



## President Nazarbayev Congratulates Kazakhstan's Women on International Women's Day



President Nursultan Nazarbayev met with prominent women from all over Kazakhstan in the Akorda presidential residence on March 6 to personally congratulate them on the International Women's Day.

By Malika Orazgaliyeva

ASTANA – President Nursultan Nazarbayev held the traditional meeting dedicated to International Women's Day with prominent women from all over Kazakhstan in the Akorda presidential palace on March 6.

Participants of the meeting represented a variety of sectors, including the economy, the social sphere, culture, sport and public service.

In his speech, Nazarbayev congratulated his guests on the International Women's Day and wished them happiness, health and prosperity. He noted that one of the priorities of state pol-

icy is improving the welfare of women.

"The Kazakhstan 2050 Strategy and Nurly Zhol state programmes are aimed at [ensuring] the prosperity and wellbeing of Kazakhstan. The wellbeing is best felt by women. They can see it in their children, on their tables and through the support of the government," the President noted.

Nazarbayev stressed the growing activities of women in the country. He noted that today the majority of civil servants are women, as are 75 percent of people employed in healthcare, 65 percent in education and 40 percent in business spheres. Nazarbayev drew attention to the country's continually increasing

birth rates, noting that 400,000 children were born last year.

He also reminded participants that this year marks 24 years of independence for Kazakhstan.

"The time flew like a flash, because all of us were busy at work. Today, we see the results. We have built a state that is recognised and respected throughout the world," Nazarbayev said.

The head of state noted that the economy is developing dynamically due to the stability in the country.

"Today, according to data provided by the United Nations, 800 million people are suffering from hunger. Each year, 30 million adults and 6 million children die

from a lack of food. Four hundred million people suffer from a shortage of water. Thirty military conflicts take place on the planet every year and 40 people are being killed in those every hour. Therefore, we must treasure the internal stability of our country," Nazarbayev explained.

At the end of the meeting, the President presented the "Alтын Alka" (Golden Pendant) and "Kumis Alka" (Silver Pendant) awards to the mothers with more than seven and six children, respectively.

The event was attended by Secretary of State Gulshara Aбыdқалиқова, Minister of Healthcare and Social Development Tamara Duisenovna, Mazhilis (lower chamber

of parliament) Deputy Gulzhan Karagussova, Mazhilis Deputy Irina Aronova, tennis player Zarina Dias, women's boxing world champion Nazym Kazybai, volleyball player Sabina Altynbekova (who became famous in Asia recently due to her anime-like look) and other prominent women of the country.

Kazakhstan is a leader in Central Asia in terms of gender equality, said head of UN Women Elaine Conkievich at a meeting with Aбыdқалиқова at the Akorda on March 3. The country was ranked 32nd out of the 136 countries ranked in the World Economic Forum's 2013 Global Gender Gap report.

## FM Idrissov Discusses EU-Kazakh Cooperation in Brussels

By Altair Nurbekov

BRUSSELS – Foreign Minister Erlan Idrissov of Kazakhstan headed his country's delegation to the 14th meeting of the Kazakhstan-European Union Cooperation Council in Brussels on March 3. Edgars Rinkēvičs, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Latvia, which holds the EU Council presidency until July 2015, and Alain Le Roy, secretary-general of the European External Action Service, led the EU delegation.

The talks focused both on the growing bilateral relations between Kazakhstan and the European Union and on the new EU Strategy for Central Asia that is currently being developed at the initiative of the Latvian EU presidency.

"The visit of the President of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev, to Brussels in October 2014 further underlined the importance we attach to our relations with Europe.

And the November visit to Kazakhstan of Maroš Šefčovič, the vice president of the European Commission for Energy Union, highlighted many opportunities for the further development of mutually beneficial economic cooperation," Idrissov said, underlining the significance of the completion of negotiations last year on a draft Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) and a document on Kazakhstan's accession to the World Trade Organisation (WTO).

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## Kazakhstan to Vote in Early Presidential Election on April 26

By Galiaskar Seitghan

ASTANA – In a televised address to the nation, President Nursultan Nazarbayev announced his decision to call an early presidential election in Kazakhstan on April 26.

"In the interests of [our] people ... and to fulfil the demands of the law, I took a decision and, in line with paragraph 3.1 of the national Constitution's Article 41, signed a decree to set the early presidential election for April 26," Nazarbayev announced.

The initiative to move the vote one year ahead was put forward by the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan (APK), a constitutional body representing the country's numerous ethnic groups. The assembly's statement on Feb. 14 referred to "numerous appeals of citizens," and called for an election to give the President "a new mandate" to implement the economic stimulus programme to counter the global economic challenges affecting Kazakhstan. The initiative found support from both chambers of the parliament, which appealed to the President to accept it.

Addressing the nation in the evening hours of Feb. 25, Nazarbayev noted that he had been receiving plenty of messages from citizens expressing their anxiety about Kazakhstan's future in light of growing instability and escalating conflicts in the regional neighbourhood. "People understand that [to prevent the negative impact] we need to strengthen stability and unity in our society," Nazarbayev emphasised.

With the adverse effects that global economic uncertainty and falling commodity prices are hav-

ing on the Central Asian nation's economy, the people of Kazakhstan need "confidence in their future," and that "means maintaining jobs, stability, welfare benefits, salaries, scholarships."

Also, citing national security concerns in light of growing geopolitical tensions, the Kazakh leader said he felt there is a growing demand among his compatriots for a "continuation of balanced domestic and foreign policies."

In this regard, Nazarbayev quoted from a letter from Nina Misochenko, a resident of the country's central Karaganda Oblast. She wrote to the President that she "prays daily for our children, for peace and concord in our country, so that no confrontation and no war come to our home." The woman said she cherished the fact that the people of Kazakhstan live quiet and confident lives, dedicating themselves to hard work and raising their children in an atmosphere of peace and stability. "Let it last," she appealed.

"Thank you [for this], Nina Alekseyevna," President Nazarbayev said on TV, using her first name and patronymic.

The Kazakh leader continued to explain that due to the significant decrease in the prices of the country's major export commodities, the government had to revise the national budget and introduce a number of major preventive measures. He emphasised that Kazakhstan had a "clear plan of action, social cohesion and sufficient resources" to tackle the effects of the global economic downturn.

Reflecting on the APK initiative, Nazarbayev said that he had held the legally mandated consultations on the issue with the chairs

of the Constitutional Council, the Senate and Mazhilis (lower chamber of parliament), and the prime minister on Feb. 25, before taking the decision to call the vote.

Earlier, at the request of the Senate, the Constitutional Council reviewed the legal aspects of the assembly's initiative and on Feb. 24 ruled that the President had a clear legal prerogative to bring the election forward.

Announcing the date of election within two months of the decision, as required by the country's constitution, Nazarbayev underlined the need to hold the election "in strict accordance with the law, openly and fairly," with the active involvement of domestic and international observers.

"In terms of my own participation in the upcoming election I will decide later, in line with the constitution and laws of our nation," Nazarbayev stressed.

Nazarbayev has enjoyed overwhelming popularity throughout his more than two decades in power. During the presidential election campaign in February 2011, an opinion research poll commissioned by the Washington-based International Republican Institute and conducted by independent pollster Gallup put his support in the country at 90 percent.

In the years since, the country has seen solid economic growth of 4 – 6 percent annually on average, albeit markedly slower growth rates compared to the early 2000s, before the global financial crisis hit Kazakhstan in 2007 – 2009.

The Constitution of Kazakhstan limits presidential service to two five-year terms, with an exception made for the country's First President, i.e. Nursultan Nazarbayev.

## Senate Chairman Visits New York, Invites UN Secretary-General to Astana Int'l Religious Congress

By Malika Orazgaliyeva

ASTANA – Kazakh Senate Chairman Kassym-Jomart Tokayev completed his official visit to New York March 4, which was devoted to the upcoming Fifth Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions.

During his stay, Tokayev held talks with United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and presented him with an invitation from President Nursultan Nazarbayev to participate in the congress, to be held June 10-11 in Astana, according to the Kazakh Senate's press service.

"I am convinced that your personal involvement in the fifth congress will give the international community a strong signal that humanity will be able to effectively meet the challenges of the modern world by providing the conditions for further development on the way to progress and taking coordinated actions and mutual support from religious hierarchies and politicians," said Tokayev, as quoted by the press service.

The UN secretary-general appreciated the Kazakh model of interethnic and inter-religious peace and harmony and emphasised that the religious forum, organised at Nazarbayev's initiative, is an important and effective dialogue platform. According to Ban, the UN will support the congress and cooperate with Kazakhstan to promote the goals and objectives of the forum in the world community.

While presenting information about the congress at the UN, Tokayev noted that New York is associated with the UN and its key global forums which give people hope to solve modern problems.

Tokayev also highlighted that Kazakhstan greatly values the UN's multifaceted activities to promote



Kassym-Jomart Tokayev (l) met with UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in New York on March 4.

dialogue between civilisations. The aim of the spiritual forum is to unite the efforts of religious leaders and promote ideas like interfaith dialogue, peace-building and conflict prevention on religious grounds, as well as development of new forms of international cooperation, he said.

Tokayev noted that the outcomes of the previous four congresses demonstrate that it has become a permanent forum of spiritual leaders, where they are able to discuss the topical issues of the modern world together with well-known politicians and leaders of international organisations. According to him, the Astana congress is a good example that overcoming the differences between religions and cultures is possible only through the establishment of peace, mutual understanding and partnership among different nations.

In New York, Tokayev also met with UN Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson and UN Development Programme Administrator Helen Clark, as well as UN senior officials, heads of major foundations and rep-

resentatives of religious communities.

During the meetings, Tokayev informed the interlocutors of the preparations for the Astana congress. The theme of the congress will be "Dialogue of Religious Leaders and Politicians for Peace and Development" and will include a plenary session and four breakout sessions.

Tokayev mentioned that the congress will include discussions on the responsibility of religious and political leaders to humanity, the influence of religion on young people, new trends and prospects of interaction of religion and politics and dialogue based on mutual respect and understanding between the leaders of world and traditional religions for the sake of peace, security and harmony.

Tokayev's visit to New York was an important part of the preparations for the Fifth Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions as the gathering is becoming an important element of wider international efforts aimed at ensuring global security and stability.

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## NATION

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 11, 2015

## Kazakhstan Committed to Free and Fair Presidential Election, Says FM Idrissov

By Danna Buzepzhanova

ASTANA – Foreign Minister of Kazakhstan Erlan Idrissov briefed the heads of foreign diplomatic missions accredited in the country on Feb. 27 on the upcoming presidential election stressing the country's commitment to conducting a free and fair election.

"We are talking about the growing pressure from economic challenges such as the decline in oil prices, the impact of sanctions on Russia, instability in the region due to the Ukrainian crisis and the withdrawal of international forces from Afghanistan. Our country, as well as the entire region, is going through a period of trials," Idrissov said, highlighting the economic and political reasons of holding an early presidential vote: that it would give the President a new mandate to pursue anti-crisis policies.

"The implementation of the programme proposed by the President, Nurlı Zhol, as well as long-term priorities such as the Kazakhstan 2050 Strategy and joining the 30 most developed economies in the world, require hard work and a clear focus on priorities. The government should make consistent, efficient and often strong-willed decisions," Idrissov stated. He underlined that the new mandate would allow Kazakhstan's leadership to begin early implementation of the objectives and to work persistently to overcome the negative impact of external factors and improve the living standards of the population.

Referring to the organisational aspects of the presidential election, the minister emphasised that Kazakhstan will take all possible measures to ensure that the highest democratic standards are applied in the electoral process.

"I am confident that the Central Election Commission of Kazakhstan will provide a high level of organisation of the election, taking into account previous recommendations of the OSCE [Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe] and other international organisations, while other interested agencies will pay maximum attention to the implementation of measures required under the legislation of Kazakhstan," he said.

Earlier, answering reporters' questions, the foreign minister said that an early presidential election would strengthen Kazakhstan's relations with foreign countries and reaffirm Kazakhstan's commitment to the principles of openness, transparency, fairness and competitiveness in the electoral process. "If [an election] takes place, we as the diplomatic service will immediately start working with international organisations,

primarily the OSCE, to establish an open and transparent process of election monitoring by the international community," he added.

At the Feb. 27 briefing, Idrissov announced that the Foreign Ministry would invite international organisations, foreign observers and media representatives to observe the election. They will be participating in all stages of the vote, receiving information on election campaign processes, informing members of the election commission about any violations of the rules and making recommendations and public statements.

The initiative to hold the presidential election one year early was put forward by the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan (APK), a constitutional body representing the country's numerous ethnic groups. The assembly's statement on Feb. 14, which referred to "numerous appeals of citizens," called

for an election to give the President "a new mandate" to implement the economic stimulus programme to counter the global economic challenges affecting Kazakhstan. The initiative found support from both chambers of parliament, and on Feb. 25 a presidential decree on holding an election on April 26 was approved.

The nomination of candidates for president will begin on Feb. 26 and end on March 15, with the registration of candidates closing on March 25. The pre-election campaign of candidates for president will begin on March 26 and end at midnight on April 24.

Voting will take place on April 26 from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m., local time.

The Central Election Commission will determine the results of the presidential election and issue the corresponding decision no later than May 3.

## NATIONAL NEWS IN BRIEF

"In 2015, there will be 157.3 billion tenge (US\$848.4 million) of available agricultural subsidies, which is almost 1.8 times more than in 2013," a recent report of the Ministry of Agriculture stated. According to the Kazakh Ministry of Agriculture, the country's gross agricultural output for 2014 amounted to 2.5 trillion tenge (US\$13.48 billion), which exceeded the previous year by 0.8 percent. Despite difficult weather conditions, crop production amounted to 98.4 percent compared to last year while livestock production grew 3.8 percent year-on-year. There was a 2.9 percent increase in food production. In 2014, the introduction of the investment subsidy increased investments in fixed capital in agriculture by 14.4 percent and reached 166.4 billion tenge (US\$897.16 million). Investments in food production increased by 16.5 percent and amounted to 40.8 billion tenge (US\$219.95 million). According to the Ministry of Agriculture, last year was a turning point for export growth. According to the ministry, Kazakhstan exported 12,300 tonnes of meat and meat products in 2014. Red meat exports totalled 7,500 tonnes, including 6,300 tonnes of beef. Agricultural imports decreased by 4.1 percent.

"The volume of payments after Kazakhstan's pension system reforms will compensate 40-43 percent of revenue; this brings the country into compliance with International Labour Organisation (ILO) requirements," Vice Minister of Health and Social Development of Kazakhstan Svetlana Zhakupova announced at a March 5 media briefing. "After the reforms, it is expected that the income replacement rate will remain at 40-43 percent. This figure is what is recommended by the ILO," Zhakupova said. She recalled that the first step in reforming the pension system was the introduction of compulsory pension contributions for those working in hazardous conditions, as well as subsidising compulsory pension contributions for mothers on maternity leave. The second stage of modernisation is a complete transformation of base pension payments, which is applied without regard to work experience and available income. From July 1, 2017, basic pension payments will be determined by insurance status. If a person has work experience of 10 years or less, he will be appointed a basic pension within 50 percent of the subsistence level. The vice minister also said that the draft law on reforming the pension system has been developed and is being considered by the government. It is expected that in April, it will be submitted to the Mazhilis (lower house of Parliament).

Kazakhstan plans to open a Family Support Institute, Vice Minister of Health and Social Development of Kazakhstan Svetlana Zhakupova said at a March 5 Central Communications Service (CCS) briefing. According to Zhakupova, the institute will be responsible for settling difficult family problems. "If a family has difficult circumstances, such as a disabled child, sick breadwinner or unemployment, an individual plan to support the family will be developed. There will be a multidisciplinary team to support the family and attempt to take the family out of the rough situation," she said. Moreover, she noted that the Mazhilis is considering a law creating work places for disabled people.

"The 6+6 model will be introduced for Bolashak student language training, which includes foreign language learning for six months in Kazakhstan and six months abroad," President of the Centre of International Programmes Gani Nygmetov said at a March 2 media briefing. He also said that the Bolashak Programme concentrates on quality results. Requirements for foreign and Kazakh languages, as well as requirements for foreign universities are becoming increasingly stringent. Opportunities for scientific works have also been increased. The programme will pay more attention to graduate and post-graduate programmes. Moreover, it has been suggested that Bolashak programme recipients apply for graduate programmes through the programme.

## Kazakh CEC Announces 14 Nominees for Presidential Election So Far

By Malika Orazgaliyeva

ASTANA – The Central Election Commission (CEC) of Kazakhstan has released an updated list of candidates who plan to take part in the country's presidential election next month.

An early election, first initiated by the Council of the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan (APK), is scheduled on April 26. The list of nominees so far includes self-nominated candidates who have never held key positions and whose names would not be known to the general public.

the head of the administration of the Leningrad region [and] worked as a civil servant in the North Kazakhstan and Akmola regions. In recent years he was the head of a department of the regional maskhat [local representative body]. Syzdykov is a man devoted to the Communist Party," Secretary of the CPPK Vladislav Kosarev said.

Also among the recent self-nominees are social activist Yessenbek Ukteshbayev from Almaty, retired Yakobzhan Dzhunisbekov from Almaty and head of the Astana Munai Gas Station Group 2007 Kanat Zhuman from Astana, the CEC said.



According to a statement by the CEC, the list of applicants who self-nominated on March 2-3 include entrepreneur Askar Syrgabayev, President of the Ruhani Kogam Alemi Public Fund Limana Koyshieva, civil engineer Bakhyt Abdulkarimov and driver Sohrab Myrzashov. The list also includes Safiolla Aldazhanov, who is unemployed at the moment and about whom nothing else is known. All of the candidates work and live in Astana.

Myrzashov and Abdulkarimov, who work in the same enterprise, JH Kurilis LLP, are not yet 40 years old, but Kazakhstan's Constitution mandates that all nominees for president be at least 40 years old. Fellow self-nominated candidate Syrgabayev failed to pass the state language proficiency test, Kazinform.kz reported on March 6. Kazakh language proficiency test is another legal requirement for a potential candidate.

Myrzatai Zholdasbekov, the chairman of the special linguistic commission that determines the level of the state language proficiency of the candidates, announced that Syrgabayev made 92 mistakes during the written test.

Another candidate, Turgun Syzdykov, has been nominated by the Communist People's Party of Kazakhstan (CPPK).

"He was born in 1947. In 1974, he graduated from the Higher Komsomol School in Moscow; he also graduated from the Tselinograd Agricultural Institute. He was

By March 9, Kairat Maishev, Bakhtiyar Estemesov and Kanat Turageldiev, upon whom the CEC has not yet provided data, had also self-nominated, bringing the total number of self-nominated candidates to 13. The CEC has rejected the candidacies of five applicants.

The nomination of candidates for the election opened on Feb. 26 and will continue until March 15.

It is expected that the Congress of the Nur Otan Party will nominate current President Nursultan Nazarbayev for the presidential election in April. The congress will take place on March 11.

Nazarbayev has been at the helm of the nation since 1989, during the Soviet times. After the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991, he was elected President of Kazakhstan. In 2007, the parliament gave him the right to run for president an unlimited number of times, an exception to the constitutional limit of no more than two consecutive terms, done in recognition of his role in the establishment of an independent nation.

According to Kazakhstan's parliamentary speaker, Kabibulla Dzhakupov, the early presidential election was needed "to turn the risks and challenges of the global crisis into new opportunities and prospects for our homeland."

On March 4, President Nazarbayev instructed the attorney general to ensure the observance of law in the country during the election campaign and the vote itself.

## Secretary of State, OECD Official Discuss Increasing Women's Participation in Country's Economy

By Kseniya Voronina

ASTANA – Secretary of State of Kazakhstan Gulshara Abdykalikova and Antonio Somme, head of the Eurasian Competitiveness Programme of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), met Feb. 27 to discuss increasing the involvement of women in the Kazakh economy.

"A special issue of the meeting was the initiative of the OECD aimed at improving the competitiveness of Kazakhstan by increasing assistance to the full participation of women in economic activities. The secretary of state expressed deep interest in the goals of the programme that meet the overall objectives of promoting women's entrepreneurship and, in particular, the involvement of women in the implementation of large-scale infrastructure projects within the new economic policy of the head of state, Nurlı Zhol," stated a report issued after the

meeting by the presidential administration.

Kazakhstan, in cooperation with the European Union (EU), is the first country in the region to lead the Central Asian Initiative of the OECD Eurasian Competitiveness Programme.



Gulshara Abdykalikova

The two officials also discussed increasing cooperation to investigate and eliminate barriers to gender equality in education, employment and entrepreneurship, as well as ways to reach

international standards on gender issues. They also discussed cooperation in general on education, health, employment and social integration.

"The desire of Kazakhstan to actively cooperate with the OECD is based on the need to implement our strategic objectives to achieve the level and standards of the member states of the OECD. Kazakhstan intends to leverage the experience of member states of the OECD to apply modern approaches to using innovation and know-how, as well as the strong expertise of the OECD analysis of its economic policy," Abdykalikova said.

The secretary of state also emphasised the high level of cooperation between Kazakhstan and the OECD, which was confirmed by the signing of the Country Programme of Cooperation with the OECD for 2015-2016 on Jan. 22 in Davos. Kazakhstan became the first country to sign the Country Programme, which marks Kazakhstan's growing cooperation with the organisation as it seeks eventual entry into the OECD.

## Kazakhstan to Go Dark for the Environment

By Leslie Krowchenko

Turn out the lights for 60 minutes. Pledge to save the planet for a lifetime.

Kazakhstan will join 161 countries and territories around the world March 28 for Earth Hour, a global commitment organised by the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF). By flicking the switch to the off position at 8:30 p.m. local time, the nation and its residents will demonstrate their commitment to reducing carbon emissions.

In addition to the symbolic action, Kazakh citizens will have an opportunity to participate in programmes supported by the Association for the Conservation of Biodiversity of Kazakhstan (ACBK), according to Forbes Kazakhstan. The initiative was announced last month by the Sustainable Development Earth Fund.

"Before Earth Hour, when people around the world switch off the lights in their homes as

a sign of concern for the planet, it remains active for little more than a month. It is during this month that everyone can support any of the five projects, events and information which is on the site www.acbk.kz," organisation's president Alan Bessen was quoted in the Forbes article. "The projects are designed to not only help preserve the biological diversity of Kazakhstan, but also to teach people how to live in harmony with the environment."

The nation participated for the fifth time last year, when approximately 1,000 urban sites went illumination-less in support of the worldwide campaign, reported kznewsline.com. From the Akorda presidential residence, Baiterek monument, Central Mosque, Catholic Cathedral and many skyscrapers in Astana to the Koktobe TV tower, skyscrapers and other large buildings in Almaty, numerous structures throughout the country were darkened.

Using the motto "the whole world for one planet," Earth Hour will begin when the lights

in the Khan Shatyr trade centre and more than 100 iconic buildings in Kazakhstan and Central Asia will go dark, said Forbes.

The event will be attended by local officials and has the support of the Department of Green Economy of the Kazakh Ministry of Energy, the Committee for Forestry and Fauna of the Ministry of Agriculture and the akimats (governors' and mayors' offices) of 14 oblasts (regions), as well as Astana and Almaty.

Begun in Sydney, Australia in 2007, Earth Hour has grown into an international campaign on the final Saturday of March, which last year involved in excess of two billion people in more than 7,000 cities, according to its website, www.earthhour.org. Individuals, organisations, municipalities and commercial establishments throughout Kazakhstan and the world that care about environmental issues are encouraged to spend the hour this year seeing by candlelight rather than electricity.

# EURASIA&WORLD

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 11, 2015

## EXTERNAL NEWS IN BRIEF

Russian President Vladimir Putin, Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko and Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev will meet on March 12 - 13 in Astana to discuss Ukraine, the Kremlin's press service reported. The three leaders will also discuss integration in the context of the new Eurasian Economic Union and other issues of trade and economic cooperation. The meeting comes at the invitation of President Nazarbayev, who is also expected to hold a bilateral meeting with Putin during his visit.

"We believe the Astana Summit will be the last to determine the legal status of the Caspian Sea," Azerbaijani Deputy Foreign Minister Khalaf Khalafov said on March 5, according to an Azerbaijan Press Agency (APA) report. Khalafov said the sides are hoping for the approval of the draft convention at the summit. "Once the convention is approved, there is going to be more work. There will be new summits which focus on the discussion of economic, security and communication issues. The sides have agreed to hold the summit in 2016, but the exact date will be decided by the presidents," Khalafov noted.

Askar Mamin, president of Kazakhstan Temir Zholy, chaired the first working meeting of the Coordination Committee of the Trans-Caspian International Transport Route (TITR), held Jan. 28 in Baku, Azerbaijan. The issues of setting competitive rates to transport goods and setting a rate to organise container transportation of goods across the TITR were addressed at the meeting. In addition, the sides agreed to take measures to organise container transportation of goods along the China-Kazakhstan-Azerbaijan-Georgia-Turkey route and use the new Zhezkazgan-Beineu railway, the capacities of the Aktau seaport and the Akhalkalaki-Kars railway, which is presently under construction. Mamin was reelected as chairman of the TITR Coordination Committee for 2015. Representatives of Kazakhstan Temir Zholy, Turkish State Railways, Azerbaijan Railways LTD, Georgian Railway LLC, International Seaport of Aktau, Baku International Sea Trade Port, Azerbaijan Caspian Shipping Company CJSC and Batumi Sea Port LLC took part in the meeting.

According to Winter Olympics organisers, Almaty will save more than \$500 million after several venue changes in its bid for the 2022 Olympics. The officials said they made the project "more efficient" and "more affordable" in line with IOC (International Olympic Committee) reforms aimed at giving organisers more flexibility and reducing the cost of the games. The changes started after the IOC Evaluation Commission visit to Almaty last month and were submitted to the IOC by this week's deadline. The biggest change is eliminating the planned venue at Shymbulak and Tau Park and relocating all Alpine skiing events to the existing Almaty mountain site. Other changes include moving freestyle ski and snowboard events to the existing Ak Bulak resort, relocating Paralympic ice sledge hockey to another arena, reducing the capacity of the athletes village in Medeo from 1,000 beds to 350 beds and eliminating one of the media villages and subpress centres. The bid committee said the changes will reduce the construction budget by more than \$450 million and the operations budget by more than \$100 million. "These revisions, based on the Agenda 2020 reforms, allowed us to save over half a billion dollars while at the same time making our concept ... even more convenient and more efficient," said Almaty bid committee Vice Chairman Andrey Kryukov. With the changes, Almaty said nine of the 13 needed venues already exist.

## In Brussels, Idrissov Discusses Easing Visa Regimes, Enhancing Cooperation, Contacts Between EU and EAEU

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The Cooperation Council reaffirmed the commitment of both parties to strengthening EU-Kazakhstan relations across a number of areas, discussed a number of issues of international and regional cooperation and confirmed the mutual interest in signing and ratifying the new PCA between Kazakhstan and the European Union as soon as possible, the press service of the European Union reported. During a joint press conference with Idrissov following their talks, Rinkēvičs said the EU side would work towards signing the agreement, which needs to be translated into 22 official languages of the EU, this year.

"We have mutual interest in keeping and widening cooperation between EU and Kazakhstan," Rinkēvičs said then. "We strongly believe that it reflects our relationship that has reached a more mature state," he added speaking of the new agreement that will cover 29 areas of cooperation.

Idrissov commended the development of trade and investment cooperation with the EU, while the EU reiterated its support for Kazakhstan's WTO membership.

"The European Union is Kazakhstan's largest trading partner, with a dynamically developing trade and investment relationship between us. Total trade turnover in 2014 fell 2.5 percent in comparison to 2013 - a reflection of the challenging times in our respective economies - but this does not detract from the enormous potential for our economic relationship and the extension of ties," Idrissov stated during the meeting as reported by press service of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

"Taking into account very significant trade and economic cooperation between Kazakhstan and the European Union and the role of the European Union as Kazakhstan's first trading and investment partner in the development and diversification of Kazakhstan's economy, we agreed that we have



Kazakhstan's Foreign Minister Erlan Idrissov shakes hands with Foreign Minister Edgars Rinkēvičs of Latvia, the country that chairs the EU Council presidency until July 2015, at the start of their talks in Brussels on March 3.

a mutual interest in developing cooperation in this vital sphere of our bilateral relations," Rinkēvičs said at the press briefing.

"On behalf of the European Union, I also reiterated our support for the membership of the Republic of Kazakhstan in the WTO which will help dismantle remaining trade barriers and further boost bilateral trade," the Latvian foreign minister announced.

"The simplification of the visa regime between Kazakhstan and the EU and the conclusion of the agreement on scientific and technical cooperation and innovation are two areas in particular which could make a significant contribution to enhancing our relationship," Idrissov said in his turn.

Meanwhile, the Kazakh minister urged European business people to examine business opportunities emerging in the framework of the implementation of the new Nurly Zhol economic policy in transport, industry, energy infrastructure and preparations for EXPO 2017 in Astana.

Delving into the issue of easing visa regimes, Idrissov said their simplification would give an additional impetus to entrepreneurs and

investors and lead to an increase in mutual tourism, thus contributing to direct dialogue between people. An important step toward future negotiations on easing the visa regime was the signing of agreements between Kazakhstan and the Benelux countries (Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg) on an exemption from visa requirements for holders of diplomatic passports and on readmission that took place at Brussels airport on March 2. Idrissov urged Latvia, as current chair of the EU Council, to support Kazakhstan's initiative.

In light of the discussion of the new EU Strategy for Central Asia, the Cooperation Council welcomed Kazakhstan's involvement in EU regional initiatives for Central Asia. It highlighted the role of regional cooperation in Central Asia as a pillar of conflict prevention and socio-economic development in the region.

Idrissov confirmed Kazakhstan's commitment to strengthening cooperation with the EU in a regional format. "We are a strong supporter of the EU's Strategy for Central Asia and have been actively involved in the policy process. We have provided a memo outlin-

ing our views of the EU's current strategy and our vision of what an updated document and our proposals could look like. We believe that this document and our proposals give the EU a useful perspective on the region's expectations about the future of the strategy. And we hope it can feed into an updated strategy that will guide a specific programme of regional cooperation that meets the interests of all countries in the region and the EU," he said.

As the key areas of future cooperation within the EU's Strategy for Central Asia, the Kazakh foreign minister primarily distinguished collaboration on regional security issues, including efforts to strengthen cooperation on border management and the fight against drug trafficking, human trafficking, terrorism and extremism.

"... [W]e believe security cooperation between the EU and Central Asia, which takes place primarily through our High Level Dialogue on Security, can be given fresh impetus by a greater focus on producing practical outcomes," he said. The second meeting of this dialogue is set to take place in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, on March 11-12.

Other areas included developing integrated infrastructure and a transcontinental transport network, particularly developing cooperation with the EU INOGATE (Interstate Oil and Gas Transport Corridor to Europe) and within the framework of the TRACECA (Transport Corridor Europe-Caucasus-Asia), and intensifying cooperation in environmental protection and water management.

"We very much appreciate the role that Kazakhstan plays in the implementation of the European Union's Strategy for Central Asia," Rinkēvičs stated at the press briefing. "We discussed the key aspects of the implementation of that strategy taking stock of progress made since the previous Cooperation Council in July 2013."

"Speaking about ... the current discussion of the Central Asian strategy, ... we had also very good

exchange and we listened very carefully [to] what our partners have told us [about] how they see some issues, be it economic cooperation, be it high-level dialogue on security issues, be it ... environment protection, water resources issues. ... But I would specifically put emphasis on issues that are related to security, ... modernisation efforts, including those of education, those of economic cooperation and cooperation in the energy field," he added. "Let me conclude by really praising Kazakhstan as being a very active partner in developing that strategy and in implementing that strategy."

Idrissov also advocated establishing contact between the EU and the Eurasian Economic Union. "One area where we believe there is an important need and opportunity to build relations is between the EU and the Eurasian Economic Union. Establishing a platform for dialogue and cooperation and growing a relationship based on mutual economic benefit would, we believe, be in all of our interests - economic and political," he said, noting that the initiative had received a positive response from the leadership of Germany, France and other European countries.

Idrissov also informed his European colleagues about Kazakhstan's upcoming presidential election scheduled for April 26 and invited the European Parliament and other international and inter-parliamentary organisations to participate in the monitoring process.

Asked about the EU's reaction to this election at the press conference, Rinkēvičs said, "We would definitely hope that ... the presidential elections will be held according to the highest international standards and according to the principles of ODIHR [OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights]. Observers from pan-European organisations, like OSCE or many other organisations, would be very helpful to evaluate the overall procedural as well as content issues of the elections."

## Kazakh FM Urges More Progress in Nuclear Disarmament, Stresses Commitment to Human Rights

By Altair Nurbekov

GENEVA - Foreign Minister of Kazakhstan Erlan Idrissov urged greater global efforts in nuclear disarmament at the plenary session of the Conference on Disarmament and addressed the High Level Segment of the 28th session of the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) in Geneva on March 4. "Today, the world is experiencing a major transformation. We have witnessed growing friction between major powers over perceived zones of influence, markets, control over energy resources and the movement of commercial minerals. This growing instability can lead to conflicts and foster a dangerous trend where states use power rather than diplomacy in world politics. As a result, this can lead to an arms race, as well as to the use of military force and other forms of coercion when protecting national interests," Idrissov said at the March 4 conference, emphasising that the forum had the potential to make a major contribution to the disarmament process.

Elaborating on Kazakhstan's position and vision on the agenda's urgent issues, he called on member states to demonstrate their political will and overcome their differences to start the practical work of the conference.

The conference's most notable achievement to date has been the elaboration of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) back in 1996 which has since been signed by 183 and rati-

fied by 163 states. It has still not entered into force because of the lack of signature and ratification by eight specific countries. Since 1996, however, the Conference on Disarmament, which unites 65 states as members and has 40 states as observers has been unable to find common ground enough to move forward on any substantive issues.

Stressing the need to preserve the principle of consensus and the inadmissibility of undermining the general rules and procedures of the conference, the foreign minister advocated for the expansion of the conference's member states and the balanced participation in the conference of civil society.

Idrissov listed Kazakhstan's key issues for the conference as nuclear disarmament through the adoption of a legally binding, nondiscriminatory and universal instrument; the development and signing of the Fissile Material Cutoff Treaty (FMCT); the prevention of an arms race in outer space; and negative security assurances to states that do not possess nuclear weapons.

On nuclear disarmament, Idrissov highlighted the initiative of President Nursultan Nazarbayev to adopt, at the UN, a Universal Declaration of a World Free of Nuclear Weapons, saying, "This would be an important step towards adopting the convention on a complete and comprehensive ban of nuclear weapons - an initiative that was drafted by Costa Rica and Malaysia. It is time to stop talking and start acting by taking measures to remove nuclear stockpiles from every country, including those that

are not part of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT)."

In this respect, the minister underlined the significance of The ATOM Project, initiated by Kazakhstan, which aims to generate global public support for the final abolition of nuclear weapons tests through the entry into force of CTBT and for the eventual elimination of nuclear weapons by all

Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings in 1945, an immensely sad day in our human history. Kazakhstan has also suffered terribly from the impact of nuclear weapons [testing]. ... Due to our shared history, Kazakhstan and Japan have a moral right to demand progress on a comprehensive nuclear test ban. We are determined to work together dur-

**IDRISSOV: "In Kazakhstan, human rights and their protection is something we understand needs constant refreshing. We do not believe we have yet made all the progress that is needed to provide the right safeguards for our citizens. To further strengthen the legal framework and take practical steps, we have developed and implemented the Concept of Legal Policy for 2010-2020."**

countries. He stressed that already 100,000 people from all over the world signed an online petition to global leaders to achieve the early entry into force of CTBT and move the world forward along the nuclear disarmament road.

Idrissov also highlighted the importance of the co-chairmanship of Japan and Kazakhstan in the Conference on Article 14 of the CTBT this year.

"A few days ago, Kazakhstan and Japan became co-chairs of the Conference on Article 14 of the CTBT. It will be a symbolic moment. This year, the world will mark the 70th anniversary of the

ing our co-chairmanship to push for the ratification of this treaty," he said, expressing the hope that the activities of the two countries affected by the application and testing of nuclear weapons would give a powerful impetus to the CTBT's entry into force.

Addressing the High Level Segment of the 28th session of the UN Human Rights Council on the same day, Idrissov emphasised that since gaining independence, Kazakhstan has pursued a policy to adhere to all major international instruments in the field of human rights protection. Thus, in February, Kazakhstan ratified the Con-

vention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

"In Kazakhstan, human rights and their protection is something we understand needs constant refreshing. We do not believe we have yet made all the progress that is needed to provide the right safeguards for our citizens. To further strengthen the legal framework and take practical steps, we have developed and implemented the Concept of Legal Policy for 2010-2020," Idrissov stated. He added that in the near future, Kazakhstan plans to create a new draft National Plan of Action on Human Rights to 2020 and establish an Ombudsman for Children's Rights.

He stressed the active cooperation of Kazakhstan with the Special Procedures of the UNHRC, confirming Kazakhstan's interest in expanding the open dialogue with Special Procedures mandate holders.

The foreign minister also touched upon the Dialogue Platform on the Human Dimension, established under the Foreign Ministry in January 2013.

"This is unprecedented in establishing an open and direct dialogue between the executive, legislative and judicial branches of government and civil society regarding further steps along the road of the political modernisation of the country," he said.

During his visit to Geneva, Idrissov also met with UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Zeid Al-Husseini and Acting Director General of the UN Office in Geneva and Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament Michael Möller.

# ECONOMY

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 11, 2015

## Kazakhstan, Int'l Financial Institutions to Cooperate on Economic Reforms

By Lyazzat Shatayeva

ASTANA – Kazakhstan plans to carry out 33 comprehensive reform projects in certain institutions and sectors of the economy with the help of international financial institutions. These lofty goals were set as part of the country's efforts to improve access to infrastructure, strengthen the financial sector and support the diversification and competitiveness of its economy.

"In order to increase the competitiveness of Kazakhstan's economy, these institutional and structural reforms will be accelerated. They are focused on improving the business climate in the country, improving the investment climate and promoting key economic sectors and tariff policies in conjunction with the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD)," Minister of National Economy Yerbolat Dossayev said during a press conference in Astana on Feb. 19.

Dossayev made it clear that one



Yerbolat Dossayev

government priority for 2015 is the implementation of structural reforms ensuring sustainable economic development and social stability. The minister also reported that the implementation of the partnership agreements with international financial institutions (IFIs) on these reforms will continue this year with an emphasis on promoting science and innovation,

improving education, healthcare, public utilities, energy efficiency, business and the investment climate, as well as stimulating the growth of small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

The agreements between Kazakhstan and the IFIs define the fundamental principles of the partnerships and joint activities of the parties in supporting Kazakhstan's development strategies. According to the co-financing arrangements, the IFIs will lend a total of 322 billion tenge (US\$1.74 billion), while Kazakhstan's government will allocate 39.2 billion tenge (more than US\$211 million) to carry out the joint projects.

Between 2015 and 2017, eight joint public utilities projects totaling 91 billion tenge (US\$492 million) will be implemented. To help spur SME growth in Kazakhstan, credit lines totaling 92.5 billion tenge (US\$499.6 million) will be supported by the participating IFIs. The Asian Development Bank is providing a 24 billion tenge (US\$129.58 million)

loan to support small- and medium-sized businesses through the Damu Entrepreneurship Development Fund. The EBRD is lending 10 billion tenge (US\$54 million) to Centre Credit Bank for this purpose.

The World Bank is allocating \$21.7 million to help increase

as well as develop and implement sustainable energy financing mechanisms.

Some of the projects launched earlier and co-financed by the World Bank have been extended to increase their results. Some of the most significant outcomes entailing complex institutional changes

**Between 2015 and 2017, eight joint public utilities projects totaling 91 billion tenge (US\$492 million) will be implemented. To help spur SME growth in Kazakhstan, credit lines totaling 92.5 billion tenge (US\$499.6 million) will be supported by the participating financial institutions.**

Kazakhstan's energy efficiency. Most of the funds, \$17 million to be exact, will be spent on installing green technology at 70 public facilities. Steps will also be taken to improve the institutional framework regarding energy efficiency

are expected in the health sector, technology transfers and institutional reform projects and an institutional strengthening project in the justice system, tax administration reform and a customs development project.

### ECONOMY NEWS IN BRIEF

"The National Bank of Kazakhstan and the government of Kazakhstan have developed an action plan to reduce the dollarisation of the economy for 2015-2016. The plan includes three main strategic directions," a National Bank of Kazakhstan report reads. According to the financial regulator, under the first direction, it is necessary to ensure macroeconomic stability; under the second direction, attention will be paid to developing non-cash payments and reducing the shadow economy and under the third, the national currency will assume supremacy over foreign currencies. The plan was approved at a Feb. 17 meeting of the government and a Feb. 25 meeting of the National Bank of Kazakhstan.

According to the National Bank of Kazakhstan, as part of the third direction of the de-dollarisation plan for 2015-2016, guarantees on deposits in Kazakhstan tenges will be increased from 5 to 10 million tenge (US\$26,492-US\$53,885). In addition, interest rates on deposits in foreign currencies will be reduced to 3 percent per annum. A ban on pricing in foreign currencies, including in conventional units will also take effect. The first direction of the plan includes measures to diversify the economy and increase the amount of locally produced goods and services available. The second direction initiates reforms on non-cash payments. In particular, due to changes in the tax code, in January of this year, VAT (value added tax) expenses will be reimbursed by budget processing enterprises.

"In 2014, the total consolidated profit of Samruk Energo totalled 15.5 billion tenge (US\$83.5 million), which is 75 percent higher than intended targets," Chairman of the Board of SamrukEnergo Almasadam Satkaliyev said at a Feb. 27 Central Communication Services (CCS) briefing. According to the head of the company, at the end of 2014, the group of companies had produced 28.2 billion kilowatt hours of electricity. Satkaliyev stated that the Bogatyr Company had produced 38 million tonnes of coal last year, which is about 35 percent of the country's total coal production.

According to the Ministry of Finance of Kazakhstan, 232 facilities, including 18 national properties will be privatised this year. "In 2015, it is planned to put 232 facilities into operation, including 18 that are national property, 121 that are municipal property and 43 from holdings," a Ministry of Finance statement read. A total of 7,043 facilities worth 42.5 billion tenge (US\$228.98 million) have been legalised in an ongoing campaign to legalise property over a period of 12 months. Local authorities received 15,465 requests totalling 119.3 billion tenge (US\$642.76 million). Finance Minister Bakhyt Sultanov noted the important role of the Ministry of Finance in improving the business climate in Kazakhstan. "More work is needed to create a favourable business environment and e-government services," Sultanov said. To ensure business development, privatisation efforts will be accelerated.

According to NADLoC, the National Agency for the Development of Local Content, Kazakhstan has about 100 systematic measures of state support for domestic producers. In order to better coordinate activities and apply state support, the government further adopted an action plan to support industrial enterprises for 2015. The move covers over 70 tasks. In line with presidential orders, a campaign titled Kazakstanda Zhasalghan, meaning Produced in Kazakhstan, was launched. Earlier, the NADLoC held a logo design completion for a logo to mark all domestically produced goods

## Government Favours Bolstering Tenge over De-Dollarisation, Says National Bank Chief

By Yerbolat Uatphanov

ASTANA – Kazakhstan's Government and National Bank announced plans in February to support the increased role of the tenge in the economy through efforts to decrease inflation, protect tenge investments, support the expansion of non-cash payment methods and other steps.



Kairat Kelimbetov

The National Bank plans to decrease annual inflation step by step, following a plan that hopes to achieve a 3 – 4 percent yearly inflation rate by 2020. To achieve this, the government is taking steps to enhance the role of the tenge in the national economy, including increasing the limit of tenge deposits guaranteed by Kazakhstan's Deposit Insurance Fund from 5 to 10 million tenge, decreasing the maximum recommended interest rate on dollar deposits to three percent per year, prohibiting price determination for certain goods and services and developing non-cash payment options, reported Forbes.kz.

**KELIMBETOV: "De-dollarisation doesn't mean that someone is going to devalue or prohibit dollars. We just think that the national currency has to take its rightful place as a measure of value and a means of payment."**

"Again, de-dollarisation doesn't mean that someone is going to devalue or prohibit dollars. We just think that the national currency has to take its rightful place as a measure of value and a means of payment. That is why we are going to develop measures diversely. The first is the supporting of macroeconomic stability to decrease annual inflation. We expect to achieve 3 – 4 percent annual inflation in 2020," said National Bank Chairman Kairat Kelimbetov at a Central Communications Service briefing on Feb. 12.

Kelimbetov also noted that authorities must work to strengthen

tenge liquidity and increase demand and supply by means of domestic production. Supporting the expansion of non-cash payment options will also help combat the extensive black market in the country, he said. "All of us are witnesses of daily transactions. In fact, 93 percent of payments in Kazakhstan are processed in cash. This is a very bad situation for any economy, because in point of fact all of these payments aren't taxed; that is, they are illegal. And we consider that the payments are often processed in U.S. dollars and exchange office networks encourage this. That is why we think that we have to establish some more order, including setting prices in U.S. dollars and [so-called] conventional units," he said, according to Kapital.kz, referring to major purchases such as in real estate or of expensive items such as cars.

The Kazakh Government and the National Bank published a joint statement about economic policy guidelines for 2015 on Dec. 24. It did not contain the term "de-dollarisation." Instead, the enhancement of the role of the tenge in the economy is the top priority. Dollarisation is the result of tenge weakness, Forbes.kz reported, and the National Bank's efforts – including raising the deposit insurance amounts, decreasing interest rates for dollar deposits and stopping price setting in dollars – are intended to strengthen national currency rather than focus on

dangerous. We need strict control, we are working on it and I think that within two months everything will be changed," as reported by Kapital.kz.

Analyst Anton Soroko of the major Russian investment holding Finam, told Kursiv.kz,

"This is a long-term task and the question isn't about the prompt

cancellation of the use of the dollar, which is the second most-frequently used currency in the state. This process is possible along with the step-by-step development of the banking system of the state and the changeover to the floating tenge rate. All these tasks are interrelated and have to be accomplished together, other-

wise the state will see additional turbulence in its financial markets. The de-dollarisation process in local financial markets has begun in different countries, but we have to understand that as of today, more than two thirds of transactions in the world are made in dollars, and nobody can change this paradigm."

FROM THE HEART OF EURASIA

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# BUSINESS

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 11, 2015

## BUSINESS NEWS IN BRIEF

“As part of the additional budget allocation to support agriculture, it is planned to increase the amount of financing of the programme of agribusiness entities from 300 to 500 billion tenge (US\$1.6 billion to \$2.7 billion),” Minister of Agriculture Assylzhan Mamybekov said at a March 6 media briefing. He noted that 13 billion tenge (US\$69.7 million) will be allocated to support livestock. “This is subsidising the cost of poultry farms, dairy products and beef farms,” he explained.

State facilities worth 40 billion tenge (US\$214.6 million) have been sold within the second wave of privatisation, Minister of Finance Bakhyt Sultanov said at a March 5 briefing. “The total amount of the sale was 29 billion tenge (US\$155.6 million) without the IPO by KEGOC. If we include it, it will be 40 billion tenge (US\$214.6 million).” According to him, entrepreneurs from the Zhambyl and Aktobe regions actively participated in the programme. About ten community properties were sold in the regions. “Unfortunately, the business in the Pavlodar region was not engaged in the process. Five facilities offered for sale have not been sold yet,” the minister stated.

According to a recent statement by Amaniyaz Yerzhanov, chairman of the Committee of Industrial Development and Industrial Safety of the Ministry of Investment and Development (MID), in the coming five years, 3,200 facilities listed in the State Energy Register (SER) plan to introduce energy saving plans until 2020. “One of the key mechanisms is the creation of the State Energy Register, including 7,000 facilities which are responsible for the energy audit in 2015,” Yerzhanov said. He added that Kazakhstan and the World Bank are implementing the grant project to improve the energy efficiency of the public facilities. “Under the project, more than 70 schools, kindergartens and hospitals will be upgraded for energy efficiency,” Yerzhanov noted. He also said that the country has 15 higher education centres and five higher education institutions which have trained more than 1,000 specialists in this sphere.

The United Nations Development Programme in Kazakhstan and the Kazakh government launched a joint project this year called Sustainable Cities aimed at improving energy efficiency, Director of the Department of Energy and Environment of the United Nations Development Programme in Kazakhstan Rassul Rakhimov announced at a March 3 press conference. “In 2015, we hope to start a completely new project Sustainable Cities for the development of energy efficiency,” Rakhimov said. According to him, the project will be implemented with the financial support of the Global Environment Facility. “In this project, we plan to focus on creating the necessary conditions in Kazakhstan for the formation of stable energy efficiency in municipal infrastructure, developing effective transport management skills, waste management, the establishment of mechanisms to attract private investment to the city and municipal infrastructure,” said the head of the department. The organisation is also developing quality standards for lighting.

“The changes that will optimise tax costs of processing enterprises were introduced in the tax code,” announced Assylzhan Mamybekov, Minister of Agriculture, at a March 6 media briefing at the Central Communication Services (CCS). As the minister noted, due to changes in the tax code, from January the cost of paying VAT (value added tax) will be reimbursed from the budget to the processing enterprises. “Given that we have almost 70 percent of cattle in personal farmsteads and farms that are not subject to VAT, it was a big problem for those businesses that buy raw materials from these non-payers of VAT, because the implementation of the entire turnover of processed products taxed full-time,” the minister said.

## New Law and More Filling Stations Planned for Liquid Petroleum Gas Cars

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – In response to government plans to enact a law abolishing taxes and fees for liquid petroleum gas (LPG) users, KazTransGas is planning to construct 105 new methane filling stations in addition to the 508 LPG filling stations currently available. While the law will create an option for drivers, LPG usage in vehicles will remain safe, economically sound and environment friendly.

“Installation of LPG equipment costs 100,000 – 150,000 tenge (US\$538-\$808) and in the context of present prices for gasoline pays back in half a year. If you use an SUV, the converting cost is up to 300,000 tenge (US\$1,616) and it will pay its way in 10-12 months. There are 508 gas filling stations in our country,” said Minister of Energy Vladimir Shkolnik at the Oct. 8 enlarged meeting of the Mazhilis (lower house of Parliament) Committee, according to [tengrines.kz](http://tengrines.kz).

Varvara Gutchenko, manager at Gazcenter, a major service station in Astana, commented after Shkolnik’s speech regarding the change-over.

“We don’t call on everybody to convert their cars to LPG consumption. It is irrational to convert some vehicles; for example, old cars or cars with insignificant everyday kilometres. It is also unwise to convert a car if its owner plans to sell it in the near future, because the cost of converting won’t pay for itself in a short span of time.”

“But we can talk about the increase in demand for our services from one year to the next. One of the reasons is that LPG usage makes vehicles more environmentally friendly. It is especially relevant for cities with bad ecological situations, for example, Almaty, which is stifled by vehicle exhaust gas,” she said.



“Today, LPG costs are also twice as cheap as low-octane gasoline and three times cheaper than high-octane gasoline. Besides, up-to-date LPG equipment sufficiently increases engine life, decreases engine oil pollution and the converted car has two fuel tanks, which means that its trip distance doubles,” she added.

Gutchenko also discussed the safety of LPG equipment.

“First of all, I would like to state that up-to-date equipment is absolutely safe. Even more, such LPG equipment is safer than the standard gasoline system of a car.

“An LPG tank’s wall thickness is 3-4 mm. A gasoline tank’s wall is 0.5 mm. It is much firmer than a standard fuel tank, which has been proven in ghastly accidents. Also, an LPG tank is equipped with a multivalve, which disables its explosion. All you need to do is to choose the right place for converting and further maintenance of your car,” she said.

When converting a car to natural gas consumption, Gutchenko noted the importance of selecting a qualified company to complete the work.

“The minimum price at our company for LPG converting amounts to 165,000 tenge (US\$889) for a four-cylinder passenger car. We don’t give preference to any brand, because every brand has its own advantages and peculiarities without regard to the country of its production. But we can say that Italian, Turkish and Polish equipment is the best. You know Italian companies started to produce the equipment in the 1960s and have great work experience,” she said.

“A car owner should write a written request for LPG equipment installation to a corresponding official dealer. The official dealer hasn’t the right to refuse such a request and we have a lot of car owners who saved their warranties, because our service station has all the necessary corresponding certificates,” she explained.

While Gutchenko noted that conversion registration isn’t complicated, approximately only 12,000 such vehicles are registered in Kazakhstan. The real number is possibly much higher.

The conversion has one disadvantage – the loss of free space in the trunk, which is solved by us-

ing a toroidal tank, she said. The tank is installed instead of a spare wheel or under the body of the car, truck, pickup or SUV.

Gutchenko also sought to dispell a myth about LPG users.

“We have absolutely different clients; for example, we equipped Daewoo Matiz. If you don’t know, it is three-cylinder, very small car. We also worked on brand-new models of BMW, Lexus, Range Rover and other luxury cars. Apart from the fact that these cars are very expensive, these cars are very complicated and have very protected electronics. Sometimes we have to dismantle half of a car to install LPG equipment. Electronic adjustment is very hard, but we do it. The Toyota Land Cruiser is the most popular model we are working on. This model amounts to approximately 50 percent of the cars we are working on. It should be noted that we don’t have many women among our clients. We haven’t had more than five female clients since 2009. I don’t know the reason. Maybe they are afraid of LPG usage. Maybe they aren’t interested in automobile tuning,” said Gutchenko.

Approximately 600 buses using natural gas operate in Almaty, which amounts to 37 percent of all buses, as reported by [auto.lafa.kz](http://auto.lafa.kz).

Gazcenter sales director Dmitri Likhachev talked about converting diesel vehicles to LPG.

“In Astana, one of the bus fleets is going to convert its diesel buses to a gas diesel system, too. We actively develop converting diesel engines, which are used in logistics companies and passenger transportation companies. It is very important, because vehicles in such companies have very high everyday kilometres. And in spite of less economic efficiency in gas diesel systems, converting enables companies to save money. As you know, saved money is earned money.

“Also we are ready to equip vehicles with methane equipment, but there are no methane filling stations in Astana,” he said.

Likhachev also commented on government actions: “We consider that converting all state vehicles to LPG usage could be a good decision and save a vast amount of money. Gas consumption is accompanied by sufficiently-less pollution than gasoline or diesel fuel consumption. Converting 1,000 buses to gas leads to the decrease of CO<sub>2</sub> to the amount of six tonnes per year and carbon soot three-five times.”

The government plans to enact a law concerning a national green economy that could make gas usage more attractive, because taxes and fees will be abolished for the owners of vehicles with gas equipment.

“KazTransGas embraced a course of action to construct 105 new methane filling stations. After this programme is carried out, trucks will be able to run from Khorgos to the border with Russia,” said Greenauto Director Rustam Issayev.

## Chevron Supports Science and Technology to Improve Lives

By Yerken Nurlybayev

Since its establishment in 2010, Nazarbayev University has developed into one of the leading educational and research institutions in Kazakhstan. The university and Chevron entered into a long-term partnership in 2012 based on the shared philosophy of striking a balance between environment preservation and the advancement of technology.

With support from Chevron, the university is developing a range of technological solutions and scientific research to improve the quality of life without compromising the biosphere. Chevron provided \$2 million for the purchase of advanced equipment to upgrade laboratory infrastructure, support faculty research programmes and fund 14 projects conducted by young scientists and students.

The university now has a mobile environmental laboratory equipped for quick analysis of the chemical composition of water, soil, air and contaminants, as well as meteorological measurements. Mobility is the key. Some biological samples must be analysed within a few hours after collection because samples can change rapidly and thus skew the data. The problem is solved by sending the laboratory to the sample and not vice-versa. The mobile laboratory also allows obtaining experimental data in real time and exploring a large volume of samples.

Through Chevron’s support, the physics and material sciences laboratory at the Nazarbayev University Research and Innovation Centre has acquired a “magnetron” for investigation of advanced materials including, gallium nitride (GaN)



used in many semiconductor applications. In the centre’s solar energy laboratory, scientists have created the entire process chain for fabrication of organic photovoltaic (OPV) devices. The main advantage of OPV in comparison to traditional technologies is that it has the potential to decrease the cost of solar electricity significantly.

In addition to laboratory infrastructure, Chevron’s support is helping Kazakhstan’s scientists improve lives through advances in the fields of energy, environment and energy efficiency.

One of the student projects underway is a study of human impacts on the lakes of the Burabai National Park. The students are acquiring and analysing two decades of geological and hydrological data to measure the impact of household water use from the lake and how to restore the dramatic drop in lake levels. Another group of young scientists are researching a hydro-energy storagesystem that pumps water to an elevated reservoir, and when power is needed, sends the water flowing down through a hydro turbine, convert-

ing mechanical energy to electrical energy.

Chevron’s contribution encourages not only experienced researchers and scientists, but includes opportunities for students from all schools within Nazarbayev University. For example, a group of students has started working on a concept for a futuristic, human-friendly eco-settlement. The Eco-Village would be energy efficient and sustainable using existing technologies and integrate harmoniously with the natural landscape.

“Collaborating on the Eco-Village is a pleasure,” said Project Leader Daniil Tarasov. “We are creating a ‘nature oasis’ where citizens may enjoy fresh air and see a sky full of stars. Implementation of the idea could contribute to Kazakhstan’s reputation as a country that cares about its ecology. Applying alternative sources of energy might increase investments in Kazakhstan’s economy. To be a part of this project is a great honour and priceless experience for me. Realising that my effort might be useful for my country makes me happy.”

## Estonia Considering Shipping Goods Between Europe and China via Kazakhstan

By Michelle Witte

ASTANA – Estonia is the latest country to publicly mull using Kazakhstan’s transit infrastructure to ship goods between China and Europe.

“We’re considering the shipment of merchandise between Europe and Asia through the port of Tallinn on the Baltic Sea and the port of Lianyungang on the Yellow Sea,” CEO of Estonia’s Port of Tallinn Ain Kaljurand said on March 2, as reported by Spanish international service EFE. He elaborated that the idea is “feasible” given that Kazakhstan’s national railway company, Kazakhstan Temir Zholy, is building its own terminal at Lianyungang.

Tallinn, which Kaljurand called one of the most important ports on the Baltic Sea, is operating far below capacity, the CEO said, noting that the transport of Kazakhstan’s exports through the ports has declined in recent years. Kazakhstan has traditionally shipped cereals, coal and oil products through Estonia.

“In December of last year, the transport of coal from Kazakhstan through the port of Tallinn was 40,000 to 50,000 tons, while seven years ago, this quantity was five times greater. The handling of grain was 1.5 million tons, but today it’s zero,” Kaljurand said, according to EFE’s report.

Kazakhstan is in the midst of major transit development, as it aims to capture a greater share of goods shipped from China to Europe. In 2012, a cargo train be-

tween Chongqing in southwest China to Duisburg was launched, cutting transit times from months to 15 days as well as cutting costs. In January, Kazakhstan Temir Zholy announced the launch of a pilot “Rail-Air” programme, taking cargo by rail from Chongqing through the Dostyk entry point and to Almaty, then loading it onto flights at Almaty airport, and in February a cargo train travelling from Yiwu, China to Madrid, Spain, via the world’s longest railway line, completed its maiden journey of 16,156 miles, crossing Kazakhstan on its way.

### Kazakhstan is developing its transit infrastructure as it aims to capture a greater share of goods shipped from China to Europe.

A Kazakh parliamentary delegation visited Tallinn in November of last year, with the development of trade and economic relationships high on the agenda. An Estonian business delegation headed by former Estonian President Arnold Rüütel visited Astana in late February, when the need to develop cooperation in agriculture and transit were discussed, along with Estonia’s potential as a bridge between Kazakhstan and Europe.

# EDITORIALS & OPINIONS

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 11, 2015

## Afghanistan Should Not Be Left Alone

Conflict and suffering has again sadly been dominating international headlines. The Middle East is engulfed in a struggle for decency against the so-called Islamic State.

The rise of this abhorrent extremist group that has caused immense suffering for thousands of people in parts of Syria and Iraq is perhaps the biggest threat to global peace and stability. There is a real risk that these two countries will be permanently torn apart and the Islamic State becomes a platform for exporting violence, extremism and instability across the entire region and beyond. Already Libya and Nigeria have become victims to this warped ideology, demonstrating that Islamic State is not just a Middle Eastern problem.

As the international community considers how to respond to this threat, these terrible developments must serve as a sobering reminder of the fate of Afghanistan if the world again walks away from the troubled country, as it did in the 1990s. We must ensure this does not happen.

Kazakhstan, together with its neighbours and the international community all share a common objective to ensure that Afghanistan never again becomes a safe haven for international terrorism, nor a threat to regional stability. This gives us a common purpose: to build the capacity of the Afghan government and the Afghan National Security Forces, and to give Afghans the opportunities to build a stable and prosperous future.

Over a decade on from the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, al Qaeda in Afghanistan and Pakistan has been significantly weakened, and today's Afghanistan is unrecognisable from 10 years ago. However the pull-out of NATO troops means that an enduring international commitment to Afghanistan is required. Unfortunately nearly 4,000 Afghan civilians died in 2014, making it the deadliest year yet in the conflict. This must act as a wakeup call to the world.

If the international community turns its back on the country and its long-suffering people, there is a real risk that it could descend again into outright chaos and that instability and violence will spill increasingly over its borders.

No nation is immune from this threat. Up to now, extremists have struggled to gain a foothold in Kazakhstan. Despite a very diverse population, we have built a moderate and tolerant society where all can make a contribution. The Kazakh government has been closely monitoring the situation regarding religious extremism and drug trafficking out of Afghanistan, two issues that can hurt our own nation.

The Kazakh government has also been working hard,

and rightly so, to counter the distorted message of the extremists in our society. And it has also stepped up direct economic and humanitarian aid to Afghanistan. Kazakhstan has allocated \$2.38 million for social services projects in Afghanistan, sent more than \$17 million worth of emergency food assistance, and implemented a \$50 million project to train Afghan students at Kazakh universities.

But the challenge requires a concerted and coordinated international effort to help re-establish and reintegrate Afghanistan into the region. It is an effort that Afghanistan's Central Asian neighbours must help shape and lead. After all, we in the region have the most to gain from success and the most to lose from failure. Not surprisingly, regional governments are already discussing how Afghanistan's efforts can do more together to help rebuild it as well as improve regional security against terrorism and the drugs trade.

The long-term solution must be to accelerate the growth of the entire regional economy to spread employment and prosperity in Afghanistan and all neighbouring countries. This will deny the extremists the anger and despair required for their divisive message to take root.

Consistent efforts in this area are being taken by organisations such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, which brings together four Central Asian nations plus Russia and China.

Through other initiatives like the U.S.-proposed 'New Silk Road', which aims to integrate the Central Asian countries of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan with Afghanistan, India, and Pakistan, there is hope to integrate Afghanistan into the wider region.

The positive impact, of course, of the 'New Silk Road' will be felt far beyond Afghanistan or Central Asia. Our region is seriously laying claim to be the next economic frontier. Rich in energy and natural wealth and strategically positioned between Europe and the fast-growing economies of the east, improved connections can provide a much-needed boost to global growth.

We cannot halt the powerful forces which are changing our world. But through increased co-operation with our partners, they can be channelled for the benefit of all. Afghanistan's people are counting for the world's powers to stop their disputes, and instead unite to battle a common foe. We have all borne the costs of decades of conflict in Afghanistan and, if we fail to come together and turn good intentions into positive action, we will see the chaos engulfing the Middle East repeated in Afghanistan.

## Early Presidential Election Meant to Solidify National Stability

Political life in Kazakhstan stands on the eve of an event of paramount importance for any country: a presidential election.

Over the last three weeks, the political parties, the Kazakh Parliament and expert community have become more active. The question is will President Nursultan Nazarbayev confirm he will run for re-election and who will be the other candidates?

The move for an early election began Feb. 14 when the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan (APK) proposed holding an early election this year, rather than the regularly scheduled election in 2016.

The APK initiative was formally announced and supported unanimously by the group's delegates. The assembly justified its initiative on the basis that in these times of global crisis, the Kazakh society must unite and support the policies and strategies of its time-proven leader.

The country's political parties and public organisations then supported the initiative of the APK. Among them are the ruling Nur Otan People's Democratic Party, the pro-business Ak Zhol (Bright Path) Democratic Party, and others.

Most leaders of the political parties agree that the early presidential election is designed to strengthen political stability and social cohesion in Kazakhstan. The initiative was also supported by the Mazhilis (lower house of the Parliament) and the Senate (upper house of the Parliament). On Feb. 25, after consulting with the chairmen of the two houses, the prime minister and the chair of the Constitutional Council, President Nazarbayev announced his consent for an early election and set it up in line with the nation's law to be held April 26.

The worsening global economic crisis is among the arguments in favour of an early election. Experts predict the global economic crisis will peak in 2016,

so holding the regular election in the midst of a global crisis would have been undesirable.

The previous presidential election was also held earlier than usual. It was held April 3, 2011 and Nazarbayev won 95.55 percent of the votes.

However, experts predict that the current competition in the early presidential election can be serious. Thus, Bolat Baikadamov, a seasoned political analyst, in an interview with one of the local news agencies, said "Kazakhstan has passed the time when the president was elected among candidates who lagged behind him on a large distance in votes."

"I think now is the time for those politicians who can compete for the post of President in our country. It all depends on what [type of] person will participate in the election. If this person is weighty and authoritative, of a large caliber, a political heavyweight, as the saying goes, then, of course, this person will pose serious competition to any other candidate, whether it is even the current head of state," Baikadamov said.

In this case, another question arises: "What are the chances of the incumbent to become a winner again?" The chances are high. It is well-known that under the leadership of Nazarbayev, the nation was able to successfully overcome the crisis in the early 1990s, the Asian crisis of 1997-1998 and the global crisis of 2008-2009.

Second, it is indisputable that today Nazarbayev is one of the most active and respected politicians in the region and leaders of many countries in the world openly acknowledge the fact. He regularly proposes important policy initiatives in the country and the world.

Events in Ukraine forced the multi-ethnic people of Kazakhstan to take a different look at the situation in their own country. Against the background of economic and political problems in the world, especially events in Ukraine, the majority of the Kazakh people want to see a strong leader leading them into the future.

## Farming to Play Key Role in Kazakhstan's Economic Anti-Crisis Programme

By Aiman Turebekova

The economies of Europe and Eurasia are facing significant challenges today, given the fallout from ongoing geopolitical tensions around the conflict-hit Ukraine, and as a result are undergoing significant macroeconomic and structural adjustment.

Falling crude oil prices are intertwined with a structural slowdown. Consequently, low oil prices will put significant pressure on the budget, limiting fiscal space for further investment and other stimulus. According to World Bank statistics, the annual GDP percentage growth rate at Kazakh market prices was 4.1 percent in 2014, whereas for 2015 and 2016 the forecast is a notably-lower increase of 1.8 percent and 3.2 percent, respectively. After a sharp deceleration in 2014, however, growth in the region is projected to recover moderately with an increase of 4.7 percent by 2017.

Moreover, capital inflows into a few countries of the region, namely Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Romania and Turkey, resulted from the successfully placed modest-sized bond issues in the market. In Kazakhstan, authorities are taking additional measures to support the financial sector. Some of them include increasing the capitalisation of the Bad Loans Fund, which the government created to tackle the financial crisis of 2007-2009, expanding eligible loans for purchase by the entity and changing the tax rules and insolvency regime to incentivise debt write-offs.

Notwithstanding the current crisis, Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev, who steered the country through the previous recessions of 1998-1999 and 2008-2009, has adopted a new strategy for the country's development. "A number of anti-crisis measures were taken last year. We enhanced partnership with international financial institutions last year and felt full support from them as we made deals for over \$8 billion," he said in announcing his anti-crisis programme Nurly Zhol - The Path to the Future during the annual state-of-the-nation address in November 2014.

Nazarbayev referred to the National Fund, a sovereign deposit accumulating excess revenues from the export of raw materials, as a major source of reserves that would help implement the government's extensive anti-crisis plan of action. The President noted the government used it successfully to tackle the economic crisis of 2007-2009, when \$10 billion sourced from the fund was funnelled into supporting the banking sector, construction industry and small- and medium-sized enterprises and boosting employment.

"As for the rest of the money, we have not spent it. We saved and multiplied it. Now we are in the period when we must use these reserves. They will help overcome uneasy times and stimulate the growth of our economy," Nazarbayev argued. As of February 2015, the National Fund's assets exceeded \$78 billion.

Furthermore, in order to attract additional funding and increase the flow of investment into the country, the Kazakh Parliament adopted a law on June 30 regarding amnesty for Kazakh citizens, repatriates and persons holding a residence permit due to the legalisation of their property. The nation's Minister of Finance Bakhyt Sultanov anticipates the inflow of money and property from the campaign to reach up to \$12 billion. Naturally, the question arises how the government should manage this money in terms of preventing crises and taking into account a long-term perspective.

The President's overall goal for his government is to develop Kazakhstan's business environment so that it becomes one of the world's top thirty largest economies. It is clear that in order to implement this serious objective, the government should work on it intensively. For instance, in 2011 the World Bank's Doing Business report acknowledged Kazakhstan as the number one pro-business reformer government in the world. Still, it is too early to claim Kazakhstan is the best place for small and medium-sized enterprises and the manufacturing industry. There is a lot of work to do in this regard and the government does not seem to be lenient on pursuing the changes needed.

It is widely believed that agriculture is one of the priority sectors of Kazakhstan's future econ-

omy. The country is one of the top 15 producers of wheat in the world, with its harvests competing in quality with those of Canada. Despite the ongoing cuts in government spending, it was announced on Feb. 18 that the farming sector will receive an additional 20 billion tenge (\$107.3 million) in government funding in 2015.

Moreover, Kazakhstan must use all the benefits of its membership in the recently-launched Eurasian Economic Union. In light of current sanctions, Russia is a huge market with high demand for all types of products. When prices rise due to high demand, the seller will want to increase capacity to produce greater quantity. We should not neglect the fact that during the transition period when joining the World Trade Organisation (WTO), it will be crucial to intensify the investments in agriculture, the processing industry and service structures. To enhance agricultural productivity, the government needs to invest in expanding infrastructure such as roads, irrigation and communication systems. In addition, in order to prevent future risks after joining the WTO it is of paramount importance to support farming in various creative ways.

One of the feasible solutions might be encouraging and helping farmers to enhance their qualifications and skills in those countries where the agrarian sector is well developed and successful, like New Zealand, which is world famous for its productive farms. The best way to experience this unique way of life is to live it yourself on one of over 400 farms around the country.

According to the Kazakh Committee on Statistics, the country's exports to New Zealand in 2014 totaled \$11,900 and imports were \$2.1 million. Kazakhstan imports meat, dairy products, fish and equipment from New Zealand.

### New Zealand's agriculture

New Zealand is heavily dependent on international trade, particularly in agricultural products. Its highly-competitive and efficient primary production systems are exported to every corner of the globe. Its major export partners are Australia, United States, China and Japan, as shown in the pie chart below (data from 2014). New Zealand and China signed the New Zealand-China Free Trade Agreement on April 7, 2008, the first such agreement China has signed with a developed country.

New Zealand's stringent food standards have led to a high-performing primary sector. The country has implemented robust biosecurity measures and has high levels of food traceability. The World Organisation for Animal Health has recognised New Zealand as free of animal diseases. The country's reputation for farming expertise and quality food-production systems places it in a strong position to meet the world's increasing food demands. Furthermore, the country is one of the most efficient agricultural economies with a reputation for producing internationally-significant research, agricultural practices and products.

As a country with considerable potential, Kazakhstan should learn more from New Zealand's experience on the way to establishing and managing productive farms. New Zealand's Lincoln and Massey universities offer study areas such as agriculture, commerce, computing, engineering, environment, food, forestry, horticulture, hospitality, landscape, property, recreation, sciences, transport and winemaking. These universities provide an opportunity to gain experience from the best agribusinesses. Consequently, after finishing their education Kazakhstan's farmers would acquire a confidence and willingness to implement new ideas and experiences which would help farming industry progress in the nation.

It is vital to support agriculture through implementing action which is needed at all levels to revitalise Kazakhstan's agricultural sectors. Rural communities and small farmers deserve empowerment and assistance from the government through the provision of additional financing and access to technology and technical know-how.

The author is a graduate student of the Foundation of Diplomacy course at the University of Oxford.

### Dear readers,

Due to the five day celebration of the Nauryz on March 20-25, the next issue will come out in print on March 27. We will continue updating our website daily with important news updates, stories and commentary as usual.

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# OPINIONS

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## G-Global Is an Idea which Unites the World, Senator Believes

By Doszhan Nurgaliyev

This year marks the eighth year of the initiative by Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev to unite international scientists and practitioners in the common search for answers to global challenges. In the context of the current crisis anomalies and geopolitical collisions, the anti-crisis ideas have gained new scientific and political significance in the global community. This is the opinion of the head of the international secretariat of G-Global, deputy of the Kazakh Senate Serik Nugerbekov.

In his famous article "Keys to the Crisis" the head of state said, "The whole world has entered into a global crisis and only the whole world can turn the 'key to the crisis' ... but will the friends' consent be achieved when the global policies often contradict with the interests of the economy, including renouncing the fundamental principles of development?"

Today, there is no doubt that in the turbulent flow of global processes politicians do not always adhere to the classic principles. Such a thing as consent of the parties is still intermittent, while political consensus is often achieved by pressure and suppression. Nevertheless, we cannot say that the politicians do not seek alternatives and compromises in the current situation, when even large multinational corporations engaged in high-tech sectors bear huge losses due to the heating of geopolitical tensions. Whatever you may say, the bough on which global policy, as well as the economic system, sits should not be sewn off or otherwise everything will collapse.

The current crisis shows once again that the settlement of the key issues of our time using heavy policy tools is ineffective. Similarly, traditional methods of regulation of financial markets do not give any results. For example, today given the weak performance of most economies in the world,



including due to the low oil prices and armed conflict in the Middle East, the U.S. Federal Reserve System (FRS) continues to hold interest rates unchanged. It means that the need to increase the money supply and stimulate economic growth remains an urgent task for the FRS amid the unfavourable macroeconomic situation in the world.

Due to the high interconnectivity of all participants in the global market and joint efforts of all countries of the world, it is also necessary to treat the monetary economic system that focuses on excess profits instead of balanced development. It is significant that this is a key condition, along with the systemic factors of the crisis the President of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev, highlighted in his articles.

He was the first head of state to raise the urgent need for a radical transformation of the global financial and economic system and also noted that the transformation of the established system of economic values was a complex issue and has more than one financial, problematic side. The roots of the current economic problems and contradictions often go back to the previous historic upheavals, including the times of the Cold War. That is why the world of the twenty-first century requires not only fundamental changes in the economy and global governance, but also the transformation of consciousness of civilisation towards the responsibility of "one for all and all for one."

*Do you not think that similarly, due to overproduction amidst global poverty and unemployment in the world, there exists overproduction of financial instruments that are useless to get the world economy out of the crisis? What priorities in this respect do you implement in the current work?*

Amid the modern threats forecast by the President of Kazakhstan in the articles "Keys to the Crisis" and "The Fifth Way," is that by the beginning of the second decade of the new century mankind in its development will have generated not one, but a set of simultaneously-occurring crises that no longer requires confirmation because today it is a reality. At the same time, it is equally obvious that no state, no matter how powerful it may be, as well as neither the largest regional associations, can overcome these destructions. The current socio-economic situation in the world is eloquent proof of that. Therefore, the incredible efforts of Kazakhstan to maintain global anti-crisis discourse within the Astana Economic Forum, with an aim to develop science-based anti-crisis recommendations for the G20, the concept of the UN world anti-crisis plan and the active promotion of the initiative G-Global today are commended by the international community.

An outstanding figure of our time, Nobel Prize winner Muhammad Yunus, gave his assessment of the Astana Economic Forum: "Bringing people together to discuss the pressing issues of the time is very important and logical. However, to consolidate the leaders of world science and practice to solve global problems is an extraordinary and historic event. None of the Asian countries can hold the event at the level at which Kazakhstan has done, which is undoubtedly an outstanding merit of the President of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev."

During the Astana Economic Forum, Executive Director of

the International Monetary Fund (IMF) Daniel Heller expressed confidence that the idea of a transition from G20 to G-Global was in sync with what the IMF is doing today as an international development institution, which is trying to find a solution to the data problems. Secretary General of the Asian Peace and Reconciliation Council (APRC) Kobsak Chutikul also fully welcomed the initiative, saying: "G-Global is an initiative that can help create a world."

*According to official documents available on the G-Global communication platform, the opinions of many influential politicians and economists reflect their high level of interest and understanding of the essence of the G-Global project as a global format uniting the world. What are the plans for the further advancement of this project?*

In December 2011, in his speech at the ceremony dedicated to the

**International experts believe that the G-Global project attains a large mass of followers not only at the level of world politics, but also at the level of parliamentary and public diplomacy.**

20th anniversary of the independence of Kazakhstan, the President proposed the creation of G-Global, a democratic format of global dialogue. Currently there are many proposals from scientists and experts from around the world about the urgent need for holding the G-Global forum during the international exhibition EXPO 2017. The G-Global forum can gather global leaders, politicians, leading experts and academics, parliamentarians and representatives of non-governmental organisations in one place. Its platform can host such activities as the Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions, the Conference on In-

teraction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia, International Summit of Journalism, Astana Economic Forum, Parliamentary and Public Diplomacy Forum, The ATOM Project, Silk Road, Green Bridge and others.

One of the top priorities of the international project G-Global is to assist promoting the nation of Kazakhstan to non-permanent membership on the UN Security Council (UNSC) for 2017-2018. Kazakhstan is committed to a comprehensive concept of security, which includes the interconnection and interdependence of security, human rights and sustainable development. Effective solutions in the field of food, water, energy and nuclear security should become the basis for such interaction. With this agenda the international project G-Global, supported by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan, plans to intensify its work within the UN and other international organisations.

level of parliamentary and public diplomacy.

At present, one of the key areas of G-Global is the fight against the global threat to humanity – the Ebola virus. Since October 2014, the international secretariat of G-Global has been providing humanitarian assistance to the people of Guinea, within which a group of doctors and scientists provides training and advice to the Guinean doctors and specialists. In addition, at no charge the G-Global international secretariat provided medicines for the treatment of patients with Ebola, as well as 200 sets of reusable anti-plague costumes for medical personnel. Today the government of the Republic of Guinea, with the financial support of the Islamic Development Bank in Conakry, is building a multifunctional clinic to treat patients with the Ebola virus, which after commissioning will be transferred under the control of specialists and doctors of the G-Global international secretariat.

*The relevance and the need to hold the G-Global forum is apparent, but at the same time will the forum not be a heavy burden on the budget?*

Today, the negative trends in the global economy affect international business activities, including the largest transnational corporations (TNCs). In this respect, TNCs are most interested in the promotion of anti-crisis measures in the format of G-Global and they could act as sponsors of a special fund for the G-Global forum. In addition, international organisations and development institutions could assist the project, creating policy in a particular area. That is part of the financial cost for the G-Global forum that could be dealt with through TNCs and international organisations as the successful implementation of projects of G-Global will have a positive effect on the entire population of our planet.

## Doomsday Clock Must Be Reversed. We Can Do It

By Karipbek Kuyukov

For nearly 70 years, the Doomsday Clock has shown how close our world is to global catastrophe. The news that on January 22 the clock's timing has been pushed forward to three minutes before midnight – signaling the gravest threat to humanity since the Cold War – is a serious warning. It reflects the view of the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists of the growing threat from nuclear proliferation and climate change to humanity.

For me and many of my fellow Kazakhs, this threat is not abstract but something we live with every day of our lives. I was born in the village of Yegyndybulak, just 100 kilometres from the Semipalatinsk test site where the Soviet Union carried out 456 nuclear tests over 40 years. Few precautions were taken to protect communities such as those where my parents lived from the radioactive fall-out. The



Project, an international initiative to raise awareness of the horrible impact of nuclear tests worldwide, with ATOM being an acronym for our motto "Abolish Testing. Our Mission."

My campaigning has taken me to other countries where people have suffered from the consequences of nuclear tests or nuclear explosions. In Hiroshima, Nagasaki and Chernobyl, for example, I have witnessed a similar pattern of devastation. All I have seen and heard has convinced me more than ever that nuclear weapons do not belong on our planet and must be eliminated with a ban on testing as a critical first step to this ambition.

That is why I believe the adjustment of the doomsday clock is a wake-up call to us all. In recent months, we have seen conflicts spring up or worsen all over the world. Russia and the West are once again on a collision course. This all sounds too familiar to me. It was the last Cold War which led

to the development of ever more destructive nuclear weapons, to so many tests and their terrible impact.

I am proud to have been part of a grassroots movement which campaigned to stop nuclear tests at the Semipalatinsk nuclear test site. Fortunately we found strong support from our president, Nursultan Nazarbayev, who made a historic decision to shut down the site back on August 29th, 1991.

**The modern history of my homeland ... dispels the myth that a country needs to possess nuclear weapons to feel secure. Despite being without nuclear weapons, Kazakhstan has enjoyed stability and safety for more than two decades.**

This happened when Kazakhstan was still part of the Soviet Union. After securing independence,

our country made the decision to give up the world's fourth largest nuclear arsenal.

The modern history of my homeland also dispels the myth that a country needs to possess nuclear weapons to feel secure. Despite being without nuclear weapons, Kazakhstan has enjoyed stability and safety for more than two decades now. We were joined by Belarus, Ukraine, and South Africa who also chose to walk the path of

Today each of us can play a role in reversing time on the doomsday clock. We can participate in creating a peaceful world, where people no longer have to fear another nuclear disaster. On behalf of nuclear testing survivors in Kazakhstan and other countries and in memory of those who are no longer with us because of radiation-related diseases, I urge all heads of state to look beyond political games and national pride. It can be done.

It wasn't my choice to be born without arms. I had no say in whether the Soviets used Kazakhstan as a nuclear test site. But I do have a voice with which to share my story and fight for a nuclear free world. Let us all pursue this goal. For the sake of our children. For the sake of our humanity.

**The author is the honorary ambassador of The ATOM Project. This opinion first appeared in International Policy Digest.**

nuclear non-proliferation. I plead with other countries to follow this example.

## Germans in Kazakhstan: Part of the Bright Multi-Ethnic Fabric

By Ruth Nielsen

I read with interest The Astana Times interview of Mr. Alexander Dederer, chairman of the Public Association of Germans in Kazakhstan. I had written my doctoral dissertation on the Saga of the Volga Germans and recall Mr. Dederer's connection to "Wiedergeburt," a German ethnic union association.

Germans came en masse to Kazakhstan and Siberia in the fall of 1941 as a result of the 28 August 1941 decree by Joseph Stalin, which abolished the Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic of the Volga Germans. Because of the perfidious attack of the Nazis in June 1941, German speakers were distrusted and considered a 5th column. By 25 Dec. 1941, it was estimated that 856,000 Russian-Ger-

mans had been exiled to Siberia and Kazakhstan. Most of the men had been sent to work in factories and mines in the Urals. Those traveling east via cattle cars were the elderly, the women and children. An estimated 50% died en route.

The Russian-German ranks later included survivors of the siege of Leningrad. Their ancestors had come to Russia during the reign of Peter the Great. Not all German settlers came to Kazakhstan after the 1941 exile. Some came earlier because of diminishing land or because of forced collectivization in the late 1920s. The Kazakhs themselves suffered under forced collectivization in the 1920s and 1930s. Between 1926 and 1933, it is estimated that almost two million Kazakhs perished.

Several other groups, such as the Crimean Tatars, Chechens, Finns,

Turks and Kalmycks were also labelled "voluntary re-settlers." Only Crimean Tatars and Volga Germans were not permitted in the 1950s to return to their regions of the Soviet Union.

Hundred of thousands of Russian Germans were also "repatriated" after WW II. These came primarily from Volhynia and the Black Sea areas of Ukraine and had been evacuated by the retreating Wehrmacht. The Germans refer to this post war movement to Siberia and Kazakhstan as "die Verschleppung" – the dragging away. At first the Western Allies aided this repatriation, as per the Yalta Agreement, but then refused for humanitarian reasons. Also, among the "repatriated" were millions of Ukrainians, mostly women, who had been slave-labourers in the Reich.

In 1957, the German Federal Chancellor, Konrad Adenauer, sought a renewal of diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union, and through an agreement with Nikita Khrushchev, arranged for over 20,000 Russian-Germans to emigrate to Germany between 1955-1970. By the 1990s, the number had risen to 9,000 "Spaetaussiedler" or immigrants a month.

Between 1989 and 1997, close to 2.4 million "ethnic Germans" had returned to Germany. Attempts to establish a Volga German area on the Volga River (1992) ad earlier in Kazakhstan were opposed and defeated.

Mr. Dederer spoke of the 18 German centres in Kazakhstan, as well as the language camps, newspapers, an inter-government commission and a business asso-

ciation. These are all a good foundation in building bridges between Germany and Kazakhstan.

However, living in another diverse country, I wonder do Germans living in Kazakhstan think of themselves as German-Kazakhs? In the U.S., people often identify themselves as German-American, Korean-American, etc. (After generations, some groups are so mixed, they run out of hyphens.)

Is there a wish among the various peoples of Kazakhstan "to return" to their ancestors' lands? No doubt that choice depends on the equality of opportunities in education and jobs. If one looks around and sees only partially opened doors, one will not assimilate or "hyphenate."

Sometimes people speak of tolerating others. That is quite lame. Does anyone really want to be

tolerated and not respected and included?

I was in Kazakhstan in 2013 and visited Astana, Karaganda and Almaty. I remember sitting in a food court in Astana and being impressed with the diversity of the families around me. I think that is one of the unique elements of Kazakhstan.

With such a diverse population, each group has its story, which can be told as Kazakhstan does in its Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan. Each group learns of the tenacity, faith and courage of the others.

**The author holds a Doctorate of Literature from Drew University in Madison, New Jersey, and taught as an adjunct at Drew University, the County College of Morris and the College of St. Elizabeth in New Jersey, all in New Jersey.**

# EURASIA&WORLD

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 11, 2015

## Belarus, Kazakhstan Work Together in Volatile Economic Times

By Dmitry Lee

ASTANA – In his interview with The Astana Times, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Belarus to Kazakhstan Anatoly Nicksassov underlined the importance of growing economic relations between Belarus and Kazakhstan and stressed further development of current relations, including under the conditions of the newly-created Eurasian Economic Union, as well as establishing new projects and deepening cultural exchange.

**How would you describe the current bilateral relations between Belarus and Kazakhstan in politics, economy and culture?**

Our countries have had traditionally friendly relations. Belarus and Kazakhstan maintain an active dialogue on the highest levels and are strategic, trade-economic and foreign partners.

We hold regular meetings and develop further cooperation on the basis of different organisations, such as the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) and the Eurasian Economic Union. Our countries represent constructive interaction and share common positions within the United Nations (UN), the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) and other international organisations.

Belarus is interested in a close partnership with Kazakhstan in all spheres and calls for a systemic deepening of bilateral relations. Despite the negative factors that we are facing in the global economy today, bilateral trade and economic relations between Belarus and Kazakhstan are developing dynamically. The trade and economic relations with Kazakhstan are of high priority for Belarus. In light of the negative processes in the Russian economy and in general a rather complicated situation on the world markets, it is beneficial for both Belarus and Kazakhstan to increase foreign trade turnover, improve the efficiency of joint projects and deepen and broaden cooperation in the industrial, scientific and technological spheres.

Currently, special attention is paid to the development of industrial cooperation between Belarusian



Anatoly Nicksassov

and Kazakh engineering enterprises. In this direction, we are focusing our efforts on the development of existing assembly productions of Belarusian machinery that are present in Kazakhstan as well as the creation of new industries.

For this year we plan to transfer the production of a BelAZ-7547 dumper from the Belarusian company BelAZ to KazBelAZ, a joint venture located in Karaganda. We will also transfer the production of another dumper such as BelAZ-7540V and BelAZ-75473 in the future. It is also planned to organise the production of Belarusian agricultural, municipal and road-building equipment at the site of the joint Belarusian-Kazakh Industrial and Technological Park of agricultural and municipal vehicles located in Kokshetau and to organise assembly production of Belarusian automotive engineering from the Minsk Automobile Plant on the basis of Semipalatinsk Machine Works.

In 2015, it is planned to organise an assembly of five models of the MAZ make. Agromashholding (Kazakhstan) and Gomselmash (Belarus) are working on the establishment of a joint production of combine harvesters. The realisation of large transnational projects in space and energy spheres is promising for us, including cooperation on nuclear power plant construction, development, production and processing of hydrocarbons, engineering, trade and logistic activities.

The growth of investments and the allocation of Kazakh capital in Belarus is the core of bilateral relations. Belarus is ready to create favourable conditions for Kazakhstan business in our country. At the governmental level, we are ready to support proposals for future projects in various fields like petrochemicals, energy, transport and logistics, innovation and new

technologies where Belarus and Kazakhstan could implement two or three major projects together.

Today one of the most important tools for strengthening and developing the cultural ties, friendly relations and cooperation between our nations is the organisation of joint cultural events, exhibitions, forums, festivals and creative competitions. Belarus and Kazakhstan Culture Days have become a good tradition. The Days of Culture of Belarus in Kazakhstan were well organised in 2014 and this year it is planned to hold Days of Culture of Kazakhstan in our country.

The organisation of such large-scale events raises interest and respect abroad, while the creativity of Belarusian and Kazakh artists helps strengthen friendship and promotes the rich and unique cultures of our countries.

**Could you describe the volume of bilateral trade-economic relations during the past four or five years, as well as the key spheres of the cooperation?**

In the context of the global crisis, the trade turnover between Belarus and Kazakhstan reached a historic high and amounted to \$1.17 billion in 2014; the general growth composed 22.9 percent in comparison to 2013. The Belarusian exports to Kazakhstan amounted to \$877.6 million and have increased by 0.8 percent, while imports from Kazakhstan composed \$293.8 million and have increased by 3.6 times. Compared to 2007, foreign trade turnover between the two countries increased by 2.3 times.

### The dynamics of trade between Belarus and Kazakhstan

Year	Goods turnover	Export	Import
2007	513.0	361.3	151.7
2008	537.0	365.2	171.8
2009	388.3	313.4	74.9
2010	870.6	464.8	405.8
2011	807.6	674.0	133.6
2012	924.8	805.9	118.9
2013	952.8	870.4	82.4
2014	1,171.4	877.6	293.8

\* Millions of U.S. dollars

Belarusian products for export in 2014 were mostly oil products (\$88.5 million or 10.1 percent of total exports), tractors and truck tractors (\$76.9 million or 8.8 percent), milk and dairy products (\$68.5 million or 7.8 percent), trucks (\$59.5

million or 6.8 per cent), furniture (\$51.8 million or 5.9 percent), machinery and equipment for harvesting and threshing (\$44.4 million or 5.1 percent), tires (\$39.7 million or 4.5 per cent), sugar (\$38.4 million or 4.4 percent), meat products (\$20.7 million or 2.4 percent), railway freight cars (\$19.5 million or 2.2 percent), fresh fruits (\$18.2 million or 2.1 per cent) and pharmaceuticals (\$16.8 million or 1.9 percent).

Investment cooperation has been actively developing in 2014; Kazakhstan has invested \$101.7 million in Belarus, including direct investments totalling \$4.2 million in 2014, and Belarus has invested \$117.3 million in Kazakhstan, including direct investments in the amount of \$107.2 million.

In the field of industrial cooperation 13 joint assembly plants have been established in Kazakhstan: BelAZ quarry and mine equipment and MAZ tractors, forage and grain harvesters, freight lifts, special fire and municipal vehicles and excavators. The project on the creation of the Belarusian-Kazakh Industrial and Technological Park of agricultural and municipal vehicles is under realisation now. This project will help establish a joint venture for the production of MT3 Bobruiskagromash tractors, MAZ municipal vehicles, Amkodor road-building equipment, Lidselmash agricultural machinery and Gomselmash combine harvesters.

**Could you name some positive and negative aspects of the Eurasian Economic Union?**

With the creation of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), Belarus and Kazakhstan have reached a new level of bilateral relations.

The Eurasian Economic Union is aimed at creating conditions for sustainable economic development of its member states and improving living standards. I would mention the fact that among its main advantages, the EAEU provides a free movement of goods, services, capital and labour and helps to coordinate a coherent and unified economic policy.

From Jan.1, Belarus took over the presidency of the Supreme Eurasian Economic Council, Eurasian Intergovernmental Council and the Council of the Eurasian Economic Commission. Belarus has already outlined its priorities, such as assistance in promotion of the four fundamental economic freedoms

of the union, the total abolition of exemptions and restrictions in the movement of goods, common industrial and agricultural policies and improving the efficiency of the Eurasian Economic Commission.

Speaking about negative factors, I would single out the presence of the exceptions and limitations in the union that significantly impede an economic integration process. We still have a long and difficult path to go in order to develop the union. A comprehensive modernisation of industrial capacity should take place. Moreover, we have to increase the cooperation between our companies and the competitiveness of national economies in the framework of the global economy.

**Are you expecting any Belarusian high officials to come to Astana this year? Maybe some cultural events are going to be organised?**

A lot of events will take place in the framework of the political and economic agenda this year. First of all, we expect the President of Belarus and the President of the Russian Federation, who were invited by Nursultan Nazarbayev to come in the near future [March 12-13].

The most important bilateral political event that is planned for 2015 is an official visit of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan to the Republic of Belarus. Because of the chairmanship of the Republic of Kazakhstan in the CIS this year, Kazakhstan will hold several meetings of the Council of Heads of State and Government of the CIS. Kazakhstan will also organise the Supreme Eurasian Economic Council and the Eurasian Intergovernmental Council meetings as a member state of the Eurasian Economic Union.

The year 2015 is the year of the 70th anniversary of the Great Patriotic War (World War II). The event is extremely important and is truly a milestone. First of all, it is our common history; it is the memory of the combat brotherhood, unparalleled courage and heroism of soldiers of all nationalities who gave their own lives fighting for the freedom and independence of our countries. The Great Victory unites and will continue uniting our countries and nations. As we know, a commemorative medal titled 70 Years of Victory in the Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945 has been approved. This award will be given to the veterans of the Great Patriotic War of 1941-

1945, as well as to others within the CIS member states. The award ceremonies in Belarus and Kazakhstan and other CIS countries have already begun.

The celebration programme of the 70th anniversary of Victory in the Great Patriotic War of the CIS states has been approved. According to this programme, the heads of CIS states will hold speeches and military parades will take place in the capitals and cities for the heroes, as well as rewarding and honouring ceremonies for veterans.

During the celebrations, participants will be able to use the international and long-distance telephone service for free. Also, they will be entitled to travel on all types of transport (except taxis) in the territory of the CIS for free.

A number of joint Belarusian-Kazakh projects are going to be implemented. In particular, numerous archive documents about the participation of the natives of Kazakhstan in the partisan movement in Belarus have been revealed and now a joint scientific publication is anticipated.

Within the framework of agreements and memorandum on cooperation between museums of Belarus and Kazakhstan, several exhibitions will be organised. In May 2015, the exhibition "The harsh, military, simple ..." will be held in Astana at the National Museum of the Republic of Kazakhstan. These collections will be presented by the National History Museum of Belarus.

Numerous Belarusian ethnic organisations represented in Kazakhstan by 13 ethno-cultural associations will all have opportunities for the preservation and enhancement of the Belarusian language and culture in Kazakhstan and are actively involved in the conduct and organisation of various events dedicated to the 20th anniversary of the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan.

We are very pleased to realise that Belarus and Kazakhstan have friendly strategic relations and that both countries are firmly aimed at further close cooperation across the whole spectrum of issues included in the bilateral agenda. I am confident that our relations will continue developing on the basis of the strong friendship, mutual respect, understanding and trust between the peoples of Belarus and Kazakhstan.

## Kazakh, Iranian Navies to Strengthen Cooperation



By Kseniya Voronina

A delegation from the Islamic Republic of Iran headed by General in Chief of the Iranian Naval Forces Rear Admiral Habibollah Sayyari made an official visit to Astana on March 2, reported the press service of the Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

"Today's visit by Rear Admiral Sayyari is another step in strengthening cooperation between the naval forces of Kazakhstan and Iran," said the Chief of the Naval Forces of Kazakhstan Rear Admiral Zhandarbek Zhanzakov.

Iranian Rear Admiral Sayyari thanked his hosts for their warm welcome.

"Our countries are influential and powerful states in their regions. Kazakhstan and Iran are neighbours across the Caspian Sea. Therefore, our cooperation is very important. In addition to providing security in the region, we are interested in cooperation in various fields of

maritime affairs. In particular, the training and exchange of students, cadets and teachers, the manufacture and repair of military equipment, joint workshops and a lot more," Sayyari said.

Iran's navy commander stayed in Kazakhstan until March 6. During this time, Iranian defence officials were to visit Kazakhstan Engineering and give a lecture to the students of the National Defence University. Then, the Iranian delegation travelled to Aktau, where they were planning to visit two military units and a training centre as well as board a rocket-artillery ship of the Kazakh Navy.

"This is a reciprocal visit. In the period from October 28 to October 31, 2013 Chief of the Naval Forces of the Republic of Kazakhstan Rear Admiral Zhandarbek Zhanzakov visited the Islamic Republic of Iran, visited the Naval University named after Khomeini and the port of Bandar Abbas," stated the press service release.

## Adaptability, Heritage, Travel Guide Local Chef

By Michelle Witte

ASTANA – Executive Chef Benoit Letellier, who comes to Astana's Marriott Hotel from France via the Caribbean, Southeast Asia and Africa, has been blending his French heritage and his Asian experiences with local ingredients and Kazakh dining culture over his four years in the country.

"I didn't know about Kazakhstan when I arrived," Benoit said in an interview on Feb. 18. "But I adapted, I used my background of moving quite a bit in different countries."

He joined the Marriott team for the challenge of opening a new hotel, he said. Now, a year and a half into his work here, the Marriott's menus definitely reflects him and some of the food of his childhood. "We are all looking for our childhood, because it's a sweet time of our life, with no worries, no responsibilities. And all these good memories are associated with the food we ate in our childhood."

Vegetables are very important to Benoit, and even during Astana's long winter, the Marriott's Aroma Restaurant showcases root vegetables, squashes, pumpkins. The French influence there is also strong.

"I do a couple dishes with foie gras. Especially now, during the winter, I put more than a few dishes that are French, like salmon with sorrel sauce, chicken in red wine, cassoulet ... all these earthy dishes, to keep you warm," the chef said. "This is like my roots, my origins, like when my grandmother was cooking rabbit with mustard – we have this on



the menu! – my childhood, if you want, my family dishes."

In the Vista Bar & Lounge, Benoit gets to highlight another side of his personality: what he learned in Asia. There, he said, he offers modern, creative, lighter food and lots of shared plates with an Asian influence. "I loved Asia," he said. "Asia was a great period of learning and discovery for me, because the whole process of cooking is completely different from Europe."

Moving around the world has influenced him a lot, personally and professionally, he said. "I had to open my mind to different cultures, to different people, different ways of life."

He's also observed different cultures of eating around the globe and learned to adapt to them. "Every culture is different and every culture has its traditions about the dining experience," Benoit said. "For me, not working in the CIS countries before, I learned that the table is important."

"[Here], when you invite people, you don't invite people to an empty table," the chef explained. "The table must be full – full of fruit, full of

salads, it must be full. You cannot ask people to sit down at an empty table." In Europe, this is different, he noted – guests may sit at a table and wait for the food to arrive. But in Kazakhstan, people might be offended to arrive at a major event to see no food out. "So yes, you have to adapt your cooking to what people want and need to have. ... All dining experiences are different."

Some adaptations are harder than others, however. In Kazakhstan, as everywhere, the chef says his two biggest challenges are supplying and staffing. "Staffing is the easiest of the two, because you can teach people if they are willing. It's not so hard to teach people." But finding supplies in Astana, with its long winters and its developing transportation network, is a challenge for all chefs.

"Definitely you have to adapt yourself," he said. And while it can be fun up to a point, it can also become frustrating, and Benoit says he has seen a lot of chef turnover in his time in town. "But in general, especially now, I'm not frustrated anymore. I know what's available and I know what to do with what's available." Benoit tries to use as many local products as possible, and says he's pleased at seeing the variety of locally-grown produce increasing.

With the rise of the celebrity chef and cooking TV shows, Benoit says he's encountering more and more young people in Kazakhstan who want to be professional chefs. "It's easier when you have somebody coming and they want to be a professional chef," he said. "They want to learn, and that makes it easier for you to teach."

The local mentality about ser-

vice staff, however, still needs to develop, in his opinion. "This is a challenge that we are all facing," he said. "There is a mentality here that [service jobs] are not professional jobs," he said. Professional waiters are normal in many other countries, he said, and waiters can advance to become managers and more. "[Around the world], hospitality is a real profession. And this we need to emphasise – that there is a career in this."

Changing menus for different seasons and different events give the Marriott kitchen staff a chance to play and learn, he said. Astana Marriott has been creating new menus for different countries' national days – including Malaysia, Germany, the Czech Republic and Thailand so far. "For me, as a teaching process for my staff, it's very important," Benoit commented. "They get a chance to learn something new. ... It's more exciting when you're doing a big banquet with completely different things on the table."

Coming up, the chef will have an opportunity to showcase his own heritage. The French Ministry of Foreign Affairs is supporting and organising a global French dining experience, Benoit said. More than 1,000 French chefs around the world, Letellier among them, will organise a six-course plated French menu, paired with French wine. "We are going to cook some frog legs, some foie gras, veal, monkfish – and snails as well, I have snails!"

But it's not only about the food – it's about the entire French dining experience, the chef said.

The event, for which anyone can book a table, is set for March 19.

# Nation&Capital

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 11, 2015

**CULTURE**

American Band Break of Reality Rock Like They Mean it

B3

**SOCIETY**

Two New Almaty Metro Stations to Open in Spring

B5

**SPORTS**

Barys and Avangard Poised for Decisive Match in KHL Playoffs

B7

## National Nauryz Celebration to Be Held in Almaty Central Park from March 22 – 25

By Julia Rutz

To celebrate Nauryz, one of the greatest holidays in Kazakhstan, Almaty officials have decided to change the usual festival location this year and organise the nation's celebration in the city central park. Instead of reveling in the central squares, locals and guests of Almaty will be transported by special busses to the park, where the concert and entertainment programme will be organised, said Almaty TV. The location of the bus stations and ticket prices will be announced this month.

All future celebrations will be organised in the central park as well, according to the Almaty city akimat (administration).

"We need to think about making the celebration programme interesting and lively. We will also try our best not to let the limited budget affect the quality of the event. We will continue attracting partners, various companies and organisations, which expressed their interest in Nauryz celebrations in order to consider creative projects and implement the most interesting of them," said Kairat Kulbayev, head of the Department of Culture.

Nauryz celebrations will kick off at 10 a.m., March 22. The city central park will offer different



The nation prepares to celebrate one of the most colourful holidays, the Nauryz, on March 20-25.

entertainment zones for traditional Kazakh games and sporting

competitions, platforms for concerts and food zones.

Festive events will be held in all eight districts of the southern cap-

ital. The gala in the Alatau district will be organised on the square

in front of the Alatau cinema and concert hall, while people in the Almaty and Bostandyk districts will celebrate in the MEGA and MEGA PARK shopping malls. The Auezov district will organise events at the Turar Ryskulov Kazakh Economic University stadium, whereas the Zhetisu district anticipates celebrations will be held in Ainabulak Park. In the Medeu district, festivities will take place on the square in front of the Palace of Students and in the Turksib district, holiday activities will be organised in Saken Seifullin Park. Nauryzbai, the youngest district of the city, will celebrate Nauryz on the grounds of School No. 192.

This year's festivities will be dedicated to the 550th anniversary of the Kazakh Khanate, so the entrance to the park will be stylised as Khan's possession and various performances will take place there.

Nauryz, which marks the beginning of the spring New Year, is a very important holiday for Kazakhs and was celebrated by people in Persia and nomads in Central Asia from ancient times. The holiday symbolises the festival of wealth, happiness and love, an opportunity for people to forgive one another and make a wish to leave all animosity behind and start the New Year with good intentions.

## Kazakhstan Beats Italy, Advances to Davis Cup Quarter Finals

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – The Kazakhstan Davis Cup team beat Italy 3:2 in team competition on March 6-8 at Astana's National Tennis Centre to advance to the Davis Cup quarterfinals.

Kazakhstan's number one player Mikhail Kukushkin beat Italy's Andreas Seppi in three sets, 7:6 (8), 6:0, 6:4, of the fourth match on the hardcourts of the tennis centre to tie the team score at 2:2 on March 8.

Kukushkin gave Seppi only one break opportunity in the match and converted five of the 10 chances offered him by Seppi. Seppi was let down by 55 unforced errors. Kukushkin had just 28 errors, according to ABC News.

"I did it today. And my hits were very good. I didn't make any mistakes in the most [important points in the match]," Kukushkin told the Tennis Federation of Kazakhstan.

Team Captain Dias Doskarayev assigned Alexander Nedovyesov to the play-off to break the 2:2 team tie. Nedovyesov beat Fabio Fognini, the 22nd ranked player in the world, in an epic three hour and 41-minute, five-set match 7:6(5), 3:6, 4:6, 6:3, 7:5. Nedovyesov had 18 aces in the match, reported the Tennis Federation of Kazakhstan.

Continued on Page B7



Mikhail Kukushkin of Kazakhstan beats Italy's Andreas Seppi on March 8 in Astana.

## Iranians Have Adapted Well to New Home in Kazakhstan, Says Community Leader

By Dmitry Lee

The first wave of Iranian migration to Kazakh territories began in the early 19th century, as many individuals travelled to a different country in search of work. The second resettlement came in the 1930s, when the great famine forced thousands of peasants to bring livestock for sale and many remained in the country permanently. In an interview with The Astana Times, the President of the

Iranian National Cultural Centre in Shymkent Nurisbek Kapar-Pur told the story of the third echelon of settlers and his personal saga that made him a proud citizen of Kazakhstan.

"It is well known that the northern part of Iran had been [heavily populated by Azerbaijanis]. After World War II, the Soviet Union had intentions to separate that part and manipulate Azerbaijan, the country that belonged to the Soviet Union at the time, to influ-

ence northern Iran," Kapar-Pur explained.

Entwined in political games between Iranian and Soviet military currents, a detachment of about 2,000 Iranian soldiers was betrayed by their commanding officers who sought to overthrow the government. When they were exposed, the soldiers fled to the territory of modern Kazakhstan to avoid unfair persecution in their home country. One of Kapar-Pur's forefathers was among those soldiers.

"Without the basic knowledge of the country, without understanding the mentality of the local people and without the ability to speak Russian, Kazakh or Azerbaijani, these young Iranians had to adapt to their new home," he said.

Like many other nationalities which were deported and repressed by Stalin's authoritative rule, Iranians have managed to thrive to this day, but not without the help of the local population.

Continued on Page B2

## Almaty Begins 2015 as Capital of Islamic Culture

By Danna Buzepzhanova

Almaty's year as the capital of Islamic culture began on Feb. 24 with an international conference, the Almaty mayor's office said on its official website.

Opening the conference, Akim (Mayor) Akhmetzhan Yessimov stressed the significance of the event and read out a congratulatory telegramme on behalf of President Nursultan Nazarbayev.

"It is symbolic that Almaty has been named the capital of Islamic culture for 2015, the same year Kazakhstan is celebrating its 20th year of membership in the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation. All these

years, Kazakhstan has been an active advocate for strengthening relations with Muslim countries and building a platform of common interests," the telegramme read.

"It is obvious that the active revival and development of traditional humanitarian ties among our countries in the fields of culture, science and education provides a solid foundation for successful long-term cooperation," Nazarbayev wrote. The Capital of Islamic Culture initiative aim to maximise cultural exchange, further the development of humanitarian relations and deepen cooperation among OIC member-states."

Continued on Page B3

**THINGS TO WATCH MARCH**

<b>ASTANA STATE CIRCUS</b>
<i>March 14 - April at 4 p.m.</i> Royal Water Circus
<b>GORKY STATE THEATRE</b>
<i>March 14 at 6 p.m.</i> Duck Hunting, Spectacle
<b>PALACE OF PEACE AND HARMONY</b>
<i>March 19 at 7:30 p.m.</i> Romeo and Juliette, Musical
<i>March 20 at 7:30 p.m.</i> Three Musketeers, Musical
<b>NATIONAL PAINTING GALLERY</b>
<i>March 21 at 7 p.m.</i> Chicago, Musical
<b>KORME EXHIBITION CENTRE</b>
<i>March 26 at 10:30 a.m.</i> Sulu Expo

## PEOPLE

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 11, 2015

## Iranians Have Adapted Well to New Home in Kazakhstan, Says Community Leader



Nurisbek Kapar-Pur

Continued from Page B1

“The Kazakhs welcomed [the soldiers]. They were very hospitable; they took them into their homes, two or three persons per family, so the local population didn’t let them die. Of course Iranians had to work to survive and without the language they took all the heavy labour jobs, construction, low-paying jobs. People sympathised with them for being betrayed by the government and for

being separated from their families back home in Iran. The soldiers married women of other nationalities; they had no choice, so most Iranian families are mixed. Today, there are about 5,000 Iranians in Kazakhstan according to our data as of 2013. But of course as times progressed, many Iranians changed the nationality on their passports to make their lives easier in Soviet times, because back then it was hard for them to simply get a job and make a living,” said Kapar-Pur.

According to Kapar-Pur, who has served as president of the centre for more than 14 years, Iranians living in Kazakhstan were not allowed to keep in touch with their families until about the 1960s. In the 1980s, they were finally permitted to travel to Iran to visit their families. With the help of the Iranian Embassy in Kazakhstan, no issues currently exist for travel to and from the country. The centre was established in 1997 and the local Iranian community and the embassy have enjoyed close relations.

“So far, groups of 32 and then 41 people have travelled to Iran with the support of the embassy [of Iran in Kazakhstan]. [The embassy] helped with airfare, offering tickets at half price, accommodations in Iran and some other arrangements. Together with the embassy, we also organise numerous art exhibitions; as you probably know Iranians are craftsmen specialising in fields, such as wood and metal masonry. Usually they hold such exhibitions in Astana and Almaty, but they contact us first for guidance and assistance. Also for Nauryz, they organise a trip of an Iranian folk-

lore band. The band performs for free in Astana, Almaty and Shymkent and shares Iranian culture with Kazakhstan. They also bring items like Iranian souvenirs and arts. We also have Sunday classes. The embassy helps us with litera-

ture and dictionaries,” said the Iranian community leader.

“I want to be completely frank with you; [living in Kazakhstan] is perfectly suitable for me,” Kapar-Pur said. “My children grew up here, they are citizens of Ka-

zakhstan. I have five children and they all have higher educations and are all married now. My father had nine children and he always was open-minded when it came to marrying other nationalities; that’s why I [am glad] to admit that our family is a little international club. They are all successfully working and we are all living in harmony and peace. Nationality has nothing to do with success; if one wants to be successful – go out and work hard. There is no easy life, even for an Iranian in Iran!”



## We Are All the APK, Jewish Cultural Centre Founder Says

By Yelena Brusilovskaya

Alexander Baron was behind the creation of the ethnic cultural centres in Kazakhstan, so he can rightfully say that the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan (APK) is a significant part of his life. Baron continues to work actively in the APK through his chairmanship of the Mitzvah Association of Jewish national organisations of Kazakhstan.

**Could you tell what brought you to the national cultural centres? As I understand it, your first career was medicine.**

It all started in the 1990s, when four ethnic cultural centres were registered in Almaty, including the Jewish centre, Shalom. I came into this movement in late 1991 and for the first 10 years worked as a volunteer, combining this work with my duties at the hospital, where I worked as a medical rescuer.

On May 30, 1992, we registered the national Jewish organisation that took over the mission of building Jewish cultural centres in every major city of Kazakhstan. In 1993 – 1994 we achieved our goal and such centres were opened. I always emphasise the fact that our activities never met any opposition; no one came and asked, “What are you doing here?” It means that the state has given the greatest gift to these national centres: it gave them independence.

However, the most important for us was 1995, when President Nursultan Nazarbayev gathered the leaders of

all ethnic cultural centres. I remember those meetings very well; we gathered a few times and the President was with us. At that time, Nazarbayev put forward the idea of creating a special organisation, which would unite all the national and cultural centres in the country.

It was a very emotional discussion. There were various suggestions of what the organisation should be like. With one voice, it was decided that it should be a representative of the people, but at the

tant that the President himself became the head of the organisation, thus marking its high level and significance in the life of the country. By the way, it helped us greatly in our work. Today we hold meetings with the President once a year. Important issues are discussed there.

For the past 20 years, we have done a lot. The President said to us, please, build our new country. We accepted his words with enthusiasm and joy, believe me.



Alexander Baron

same time, the assembly should not be a legislative body like a parliament; rather, it should be the people’s voice. Not accidentally, Nazarbayev said, “The Assembly is all of us, citizens of Kazakhstan.” Truly, through interacting with each other, learning from each other, we are living the full life of our state.

In addition, it is extremely impor-

tant that there is some primitive view that ethnic centres are about songs and dances, although their purposes are much deeper and far more serious.

**Do the centres mean that different ethnic groups within Kazakhstan don’t want to be part of the larger state, but are trying to cre-**

**ate a piece of their ethnic homeland in the country?**

No way! We have always understood that we all live in one state. We have the same interests, even though we pray in different places. State-building and Kazakhstan’s well-being are extremely important to us. In this regard, we have a lot of projects. For example, we launched a project called the Garland of Dance in Almaty. We invited all the ethnic cultural centres to take part in it. Each community represented not only their own culture, but other nationalities as well. It turned into a big celebration, which showed the youth that the only way to exist together is to love each other, understand and persevere.

Also, we are planning to open a camp of interfaith tolerance for children who are brought up in families of different faiths. Basically, we are engaged in youth issues very seriously, paying particular attention to promoting patriotism.

Yes, it is especially important now, when we see tragedies occurring through young people being manipulated.

You are right, these are important ideological tasks, such as an education of love for the motherland. We are trying to withdraw from the shadow of formalism, so the kids understand why it is important. Especially we, Jews, like no one else, know how important it is to live in a state that does not offend you.

A few years ago, we created special Young Family Clubs, where

every summer we organise trips to Kapshagai. There, young families can get acquainted with each other, play games, et cetera. The effect of these trips is amazing! All the families begin to make friends – not only adults, but children as well. By the way, 21 babies were born to couples from our centre in Almaty in 2013 and 19 were born the year before. Four couples met in our centre.

**What do you consider your main achievement over the years?**

Our main achievement is our activities. For example, we have an enormous library in our centre. I suppose it is the best ethnic library not only in Kazakhstan, but in all of Central Asia. We have 15,000 books and other printed materials, a lot of digital information, music, films, a social library for the visually impaired, audio books.

**Who can use it?**

It is open to all visitors like any other library. In addition, we study the history of the Jewish community in Kazakhstan. We have already held six international conferences and published 13 books.

**Are those studies more about the fate of the Jewish people in Kazakhstan?**

Not only the Jewish people – we are studying the history of Kazakhstan during the periods of the deportation of peoples and evacuation of refugees, without emphasising nationality. This is our common history. And, of course,

particularly, we trace the history of the emergence of the Jewish ethnic groups in Kazakhstan.

**You worked as deputy chairman of the APK. What were your main responsibilities?**

All the work of the APK aims to unite the people of Kazakhstan, make them monolithic, so there are no gaps of ignorance left. Think, what scares you in a stranger? Ignorance of what you can expect from him or her. Whereas when you know that you are surrounded by friendly-minded people, it destroys the wall of distrust. It is very important that such work is held among the people in the cities and small towns.

Last summer, I had a chance to be a part of the delegation of the APK that paid an official visit to the United States. Besides me, there were also members of the Mazhilis of Parliament, such as Yegor Kappel, who represented the German Centre, and Yuri Timoshenko, head of the Ukrainian Centre. In Washington we held meetings at the White House and the State Department, where we explained that 2015 would be the Year of the Assembly of People of Kazakhstan.

I told them that Kazakhstan is a country that allows each ethnic group to live its national life, and at the same time it is a single state, a leader in Central Asia and beyond. Therefore, we try to do everything to make our Kazakhstan stronger from year to year.

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## CULTURE

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 11, 2015

## American Band Break of Reality Rock Like They Mean It

By Lyazzat Shatayeva

ASTANA – The spring has started with a fresh look at classical music and rock for many music lovers, as the American cello rock band Break of Reality gave concerts in four major cities of Kazakhstan as part of their Central Asian tour.

The band's performances, organised by the U.S. Embassy and American Music Abroad, have created a real buzz, stirring interest among audiences of different ages with various musical tastes, ranging from younger rock listeners to older classical music fans. The exuberant sound of three cellos and drums has been equally well received in Almaty, Shymkent, Astana and Atyrau, with tickets sold out for all venues days before the shows.

The concerts featured a Bach cello arrangement, some of the original tracks from the band's latest and most acclaimed album, "TEN," and collaborations with local Kazakh musicians. One of the highlights of the shows was a rendition of the theme song to the HBO television series Game of Thrones, which appeared in Huffington Post and earned wider fame for the group with over six million views on Youtube. An electrifying cover of the Tool's "Lateralus" was the dramatic climax of the concerts



From left to right, Meta Weiss, Patrick Laird, Andrew Janss and Ivan Trevino of Break of Reality.

in Astana, which ended with standing ovations.

Break of Reality consists of a percussionist, Ivan Trevino, and three cellists: co-founder and permanent member Patrick Laird and guest artists Andrew Janss and Meta Weiss. The group is associated with such music genres as alt-classical, cello rock and indie-classical; however, the band members say that even they are not sure what genre they fall into. "We're classically trained musicians, but also understand and love the raw qualities of rock; this dichotomy is very clear in our sound," says the group founder, Ivan Trevino, in this regard.

Before the concert in Astana,

Trevino was able to sit down with The Astana Times for a short interview.

**Tell us the brief history of the band.**

It was almost eleven years ago at a music conservatory at university [the Eastman School of Music, Rochester, New York]. We started the band: me and Patrick [Laird]. We loved rock music. At a conservatory nobody really studies rock music, so we started our band for fun, and it just started growing and growing and now it's become our career.

How has your music evolved since you first started playing together?

Patrick and I are always playing with the band. Sometimes the musicians around us change, depending on what their schedule is. We play with really great cellists. This allows us to play more concerts. We always get to work with different people and it stays really fresh. So it has evolved in that way. And also, we've taken our classical roots and we've really morphed it with our rock sound. When we first started, it was super rock – really loud most of the time. Now we really value our classical training and we try to portray that just as much the rock stuff that we do.

**Tell us about your latest album, "TEN."**

The album is really diverse, it's definitely the album that we are most proud of. Patrick wrote a lot of the tracks and I helped with a few as well. Two of my favourite pieces from the album are "Helix" and "Star," which we will play tonight. "Helix" is a loud rock song with a lot of mixed metres, heavy drums and cellos. Most of our songs are dark, but there is one that stands separately and that is "Star," that Patrick wrote for his wife. This song is like a ray of sunshine. What's nice about our band is that we self-release all of our music, so we don't have a record label. That allows us to release, mix and record it the way we want. The album has done really great. We get

millions of plays on internet radio, and Youtube helps us out.

**What has been the band's biggest challenge?**

Playing classical instruments and having no singer can be a tricky thing to market. I'm not sure if our music is radio-friendly. Next to Taylor Swift's music, it might not fit too well. At the same time, that's the thing that helped us reach new people. It's like a Catch-22. We've had member changes in the past that have also been difficult. But those kind of trials have inspired albums and songs. Now that we have played for 10 years, the trajectory is going up and there are a lot more good moments like being here and travelling. So we are very fortunate to be able to do what we do as musicians.

**What are the highlights of this tour?**

It's been a great experience since it's not only us teaching people about American music but also us learning about other kinds of music. For example, the dombra is an amazing instrument I had never heard before and I actually was able to collaborate with some dombra players in Shymkent. We want to further collaborate with a musician whom we met in Almaty named Galymzhan Moldanazar. He is an awesome musician. We would like to have him fly to the

U.S. and do a record together, maybe cover one of his songs or arrange one of his songs and have him sing it with us. That would be the follow-through for this visit so that we can keep the momentum going.

I'm also really glad to be here, the native country of Gennady Golovkin, my favourite boxer. I've seen all of his recent fights ever since he started fighting on HBO.

**What was the local audience's reaction to your playing?**

Response here has been great. The audiences have been even more excited than what we are used to. Since we don't play much here, people are more appreciative. I feel like people here appreciate the arts a lot; that may be a part of culture and history.

**What are your plans for the near future?**

We toured Turkmenistan before this, and next is Azerbaijan. We also have shows scheduled for this spring in Chicago and New York City. We have a tour in Brazil this summer. We are collaborating with professional orchestras there. Patrick composed a concerto for Break of Reality in full orchestra. So we will be performing that, and it will be way different than what we are doing here. And we would like to come back here and maybe play an even bigger concert.

## Almaty Begins 2015 as Capital of Islamic Culture

Continued from Page B1

"The honorary title of Capital of Islamic Culture emphasises historical continuity and gives new momentum and life to Islamic spiritual life in Almaty," the telegramme stated.

During the conference, participants discussed international integration efforts and their challenges, historical and cultural analysis of the Islamic World today and opportunities for multilateral cultural cooperation.

The ministers of culture from Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) member states, representatives of the Directorate General of ISESCO (Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation), international organisations and members of the clergy attended the event.

"We expect that by the end of the conference, a dialogue between different nationalities will have taken place. We want people to know more about Islamic culture. Our organisation demonstrates a true image of Islam and Islamic culture to all ISESCO member states," ISESCO Director General Alibaba Babayev said.

Kazakhstan successfully chaired in the OIC council of foreign ministers in 2011-2012. Despite facing complicated geopolitical conditions and political transformations, particularly in the Middle East,

Kazakhstan, as chairman, helped solve pressing international issues. Astana made every effort to contribute to Palestine's efforts to acquire UN membership and also organised the effort to gather \$500 million in humanitarian donations for Somalia through an OIC campaign. Kazakhstan offered some new ideas for OIC efforts, includ-



Representatives of different religious groups at the Almaty Capital of Islamic Culture Event.

ing the creation of an OIC Islamic Organisation of Food Security. During Kazakhstan's chairmanship, the organisation was renamed from the Organisation of the Islamic Conference to the Organisation for Islamic Cooperation, reflecting its intentions to push its positions on various global policy efforts.

It was no accident then that Almaty was chosen to serve as

the centre of Islamic culture for 2015. This opinion is also shared by Vice-Minister of Culture and Sport Galym Akhmediarov, who underlined that the event also coincided with the celebration of the 550th anniversary of the Kazakh Khanate.

"Kazakhstan is respected abroad; our country is a known platform

of interfaith unity and harmony. Islam and culture are inseparable and religion is an integral part of any secular society. The state pays attention to relations between different religions. It is no accident that Almaty was chosen as this year's Islamic culture capital. The city has more than 300 cultural institutions and 115 cultural monuments," he added.

Famous Kazakhstan poet and

public figure Olzhas Suleimenov stated: "Many politicians have started talking about the fact that this will be a time of clashes between Eastern and Western civilisations, namely between the Islamic and Christian worlds. When Kazakhstan made a proposal to declare the year of rapprochement of cultures and peoples, UNESCO gave its support and such a year took place in 2010. When 2010 passed, we made a proposal to extend it. Then the question to extend it for a decade was raised. The new generation should know why these cultures sometimes suffer from a lack of harmony with each other. When we learn why exactly, we will be able to fix the problem."

Abdulaziz Othman Atvaydzhi, Director General of ISESCO also emphasised that "in honouring Almaty as the capital of Islamic culture, ISESCO is very proud to present this beautiful historic city, located in the high mountains of the Trans-Ili Alatau. All year, the city will host many activities that are designed to increase cultural tourism. I appreciate the organisers' efforts, I want to thank everyone for their participation in the conference and wish you success and fruitful work."

The actual ceremonial presentation of the keys to the new capital of Islamic culture took place in the capital of Kyrgyzstan, Bishkek, in January.

## Trumpeter's Journey Takes him From Wales to Astana Opera

By Yelden Sarybay

ASTANA – Astana has been home to a globetrotting musician for the past two years, and Astana Opera for one. Originally from northwest Wales, Ross Clarke came to the capital of Kazakhstan on the recommendation of a good friend to work at Haileybury Astana, where he conducted the international choir. Two years later, he is a full-time member of the Astana Opera.

Prior to moving here, Clarke studied at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama in London and also spent six months in Berlin studying under Konradin Groth at the University of Arts. He was a semi-finalist in the Texaco Young Musician of Wales competition in 2005 and a quarterfinalist in the BBC Young Musician of the Year competition in 2006.

Clarke is also a keen composer and won a class in the National Eisteddfod of Wales in Newport 2004 for a brass fanfare piece. He continues to write music today. Clarke was also a founding member of Eschoir and has sung for his native country with Edward Hallinan at the Millennium Stadium in Cardiff.

In 2013, Clarke formed the Astana Music Society, comprising of a choir and many other ensembles who play across Astana at various events. The Astana Music Society is designed to join local and expat musicians and fans of music.

Two and a half years after moving to Astana, Clarke says he is "very happy here," adding "the food, the people, the weather here are great!"

**How does music you were used to compare with local traditions? Any similarities or anything unusual?**

Folk music is like folk music anywhere. Every place in the world has a unique tradition and sound, and Kazakhstan is no different. The sound of the dombra, and the specific Kazakh rhythm (which is instantly recognisable) are a great complement to the fantastic people and landscape of Kazakhstan. The Kazakh songs are also very beautiful, but nothing beats a Kazakh

orchestra with a huge set of dombras! In our concert on Feb. 27, in the world premiere by Simon Wills [of a piece] written specifically for this concert on two themes, one Welsh, one Kazakh, the Kazakh theme was instantly recognised by some Kazakh audience members.

**Could you tell us about the Welsh weekend festival that you recently organised?**

It all started with the arrival of four Welsh brass players [Rupert Whitehead, Edward Hallinan, Jason Lewis and Oli Hickie] on Feb. 26 to play with me in a brass quintet called Pres Y Ddraig. They absolutely loved it here and they said it was absolutely nothing like what they expected. They felt so welcome by their fellow brass players at [Astana Opera] and by everyone. They also said the food was great, and they couldn't believe how many different types of vodka there were in the supermarket! ...

The concert was a sellout, and I have heard only great things about it!

Then on Feb. 28 came rugby on the river. We accidentally bumped into the Astana Rugby team (who we weren't aware existed) and invited them to join. It was a great game, and one of the Welsh brass players even had the pleasure of attending a Kazakh hospital as he fell on a cone and cut his eyebrow. But with a 90-minute turn around in the hospital, we were back with everyone else enjoying cawl [a traditional Welsh stew], Welsh cakes, Norwegian salmon and mulled wine by the river. ...It was a great weekend and exhausting, but one to remember, and one to welcome in spring in Astana as the snow is gradually melting. Everyone had such a great time and everyone now knows a little bit more about our small, fabulous nation and how rich it is in culture.

Let's see what next year brings ...

**What do you plan to do in the future?**

The future. Well, for now I am here for a while, but who knows? I follow whatever adventure, whichever way it takes me. If a door opens, I will more often than not walk through it ...

## Classic Rock Rocks Kazakh Fans

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – Although Kazakh rock groups aren't very successful in the country and virtually unknown abroad, American and Russian rock music is popular with true fans in some regions of the nation.

Rock fan Aidar Kontorbayev, general director of a transport company, lived 16 years in Russia and has travelled in Europe. A year ago, he opened a rock bar in Astana which is specialised for its fans.

"Rock music is popular in Kazakhstan, but only in some regions; to be more precise, in some cities. I would distinguish Karaganda and Almaty, where a lot of rock fans live. Astana is absolutely not a rock city, because it is a city of officials. I can also say that Astana is really a very young city, which doesn't have its own face and own rock culture yet. In general, rock music isn't as popular as pop music, because pop music is destined for 15-23 year-old young people ... This is the most active and largest part of

the population. They listen to trendy hits, but as for me, pop music has only short-lived songs. Such songs live one month and everybody forgets about them very soon," he said.

Kontorbayev's bar caters to a different crowd, one that appreciates global rock.

"Every month, we invite rock groups from all regions of Kazakhstan and Russia. On March 27, the official tribute to AC/DC will come to our bar." The band comes from Ukraine and has the right, Kontorbayev said, to dress as AC/DC and play all their songs. "They performed in Europe and most importantly, the Nashestvie Russian rock event. AC/DC gave this right to their tribute bands because it doesn't do shows anymore," he said.

Russian rock is popular too, Kontorbayev said, with Smyslovy Galutsinatsii, Kino, Zemfira, Mumiy Troll, DDT and Zhuki among the current favourites. But Kazakh rock hasn't come into its own yet, he said.

"Kazakhstan's rock isn't well developed. Art songs aren't popular in Kazakhstan. Our fans want to lis-

ten to well-known hits. As for me, I don't know a really good rock group in the state. There are no really popular Kazakh rock groups which have climbed to success and are really popular in the former Soviet Union. I really don't know why our rock groups aren't developed."

Most rock fans are men from 27 to 55, Kontorbayev reckons. "I consider that as of today, rock is music for middle-aged people. Young people listen to the music, but it is uncommon," except among subcultures, he said.

Twenty-five-year-old Kristina Stepanova, a professional translator who lives in Ust-Kamenogorsk, is an exception.

"I am fond of Russian and American rock," she said. "Of course, I try to listen to Kazakhstan groups, too. As of today I know two really good Kazakh rock groups – Subkultura and Tishina," she said.

Rock fan Nikita Alexeyev, a 28-year-old dentist, started early.

"I began to listen to rock music as a boy. My parents say that I had a friend and his father was a fan of rock music.

Listening of this music at my friend's home affected me. Maybe it was unwitting when I was a boy, but it is absolutely conscious now, because this music makes sense. I really like the texts of rock songs." He even plays rock guitar in his free time, he said.

Rock has a particular resonance in the post-Soviet world, Kontorbayev thinks.

"Rock music has been popular since the 1960s with the Beatles. After that we had Soviet rock and Russian rock. We lived in that time and this music indicates all the trends and our life. For example, there were periods of change in the 1980s and anxious times in the 1990s. This music saves part of our memories. That is why it is so important and immortal. This music is 100 percent true. Maybe it is sadder than pop music, but it is honest. In general, I am sure that rock music will get its fans for a long time, because young people who don't listen to it now will do it later. Because when you are getting older, you begin to value real music," he said.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 11, 2015

# National Scientific Cardiac Centre Helps Train International Doctors in Heart Implant Procedure

By Marina Parkhomenko

ASTANA – Thirteen experts from Germany, Italy, Serbia, Poland and Turkey are for the first time in Astana to learn how to implant the Heart Mate III, which is produced by the American company Toratec.

The training programme is being held at Astana's National Scientific Cardiac Centre, which was conceived by President Nursultan Nazarbayev. Since 2011, Chairman of the Board of the National Scientific Cardiac Surgery Centre Professor Yuri Pya has been implementing an artificial heart implant programme to help Kazakhstan become a world leader in the field of cardiac surgery.

More than 150 Kazakhstan citizens have already been given a second chance at life with a new heart at the centre. The Heart Mate is a third generation device that has replaced its pre-

vious, less developed analogues. Kazakhstan, being a participant in the research, received implant rights from the manufacturer.

"Since we gathered here, I have had the extraordinary opportunity to witness implants of this third generation life saving device. I admire the professionalism of our Kazakhstan colleagues," a University Hospital of Tübingen (Germany) Professor Christian Schlensak said.

Cardiac surgeons have had the opportunity to witness an implant procedure and ask Professor Pya questions via the internet. It should be noted that presentations of the third generation artificial heart are expected to attract about 300 foreign experts to Astana. Apart from the Heart Mate III, the centre has more than 30 innovative technologies that will be presented through various workshops in the future.

Talking about other achievements at the centre, it should

be mentioned that three hearts were transplanted last week. For the first time, a heart transplant was carried out on a minor, a 17-year-old boy. Since August 2012, 13 operations have been successfully carried out at the centre.

Both artificial and donated heart implants are expensive; this is why these procedures are usually carried out in countries with established economies. The cost of the first operation is 40 million tenge (US\$215,767), the second is 25 million tenge (US\$134,879). Despite today's challenging economic realities, the transplant programmes won't be cancelled as they are part of the social obligations of the state that President Nazarbayev ordered not to be curtailed in a recent round of budget optimisations. Hence, Kazakhstan's citizens will continue to enjoy the opportunity to improve their health through the country's high quality cardiac surgery options.



## Secretary of State Opens Hospital, Visits Key Constituencies in South Kazakhstan

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – Kazakh Secretary of State Gulshara Abdykalikova visited South Kazakhstan Feb. 20, where she opened a new hospital, visited several cultural and educational sites and met with representatives of ethnic and cultural associations and the women's community, reported the Akorda presidential residence press service.

"I wish the personnel of the new hospital good luck in treating children," said Abdykalikova, as she participated in opening a multi-field children's hospital designed for 270 beds in Shymkent. The new building is four times larger than the old one and equipped with up-to-date medical facilities. The hospital was built under the 100 schools, 100 hospitals state programme and is prepared to treat 10,000 children per year, according to Otyrar.kz, a local media outlet.

"The new hospital is distinguished by the location of a surgical block, which is separate. The hospital also has a traumatology centre for emergency care and a small operating room," said, Gaukhar Ukbayeva, the hospital's head doctor, according to Otyrar.kz.

Abdykalikova also met with representatives of the region's ethnic and cultural associations at the Centre of Customs, Traditions and Rituals. The centre is unique in the state, as 20 ethnic and cultural associations operate within it and more than 100 ethnic groups live in the region. The secretary of state emphasised the high social-political value of "Year of the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan," noting the nation's task is to reach every village and every man and wom-

an to show the country's unity to the world, according to Otyrar.kz.

During her visit to Culinary College No. 6, Abdykalikova was presented with the details of the dual education system, which has been implemented at the college. Under the system, 96 percent of the graduates of the college achieved employment in 2014, an increase of 2.2 per cent from 2012. According to zakon.kz, 136 contracts with regional companies were executed under the dual education system.

"This means that the college graduates are in demand," said Abdykalikova, according to zakon.kz.

One of the culinary college's employees also noted that "the [college's] three-floor educational building with gymnasium designed for 900 students, was built at the expense of the regional budget. Formerly, we taught only cooks, candy makers and bakers, but now we teach waiters, barmen and salesmen." The college also plans to begin offering hotel management classes in 2015-2016 to train administrators, assistants, maids, porters and receptionists.

Abdykalikova also visited the regional Russian Drama Theatre and the rebuilt School No. 1, which is named after Russian poet Alexander Pushkin.

The secretary of state concluded her visit by meeting with representatives of the region's women's community to discuss development of demographic policies and women's activities in the implementation of the Kazakhstan 2050 Strategy and the new Nury Zhol economic policy. Abdykalikova also charged the heads of regional state bodies to complete specific tasks.



## Anti-Corruption Programme Seeks to Make Kazakhstan Among World's Least Corrupt Countries Within 10 Years

By Batyrbek Agimbetov

ASTANA – "The government must be accountable to the public and operate both transparently and effectively," Bauyrzhan Baibek, the first deputy chairman of the Nur Otan party said during a recent international round table titled "Prospects for the Expansion of the Right to Access Information, Forms of Social Control and Anti-Corruption in Kazakhstan."

He also stated that the country's citizenry must be given the appropriate legislative infrastructure needed to monitor local executive bodies. In order to make this possible, the ruling party had developed an anti-corruption programme for 2015-2025, Baibek said.

He emphasised that Kazakhstan, which is seeking to enter the top 30 most-developed countries by 2050, is implementing anti-corruption reforms. According to Baibek, civil society and nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) should be actively involved in this process.

"The state is implementing major public service reforms. The number of political officials, or political appointees who have not passed state merit based exams due to lack of testing criteria has decreased by eight times. There is now the professional "A" corps [of civil servants]. These officials are those who passed the test on the [Kazakh Constitution] and seven or eight laws; i.e. we are looking to increase the legal culture of

those making the decisions. They must be able to communicate with the public and speak Kazakh and Russian perfectly, so that they can properly and fully handle citizen requests," Baibek said.

He also said that by 2020, 13 bills pertaining to the implementation of Nur Otan's 2015-2025 anti-corruption programme should be adopted.

Baibek noted that today, corruption can be found in many leading European countries.

"We see that no country has completely overcome corruption, as corruption is changing its face, it is like rust. Even the United Nations (UN) sees corruption as a key obstacle to achieving its Millennium Development Goals," he said.

"Every year, the global economy suffers losses of \$2.6 trillion, or 5 percent of its GDP due to corruption. The 2014 European Anti-Corruption Commission report stated that corruption affects all 28 EU nations. This comes with an annual price tag estimated at about 120 billion euros," he said.

"The [Nur Otan] party has set itself the ambitious goal of ensuring that Kazakhstan enters the 30 least-corrupt countries on the Global Competitiveness Index of the World Economic Forum within 10 years of implementing the programme. We have published the party's financial statements. We have shown everyone that there must be openness," Baibek concluded.

## Demand for Public Housing Increasing in Kazakhstan

By Ainur Kuramysova

Deputy Prime Minister of Kazakhstan Bakytzhan Sagintayev reported recently that the number of Kazakhs seeking public housing has increased.

"In Kazakhstan, more than 300,000 people are standing in line for housing, over 100,000 of those [are part of a vulnerable population], 124,000 people are state employees and civil servants and 43,000 are orphans. And this queue continues to grow. Twenty-nine thousand apartments are planned to be built and purchased from developers in the framework of the Nury Zhol programme. Of these, about 60 percent of the rental units will be commissioned in metropolitan cities: Astana, Almaty, Shymkent, Aktobe and 40 percent in the regional centres, single-industry towns, as well as in supportive rural areas," said Sagintayev at a recent public meeting on the topic.

In the autumn of last year, 286,507 people were reported to be on the waiting list for housing from the municipal housing fund. Of these, 465 are disabled and veterans of World War II, 41,682 are children without parental care, 125,070 are from socially vulnerable segments of the population, 117,456 are state employees, civil servants, soldiers, persons holding public office and 1,834 people are

citizens whose homes are in a state of emergency.

Sagintayev stated that the changes to the country's public housing and development programme came at the urging of Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev.

"Under the programme, priority is given to flats with small areas. The area of one-room apartments will be about 33 square metres. Two-

bedroom apartments will be at least 45 square metres; three-bedroom flats will be at least 62 square metres. The average monthly payment for a lease-purchase apartment of 50 square metres will not exceed 56 thousand tenge (US\$302), and rent without purchase will be no more than 28 thousand tenge (US\$151)," he explained.

The deputy prime minister also

stated that priority in the allocation of the apartments will be given to large families and single-parent families, families with disabled children, repatriates, civil servants and employees of state-financed organisations. At the same time, 50 percent of the housing will be distributed to young families up to 35 years of age and married for at least three years.



Tenants receive keys to their new apartments.

# SOCIETY

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 11, 2015

## Two New Almaty Metro Stations to Open in Spring

By Julia Rutz

In light of the December announcement by Kazakh officials to extend the metro in Almaty, two new stations may be opened to commuters this spring. The city is anticipating the Moscow and Sairan stations, both of which are under construction, although the official opening has been postponed due to weather conditions, according to [tengrinews.kz](http://tengrinews.kz).

"The question of beautification is our main concern now. Basic construction of the Moscow and Sairan stations has been completed. We cannot start planting trees and continue asphaltting till the end of the winter season, so we will start the next construction phase in spring 2015. We expect two stations to be opened in late March

or April, after the completed construction work is accepted," said Aidyn Orazkhanov, head of the metro administration said.

He also described the appearance of the newly-constructed stations. The Moscow station will feature a Russian motif and have a Kremlin Wall. Sairan, which in Kazakh means "joy," will feature designs that highlight the spirit of teenagers.

"We have also scheduled the construction of two other stations, Dostyk and Saryarka. The Dostyk station will be located at the Abai Avenue and Momishuly Street crossing," said Orazkhanov.

The process of land acquisition and house demolition in the construction areas has also affected the deadlines, he added. The exact date when Dostyk and Saryarka

open has not yet been determined, as bargaining with tenants may take additional time.

"Inhabitants and tenants do not always accept the proposed amount of financial compensation to leave the house needed to be demolished. Sometimes we have to cope with lawsuits," explained Orazkhanov.

According to [tengrinews.kz](http://tengrinews.kz), Orazkhanov said the installation of metal detectors was not incorporated into the original draft. Taking into account the underground terrorist attacks that occurred in Moscow and Minsk, however, the decision was made to incorporate preventive measures and put metal detectors into operation at the stations.

"This is a safety measure, I think it won't hurt," concluded the official.



## Alatau Industrial Zone Key to Almaty Anti-Crisis Plan, Says Akim

By Yelden Sarybay

The Almaty anti-crisis programme was presented by Akim (Mayor) Ahmetzhan Yessimov Feb. 19 during a meeting with the public.

Yessimov noted that the optimisation of Almaty's budget to 35 billion tenge (US\$189 million), while increasing revenues, would not affect the volume of the city's social obligations.

The first point in a list of key priorities of the anti-crisis plan is the industrial zone of the Alatau district, according to the akim. Twenty-eight projects worth 230 billion tenge (US\$1.2 billion) in the engineering, construction, light food and pharmaceutical industries are to be realised in its territory within a few years.

"This year, the construction of these projects will create 1,500 jobs. Next year that will be 6,000 jobs. Projects that start running [in the industrial zone] will create 20,000 jobs and provide tax revenue of 7 billion tenge (US\$37.8 million). The first projects will be launched later this year," said the mayor.

The second item is the development of Alatau IT Park. Since 2011, the number of companies operating in the park has doubled. According to the akim, 160 innovative companies worth 10.5 billion tenge (US\$56.7 million) will be established in the near future, creating 2,000 jobs and providing tax revenue of 2.4 billion tenge (US\$13 million).

The third area of anti-crisis measures is legalisation and privatisation. The akim noted that Almaty's special programme will bring to light material resources and facilities and thereby will help to increase tax revenues to the city budget in the future.



"To date, the number of legalised assets is 1,945 in the amount of 24 billion tenge (US\$130 million). The volume of money legalisation in the city was 10 billion tenge (US\$54 million). In 2015, the privatisation and the legalisation program of the city should contribute 6 billion tenge (US\$32.4 million)," said Yessimov.

A fourth measure would be the issuance of municipal bonds. The volume of these bonds was made public in November 2014 and will be worth about 20 billion tenge (US\$108 million). Money raised through these bonds will be spent on housing construction, improving traffic, trade and food security and developing ecological transport.

In 2010, Almaty issued securities worth 13 billion tenge (US\$70.2 million) which were aimed at developing urban projects. According to the mayor, the measure was effective. In particular, he noted the creation of a system of video surveillance on urban roads, which cost 3.4 billion tenge (US\$18.4 million) and brought 12.7 billion tenge (US\$68.6 million) in fines to the city budget.

The fifth point of the anti-crisis programme is strengthening work with government institutions and development funds. The most im-

portant of these is the work with Samruk Kazyna Sovereign Wealth Fund, which in late 2014 concluded a state order memorandum with Almaty for 800 billion tenge (US\$4.3 billion).

The city will also work with Baiterek Holding, having signed agreements worth 10 billion tenge (US\$54 million) for the demolition of shabby housing and construction. In addition, a 4.5 billion tenge (US\$24.3 million) agreement was reached with Damu Entrepreneurship Development Fund for lending to small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) that do not fall under the criteria of other government loan programmes. Two billion tenge (US\$10.8 million) will come from the city administration.

In conclusion, Yessimov noted that significant emphasis would be placed on the development of SMEs, as the sector today provides 66 percent of the revenue to the city budget. To further improve the business climate in the city, the administration recently held a meeting with business people in Almaty and developed a series of legislative amendments that will simplify many tax, infrastructure and customs procedures for entrepreneurs.

## Nazarbayev University Academics Win Grant to Lead Public Policy Workshops in Kazakhstan

By Saltanat Janenova and Aiman Temirova

ASTANA – Academics from the Nazarbayev University Graduate School of Public Policy were involved in leading a three-day workshop in Astana in February in partnership with the Universities of Exeter and Edinburgh from the United Kingdom. Funding for The Learning in Governance and Innovations in Public Services workshop was secured through a grant from the Newton-Al-Farabi Partnership Programme, a new bilateral U.K.-Kazakhstan programme coordinated by Kazakhstan's Science Fund and the British Council.

The forum was aimed at early-career researchers in political science, public policy, management and international relations both from the U.K. and Kazakhstan. It was led by a team of international public policy scholars: Dr. Claire Dunlop and Prof. Claudio Radaelli from the University of Exeter, Dr. Tony Kinder from the University of Edinburgh and Prof. Neil Collins and Dr. Saltanat Janenova from Nazarbayev University. More than 56 researchers and practitioners, including 15 from the U.K. and 46 from Kazakhstan, participated in the symposium.

The workshop focused on two major streams: learning in governance and innovations in public services. The first stream explored regulatory governance

and policymaking as a challenge of learning. Focusing on how, when and from whom policymakers learn is crucial for the effectiveness and legitimacy of all systems of governance. These questions help to highlight the shortfalls of organisations that are often subject to regulatory reforms.

The second stream analysed the application of technologies and innovations in various public service areas, with a particular focus on social and health care, education and integrated services. Good practices from the international experience such as smart housing, e-government and e-learning technologies were explored through the participants' debates and reflections on how to improve services for vulnerable groups of the population.

The Newton-Al-Farabi Partnership Programme, jointly financed by the governments of the U.K. and Kazakhstan, aims to develop existing contacts and build strong, sustainable, systemic relationships in research and innovation. It works with government bodies, research organisations, universities and businesses to support Kazakhstan in achieving its development goals.

Simon Williams, Director of the British Council Kazakhstan, said, "The Newton-Al-Farabi Partnership Programme allows us to use the U.K.'s strength in research and innovation to promote the economic development and social welfare of Kazakh-

stan. I would like to offer my congratulations to the winners of the grant and I wish them all the best for a successful workshop. I hope that this workshop is the start of a long and productive collaboration between the two partner institutions."

Yerkin Tazabekova, acting chair of the Science Fund, added, "Participation in large-scale research projects on strategically-important themes which encourage Kazakhstan researchers to integrate with the international scientific community was one of the main priorities set out by President Nursultan Nazarbayev in his annual address to the people of Kazakhstan."

The Nazarbayev University Graduate School of Public Policy, jointly with the U.K. partners, has produced a key findings document for their institutions' websites and professional blog sites as an example of international collaboration through partnership. The longer-term benefit of the workshop will be the institutional links that Nazarbayev University is developing with the Universities of Exeter and Edinburgh and the workshop participants.

Saltanat Janenova is the co-ordinator of the workshop and an instructor at the Nazarbayev University Graduate School of Public Policy. Aiman Temirova is a teaching assistant at the Nazarbayev University Graduate School of Public Policy.

## TURKSOY Department Opens at Al-Farabi University

By Malika Orazgaliyeva

ASTANA – As part of activities celebrating Almaty as the Capital of Islamic Culture for 2015, the faculty of Oriental Studies of the Al-Farabi Kazakh National University in Almaty has opened a Department of the International Organisation of Turkic Culture (TURKSOY). The opening ceremony on March 4 was dedicated to the 20th anniversary of the Assembly of People of Kazakhstan (APK).

The new department is intended to become another bridge of cooperation between Kazakhstan and the Turkic world, and its activities will be designed to promote closer relations among

Turkic people; deepen cultural, humanitarian and technical integration; and develop scientific and educational ties. In addition, the department will act as a research centre of Turkic languages and the socio-economic and political processes of Turkic-speaking countries.

One of the important goals of the TURKSOY Department is training competitive specialists in Turkic studies. Teaching will be carried out by highly qualified Kazakh and foreign teachers and scientists engaged in research in various spheres of linguistics, literature, history, political science, philosophy and cultural studies.

The opening ceremony was attended by Secretary-General of

TURKSOY Dyusen Kasseinov; representatives of the embassies and consulates of Turkey, Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Kyrgyzstan; representatives from ethnic and cultural associations within the APK; and scholars, teachers and university students.

Kasseinov stressed that TURKSOY cooperates closely with UNESCO. This interaction is directed not only at the preservation of the cultural heritage of Turkic nations, but also plays an important role in fostering dialogue between cultures. According to him, the new TURKSOY Department will contribute to this cooperation and will take part in TURKSOY activities.



NATION&CAPITAL  
**TOURISM**

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# Multiple Organisations Work to Revive Saiga Population

By Leslie Krowchenko

On the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List, which has been guiding conservation efforts for more than five decades, the saiga antelope has moved in just six years from vulnerable to critically endangered.

The population pendulum, however, is starting to swing the other way.

Through the efforts of organisations such as IUCN, the Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF), WildInvest and Saiga Conservation Alliance (SCA), the figures have increased from a low of 30,000 in 2003 to more than 150,000, according to an article published on the National Geographic Society website. Many of the animals roam the Ustyurt Plateau in the steppe region of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan.

"While the recent increase in saiga numbers is encouraging, it has also resulted in increased poaching pressure," said Maria Karlstetter, saiga programme manager



at Fauna & Flora International, in an article. "With saigas becoming more abundant again, hunting has become easier and thus lucrative."

A small antelope with a distinctive bulbous nose, the saiga once roamed in herds approaching 2,000,000 strong across the

plains of Central Asia and Russia. The animal is highly adapted to the harsh climate conditions of the semi-deserts, making it a mainstay

species of the steppe ecosystem it inhabits. Although protected under national and worldwide laws and conventions, the main threat is illegal hunting for horn and meat, the former used in traditional Chinese medicine. As only males bear horns, poaching has resulted in heavily-skewed sex ratios causing a significantly-reduced reproduction rate.

Through the support of international organisations, the Kazakh saiga antelope project has developed a multifaceted approach to monitoring the animal's population and movement. Field observations during migration in the winter and data collected throughout the year are helping to inform future conservation planning, according to the WildInvest website, www.wildinvest.com.

The saiga is representative of the nomadic traditions of the Ustyurt Plateau and engaging local communities has been a critical component. Community awareness and regional workshops held in villages known to be local poaching hubs

serve to initiate discussion, giving villagers ownership of the venture and promoting long-term success.

Project leaders like Elena Bykova demonstrate how effective the endeavour can be. A graduate of the biology department of Tyumen State University, she heads a network of saiga friend groups, a community of 10 clusters with approximately 50 members including police and teachers. The volunteers work as monitors and animal advocates, collecting crucial information and targeting hunters and poachers to join them.

"The saiga plays a distinctive role in maintaining the steppe habitat conditions for a range of other threatened species and is an important part of the cultural heritage of nomadic people who historically shared the same lands for thousands of years," said Bykova in a statement on www.wildinvest.com. "The saiga's fate could not keep me indifferent. I really believe that we can save the saiga and would be happy if new people join us for this noble aim."

## Aisha Bibi Mausoleum Construction Techniques Remain Mystery to Researchers

By Vyacheslav Lebedev

"Autumn ... Clouds ... The Earth is beautiful." For almost 1,000 years this line in Arabic alphabet Kufic script has decorated the patterned column of the famous Aisha Bibi mausoleum.

To date, 28 versions of the legend of Aisha Bibi have been told from generation to generation. A most popular tragic legend tells the story of young Karakhan Muhammad, bатыр (warrior) and ruler of Taraz who loved beautiful Aisha, the daughter of Muslim saint Zengi Baba and Anvar Begim. She responded with the same passionate feelings. Muhammad soon returned to Taraz and the beauty, deciding to see her beloved, asked her parents for a blessing. Aisha's actions were contrary to the laws of Islam and angry Zengi Baba gave her a teris-bata (reverse blessing), prohibiting her to go to Muhammad.

Nothing could stop the brave girl. At night Aisha Bibi and her babysitter Babaji Khatun quietly left the house to make their way to Taraz. They stopped to rest on the shore of the Asa River, where a venomous reptile killed Aisha Bibi. Mourning over his beloved, Muhammad buried her on the hill and the most talented craftsmen were invited to build a beautiful mausoleum over the grave.

After her burial, Babaji Khatun remained as the grave guardian until her own death. In recognition of this extraordinary love and fidelity, Babaji Khatun was ranked at her death as a saint and buried 20 steps from Aisha Bibi's grave. The mausoleum was also erected over the tomb.

By the mid-twentieth century, only a wall with a lancet arch entrance and two columns decorated with nearly 70 patterns showing plant-geometric motifs remained from the mausoleum. The decoration of the tomb and its architectural

proportions are unique and even this part of the preserved masterpiece demonstrates the highest skill and rich artistic imagination.

The secret of the monument's longevity is still unknown, although some researchers have guessed about it. There are many ancient, majestic buildings in the world which time could not destroy. The Aisha Bibi mausoleum was made from burnt clay bricks, which scientists have tested to determine their composition. There is nothing special – just clay and sand, but the particles are bonded to each other with a tremendous force and so far have not weakened. Medieval craftsmen used an unknown composition of natural origin as cement, which eventually disappeared.

The Aisha Bibi mausoleum is the only architectural monument in Kazakhstan and Central Asia fully lined with carved terracotta tiles. Its uniqueness is the fact that the tiles were not glued to the bricks, the method used by the craftsmen who built the world-famous Sanjar Sultan mausoleum in Turkmenistan, for example. The tiles were the front parts of the elongated elements and the rumps, or 20-40 centimetre "tails," were pinched to the masonry. That's why the patterns have not fallen from the walls and columns, as happened to many ancient structures.

Restorers first tried to save the dying mausoleum about 30 years ago by hiding it under a glass sarcophagus, but the new terracotta tiles, made in haste, were barely a pale copy of the real ones. In summer 2002, the Kazakh government decided the fate of the mausoleum. The sum of 76 million tenge (US\$407,712) was allocated for its recovery, with the work entrusted to Nishan Rametov, the best restorer in the country.

"I was warned not to rush, although it was tempting to revive the mausoleum by the 2,000th anniversary of Taraz. For the anniversary of the oldest city in the country we managed to remove the glass cover, restore the beautiful exterior and interior of the dome, strengthen the foundation and remake three walls which were restored in 1983," said Rametov.

Numerous commissions in Moscow and Tashkent considered the restoration project, developed by architects over 30 years ago. They offered to preserve the remaining part of the mausoleum and build exactly the same mausoleum next to it, as it is practiced in Japan. They finally approved the project presented by renowned Kazakh architect Aben Itenov. The most eminent Turkestani masters cast bricks and carved patterns for Aisha Bibi, creating new tiles that were almost indistinguishable from the old ones. Clay was taken from a pit near the ancient city of Sauran, which has no harmful impurities and a composition similar to the one used by the ancestors. The technology is also as close as possible to the medieval, although the secret of the recipe could not be solved.

The new dome was doubled. The inside dome, seen upon entering the mausoleum, is false. There is emptiness behind it and the vacuum protects the inner surface of the main dome from destruction. Humidity and temperature changes can damage only the false dome, which is low and easy to restore. That is why the ancient masters, erecting similar structures, used this technique.

Today, the Aisha Bibi mausoleum, like other ancient monuments, is protected by the state. According to legend, on windy days the mausoleum sometimes sounds like an organ. They say this is the sound of the souls of craftsmen who created the pottery patterns. There are 70 patterns, as there were 70 craftsmen of different nationalities, which is why their works are not alike.

## EXPO 2017 Promoted in Germany, Norway and Netherlands

By Malika Rustem

ASTANA – From March 4 to 9, a Kazakh delegation headed by EXPO 2017 Commissioner and First Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Rapol Zhoshybayev visited Germany to participate in the 49th International Tourism Exhibition, better known as ITB-2015. He also visited Norway and the Netherlands where he had a number of bilateral meetings.

As one of the largest exhibitions in the world, ITB, with more than 100,000 visitors each year, covers all aspects of travel and tourism:

The head of Kazakhstan's delegation, together with UNWTO Secretary General Taleb Rifai helped open the Kazakhstan pavilion. Rifai emphasised how much holding EXPO 2017 in Astana will increase the number of tourists and develop city infrastructure. Rifai also noted the importance of the UNWTO Silk Road programme, in which special importance is given to Kazakhstan.

While in Berlin, Zhoshybayev held a number of bilateral meetings with senior German officials. He met with State Secretary of the German Federal Foreign Office Stephan Steinlein, the Deputy Minister

for Norway to participate in EXPO 2017, as the country is a world leader in alternative and renewable energy sources. In turn, Høglund noted that the event's theme, Energy of the Future, is of particular interest to Norway in its efforts to promote dialogue on energy and environmental security issues and sustainable international development.

During his time in Oslo, the commissioner also held talks with the Norwegian State Secretary of the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Fisheries Dilek Ayhan. The sides expressed interest in intensifying



EXPO 2017 Commissioner and First Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Rapol Zhoshybayev (l) with his Norwegian counterpart, State Secretary of the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Fisheries Dilek Ayhan in Oslo.

destinations, tour operators, booking system developers, airlines, hotels and other businesses engaged in tourism. In the 26 rooms of the Messe Berlin fairgrounds, about 10,000 representatives of 190 countries demonstrated tourist services and products from their respective regions. Kazakhstan was among them.

Every year, Kazakhstan participates in the ITB, which is a good opportunity to present the country's history, culture and natural beauty. The exhibition is an effective platform for building partnerships and exchanging experience with leaders in the tourism industry.

Kazakhstan's pavilion attracted many visitors. They had the opportunity to taste Kazakh cuisine, see national dances, hear Kazakh music on Kazakh folk instruments, and watch clothes being made from felt and the assembly of silver jewellery.

During the exhibition, the commissioner took part in the 5th World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) Silk Road Ministers' Meeting and presented a plan to bolster Kazakhstan's tourist industry. He also informed participants about preparations for EXPO 2017, highlighting that the upcoming event will be the main driver of the development of tourism in both Kazakhstan and the region.

of Economy and Energy of Germany and leaders from major German companies. He also participated in a conference titled EXPO 2017 in Astana: Opportunities for German Companies.

At a meeting with economy and energy ministry officials, the German officials responsible for Germany's participation in EXPO 2017 discussed specific opportunities available to German companies at the event. Other issues discussed included the further deepening and widening of raw material, industrial, technological and investment cooperation between the two countries and attracting German investors to priority sectors of Kazakhstan's domestic economy. Co-Chair of the Intergovernmental Working Group for Trade and Economic Cooperation Eckhard Franz assured that Germany will be represented by one of the best pavilions at the exhibition.

In Oslo, Zhoshybayev met with State Secretary at the Foreign Ministry Morten Høglund. The sides discussed issues pertaining to international policy, as well as the current state and future of the two countries' bilateral relations. They stressed the need to further develop political, economic, cultural and humanitarian cooperation.

In this regard, Zhoshybayev made note of how important it is

trade and economic cooperation, including undertaking joint efforts in water management, energy efficiency, the green economy and new technologies.

Zhoshybayev told his counterpart about ongoing preparations for EXPO 2017 and on behalf of Prime Minister of Kazakhstan Karim Massimov, handed an invitation to Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Norway Erna Solberg.

In the Netherlands on March 9, on the last leg of his European visit, Zhoshybayev spoke at a round table conference on EXPO 2017, arranged by the Embassy of Kazakhstan in the Hague. Representatives of major Dutch companies such as Shell, Philips and DSM, amongst others, took part. Dutch business people learned about ongoing EXPO 2017 preparation measures and discussed ways in which they can participate in it.

In his remarks at the conference, Zhoshybayev noted the importance of the Netherlands to EXPO 2017, as the country is a major investor in Kazakhstan's economy and one of the world leaders in the design and development of cutting edge renewable energy technology.

Dutch business representatives expressed their willingness to take an active part in organising EXPO 2017 and presenting their best technologies.



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# Kazakhstan Beats Italy, Advances to Davis Cup Quarter Finals



Continued from Page B1

"This match was fantastic for me. I thank the captain for his trust and opportunity to play in the play-

off. I am very glad. The match was very stressful," Nedovyesov said at a press conference after the match.

According to davis-cup.com,

"Kazakhstan underlined its burgeoning reputation in Davis Cup by booking a quarterfinal berth for the fourth time in five years."

Kazakhstan will face the Australian team in the Davis Cup quarterfinals in July. The Australian team reached the quarters after beating the Czech Republic 3:1.

# Barys and Avangard Poised for Decisive Match in KHL Playoffs



By Yerlan Zhanayev

ASTANA – In the first round of Gagarin Cup playoffs, Barys Astana held seven matches with Omsk Avangard, a series that might be the most outstanding first round of all the Continental Hockey League (KHL). The confrontation was tied at 3-3 on March 10, while the winners have already been determined for the other first-round matchups.

Out of all the clubs in the playoffs, only Barys and Avangard will play a crucial seventh match. The decisive game in Omsk finished as this edition went to print in the late hours of March 10. Ahead of the series, pundits predicted a confident victory for the Omsk club, because at the end of the regular KHL session, as well as in its run-up, Avangard won seven games straight.

However, Barys' players and their head coach Andrei Nazarov emphasised that playoff matches cannot be compared to regular-season games. "In the playoffs, the competition is not for three

points, but for a total victory in four games," the coach said.

The first two games the team played in Omsk. Avangard won the first match with a score of 5-2, but in the second match, Barys was stronger. The clubs went to Astana tied 1-1, where they once again exchanged victories. The third match was 3-0 in favour of Barys, and in the fourth they succumbed, 3-4. Then in Omsk, Avangard again came forward with a score of 2-0. However, in the sixth match in Astana, Barys earned their revenge, 4-1, and the series was tied at three games each. The teams' fates will now be decided in Omsk.

Unfortunately, the sixth game in Astana was marred by an unfortunate injury when Barys defender Roman Savchenko performed a body check on Avangard's captain, Sergei Kalinin, after which Kalinin landed badly and hit his head. The medical team at the match reacted quickly. In five minutes, the player was taken to the hospital with a diagnosis of a cerebral injury. For at least 10 days, the hockey player will stay in Astana.

# Alau Ice Palace Hosts World Sprint Skating Championship, Kazakh Skaters Fail to Reach Podium

By Dmitry Lee

ASTANA – The Alau Ice Palace hosted the 46th International Skating Union (ISU) World Sprint Speed Skating Championship for the first time Feb. 28-March 1 in the hope that the hometown venue would give an advantage to the Kazakh skaters. The home athletes, however, were unsuccessful in reaching the podium.

Yekaterina Aidova was the closest Kazakh skater to a medal, yet

she was not completely satisfied with her results. Fellow countrymen Denis Kuzin and Roman Krech also participated in the events.

"I didn't finish the first 500-metre race as well as I could have," she admitted in a March 1 interview during the competition, as cited by vesti.kz. "Perhaps I got too nervous and eventually burnt out. In the second 1,000-metre race I was determined and did better. Had I been as determined in the 500-metre race, I would have

competed for the medals. It's a pity that [I was unable to do better] but I accomplished my goal to be in the top 10. Let's see what today's results will bring. The best skaters are competing here so it's not easy [to beat them]."

Kazakhstan's Sochi 2014 hopeful Kuzin finished the 1,000-metre race in sixth place, while Krech ended in 19th. Ironically the skaters took the same positions, but reversed, in the 500-metre race: Krech was sixth and Kuzin 19th.

Final results:

- 1,000 metre distance, men
- 1. Pavel Kulizhnikov, Russia – 1:09.06
- 2. Alexei Yesin, Russia – +0.35
- 3. Havard Lorentzen, Norway – +0.37
- 6. Denis Kuzin – +0.69
- 19. Roman Krech – +2.16
- 1,000 metre distance, women
- 1. Brittany Bowe, USA – 1:14.50
- 2. Heather Richardson, USA – +0.56
- 3. Li Shishi, China – +1.35
- 4. Yekaterina Aidova – +1.51

# Astana Arlans Defeat Italia Thunder, Caciques Venezuela to Extend Winning Streak to Eight

By Dmitry Lee

ASTANA – The Astana Arlans continues its so-far perfect season in group B of the World Series of Boxing (WSB), besting one opponent after another. This time around, they defeated the Italia Thunder on March 1 and went on to dominate Caciques Venezuela on March 7 in Almaty.

As the WSB website reports, both 3:2 victories came after long battles, securing wins from the jaws of defeat.

Against the Venezuelans, the match started in the usual flyweight category (52 kilograms), where Kazakh Olzhas Sattibayev beat Carlos José Ascanio Perez.

Among lightweights (60 kilograms), Fradimil Macayo came back with a split decision to equalise the scoreboard by defeating Zakir Saifullin.

In the welterweight category (69 kilograms), Gabriel Maestre Perez outboxed Aslanbek Shymbergenov in all categories to get his team ahead, 2:1.

But the roller coaster of a boxing match yet again turned Kazakhstan's way after light heavyweight (81 kilograms) Hrvoje Sep managed to defeat Albert Ramon Ramirez Duran.

Arlans' super heavyweight

(91+ kilograms) Filip Hrgovic had the final say, stopping Edgar Ramon Munoz Mata in the second round to keep his team's streak alive.

The match against Italia Thunder also opened with a flyweight (49 kilograms) bout between Patrick Barnes and Temirtas Zhussupov. The Italian boxer remained undefeated for the season, winning the bout and scoring the first points for the guest team.

However, 2013 International Boxing Association (AIBA) World Championships bronze medallist Kairat Yerallyev evened the score in the second fight against Michael Conlon in the bantam weight category (56 kilograms) with a split decision, making it a 1:1 match.

In the light welterweight (64 kilograms) division, Vincenzo Mangiacapre won every round against Askhat Ualikhanov to retake the lead and make it 2:1 for Italy. The lead did not last long, however, as middleweight (75 kilograms) Meirim Nursultanov dominated Raffaele Munno to tie the team score at 2:2.

In the final showdown, Kazakh heavyweight Vasiliy Levit (91 kilograms) defeated Endri Spahiu to snatch victory for his team and keep the undefeated streak alive.



# CAPITAL

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## Astana Mayor Outlines City's Plans for 2015

By Julia Rutz

Astana Akim (Mayor) Adilbek Dzhaksybekov discussed 2015 development plans for the city on Feb. 18 in Congress Hall during the first public meeting of his administration, according to the press service of the city akimat (administration).

As part of the development plan discussed by the mayor, about 100 new building projects will be realised in Astana in 2015. Construction is scheduled to begin in the area next to the Arch of Triumph, along Mynzhyl'dyk Alley and Turan Avenue, as well as in the green district near Khan Shatyr shopping mall. In accordance with the Affordable Housing 2020 state programme, 2,507 apartments totaling 1,588,000 square metres will be put into operation during the first quarter of the current year.

According to the mayor, all buildings to be constructed in the capital will have parking lots.

"There are several unreliable construction companies that operate in the city now, so I insist people double-check all the documentation before investing money into real estate. You can also ask for some information about the com-



Mayor of Astana Adilbek Dzhaksybekov meets with local residents to unveil plans for the city's development on Feb. 18.

pany from the city akimat to be sure," said Dzhaksybekov.

The mayor also mentioned efforts to save energy. The annual growth of the power supply system load is 8-10 percent and by 2017 the growth of the electricity load is expected to reach 30-35 percent while the growth in heating load is expected to reach 25-30 percent. In

this context, the energy complex investment programme provides a comprehensive modernisation of two central heating and power plants, as well as the construction of another one in Astana, according to the akimat press service.

"World experience shows that the growth of the city directly influences the growth of the demand for en-

ergy. The energy consumed should be preserved by citizens while using innovative technologies and eco-materials. That would also help reduce negative effects on the environment," explained the mayor.

The third point of his speech was dedicated to the development of infrastructure. A decision has been made to reconstruct the city roads

and improve the quality of public transport by instituting an electronic ticket system and changing the routes. As a result, 108 kilometres of roads will be reconstructed, including 30 streets in 11 districts. Moreover, the city streets will be equipped with video cameras, in addition to the 700 cameras currently located on Astana roadways.

Advancing conditions for small- and medium-sized businesses was another pillar of the Astana development programme for 2015, as their share accounts for more than 65 percent of all taxes paid to the local budget. The first service centre for entrepreneurs is now operating in Astana, with more than 4,500 businessmen and businesswomen already assisted by the centre.

Old shopping facilities will also be replaced by new ones. A system of a fast food chains has also been developed for this year and catering facilities will be available to entrepreneurs.

Dzhaksybekov focused his final attention on social issues, noting the importance of supporting veterans. There are 216 veterans of the Great Patriotic War living in Astana, he added.

"Our veterans are able to use public transport for free and they do not have to pay for utilities. Last year, we re-

paired 83 apartments and this year we will grant apartments to seven veterans who came to the capital in the last quarter of 2014," said Dzhaksybekov.

The support of people with disabilities was also included in the agenda. According to the mayor, 19,000 individuals with disabilities, including 3,000 children, currently live in Astana.

"We have to give these people the opportunity to actively participate in the social and cultural life of the city by organising special classes at schools," explained Dzhaksybekov.

The elimination of unemployment and easy access to medical and education services, as well as development of Astana's cultural, sport and tourist potential, were also highlighted by the mayor. He mentioned the importance of the current year for both the city and the country, as it marks the 20th anniversary of the establishment of the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan, the 70th anniversary of victory in the Great Patriotic War and the 550th anniversary of the establishment of Kazakh Khanate.

"Our main goal is to let all the citizens feel the spirit of these great events and awake the sense of patriotism towards the country and the city," concluded Dzhaksybekov.

## Air Astana Introduces Self Check-In Terminals in Kazakh Airports

By Malika Orazgaliyeva

ASTANA – Check-In for Air Astana passengers just got a little easier. Kazakhstan's flagship air carrier Air Astana recently introduced Kazakhstan's first passenger self check-in kiosks for its flights.

The kiosks will be initially limited to domestic flights, but the air carrier plans to expand the programme to include self check-in for international flights, according to the airline's press service.

The first kiosk was installed in

Shymkent City in Southern Kazakhstan in mid-January. Two more kiosks appeared in February at the Almaty airport. In the future, the Astana and Atyrau airports will be equipped with similar kiosks. Negotiations are also underway to install the terminals at the Aktau Airport in Western Kazakhstan.

The kiosks are meant to compensate for the limited number of registration desks at airports, which must currently handle large number of passengers. Officials hope the kiosks will shorten lines and check-in times.

To self-register for a flight, a passenger must scan his identification or insert a Nomad Club Frequent Flyer programme card and enter the booking, ticket or Nomad Club number. After completing self check-in, passengers who need to check luggage will be directed to a special counter.

The kiosks software was developed in cooperation with Amadeus Company. Hardware implementation and customisation was performed by Air Astana Information Technology Department.

## Tire Recycling Plant Reopens in Capital

Staff Report

Production at Kazakhstan's only tire recycling plant has begun rolling again after being shut down for two years.

The German equipment and technologies used at the plant allow up to 32,000 tons of raw material to be processed annually. While the plant was offline, Kazakhstan's environmental regulations underwent considerable changes. This simplified the plant's operations because before that it was easier to burn used tires than recycle them.

Because the plant was out of

commission for two years, the company could not pay its debts. In order to actualise the project, a loan of more than \$6.5 million from the Development Bank of Kazakhstan was taken. The Baiterek Holding and the National Chamber of Entrepreneurs decided to write off 330 million tenge (US\$1.78 million) of the plant's debt as part of the restructuring programme.

In processing used tires, the plant produces three products: rubber crumbs, high-alloy steel and rayon. The rubber crumbs are used to cover playgrounds and sports fields, stadiums and artificial turf.

They are also used in the production of railroad crossing plates, manhole covers, pavement and more. The company currently employs 25 people. The plant is looking to expand its staff to 90 employees.

According to recent statistics, around 300,000 tires are disposed of in Kazakhstan every year. Experts say that the launch of such plants has positive environmental impact. A single tire needs 150 years to decompose; the recycling process reduces man's effect on nature. Also, with the number of cars in the country increasing every day, the plant's reopening means that the country will be unlikely to see a raw material shortage.

## Ambassadors Club in Astana Opens New Season

By Yelden Sarybay

ASTANA – After a long hiatus, a club meant to bring together on a regular basis international chiefs of missions is reviving its activities in the newly opened Marriott Hotel. The first revived Ambassadors Club event is planned for March 25, celebrating the traditional Nauryz Festival.

The Ambassadors Club is an initiative by Art Club Kulanshi, which saw a need to form a cultural platform for international chiefs-of-missions in 2009 and has organised events ever since. The club's host Leyla Mahat, an artist and gallery owner who promotes Kazakh culture, is currently away

on a diplomatic mission. This has caused a disruption in the regularity of the club's monthly meetings, but did not cease its existence.

A new team, under the guidance of Mahat, plans to resume the club's initiative and expand the club's scope of activities. The club's main mission remains the same: to show the rich cultural heritage of Kazakhstan to the ambassadors and chiefs-of-missions based in Astana, thereby enriching their experience in the Kazakh capital.

The cultural dimension of the club will be provided by the faculty and students of Kazakh National University of the Arts, coordinated by Alibek Batyrov, head of

Foreign Affairs and Creative Work at the university. The wide spectrum of disciplines offered at the university offers the opportunity for members of the club to have an enlightening and cultural taste of Kazakhstan. Everything from visual arts to instrumental and vocal music is available to be experienced by the diplomats.

The club will be inviting deputy ministers of the Kazakh Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other government organisations to be special guests during regular meetings.

The Marriott Hotel Astana has agreed to be the new partner of the Ambassador's Club, providing a comfortable venue and other amenities.

## Astana-Seoul Flights to Be Available by Summer 2015

By Malika Orazgaliyeva

ASTANA – Flights from Astana to Seoul will be available this summer, according to a March 4 report from the press service of the Ministry of Investment and Development of Kazakhstan (MID).

The announcement followed a meeting in Seoul between representatives of Air Astana, Asiana Airlines, Korean Air, Jin Air and the Incheon International Airport Corporation.

Currently, Kazakhstan's flag air carrier, Air Astana, operates flights on the Almaty – Seoul – Almaty air route three times per week, and South Korea's Asiana Airlines operates its flights on the

Seoul – Almaty – Seoul air route twice a week.

However, Air Astana cooperates closely with the Asiana Airlines within the code-share agreement on joint selling seats on flights of both carriers in order to increase the transit of passengers from Japan, Taiwan and other countries in Southeast Asia.

At the end of the talks the two sides signed a Memorandum of Understanding that provides an increased number of flights between Kazakhstan and South Korea. The MID reported that the Kazakh side proposed to increase existing air carriage capacity between Kazakhstan and South Korea by 35 percent.

The move will likely contribute further to the expansion of mutual

travel between the two countries following the agreement to introduce visa free regime for up to one month that went into effect last November.

Air Astana was named Airline Market Leader of 2015 at the 41st annual Air Transport World Awards in Washington, D.C.

Accepting the accolade on behalf of the airline's 4,300 employees, Air Astana President Peter Foster noted the airline's achievements these past 12 years have taken it on "a remarkable journey."

"We are proud to be the youngest airline to win such prestigious recognition," he said, addressing the 200-strong audience and thanking the people of Kazakhstan for their support.

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