



Astana Celebrates 550th Anniversary of Kazakh Khanate, Holds CCTS Summit



A large-scale theatrical show was staged at the Barys Ice Palace to celebrate the 550th anniversary of the formation of the Kazakh Khanate on Sept. 11 in Astana.

By Malika Orazgaliyeva

ASTANA – Kazakhstan celebrated the 550th anniversary of the formation of the Kazakh Khanate on Sept. 11 with a number of events throughout the capital. President Nursultan Nazarbayev congratulated all the country's citizens on the day during a solemn meeting held in the city's Palace of Independence.

Presidents of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev and Kyrgyzstan Almazbek Atambayev, Speaker of the Turkish Grand National Assembly Ismet Yilmaz and Turkmenistan Deputy Prime Minister Saparurdy Toylyev, as well as deputies of the Kazakh Parliament and representatives of the country's intelligentsia, sports, culture and arts fields.

Addressing the participants, Nazarbayev said the celebration was a tribute to the glorious past of

the nation and reminder of the history lessons for today's generation. He emphasised that the generation raised in independent Kazakhstan had lifted the prestige of the country to unprecedented heights by realising the centuries-old dream of its ancestors.

The head of state stressed that Kazakhstan will always cherish and preserve the friendship and trust with its neighbours and build good relations with all countries in the world.

"We should remember that we share a centuries-long historic path with Russia, especially the Russian people. Over the years of independence, we have also written new pages of history together with the European Union and American and Muslim countries. Important international events hosted in our country are now reflected on the pages of the newest history," he said.

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Nazarbayev Visits Sochi, Attends Russia-Kazakhstan Interregional Cooperation Forum

By Malika Orazgaliyeva

ASTANA – President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev visited Sochi, Russia, on Sept. 15–16 to meet with Russian President Vladimir Putin and attend the 12th Forum of Interregional Cooperation between Russia and Kazakhstan on cooperation in the field of agriculture and food security, the press service of the Akorda reported.

During the talks with Putin, Nazarbayev stressed that the forum plays a significant role for the two countries, especially in the context of current turbulence in the global economy.

"There is a decline in mutual trade caused by decreasing export prices and the volatility of currency markets. In my opinion, our governments rapidly respond to current issues. Today's forum is giving us an opportunity to discuss the most important of these issues," Nazarbayev said.

In turn, Putin stressed the importance of meetings involving regional leaders in Kazakhstan and Russia.

The leaders and members of regional governments in Kazakhstan and Russia attended the forum.

Nazarbayev stressed the importance of the forum's theme, noting that food is the most stable currency in the world today.

"Both of our countries are agricultural and industrial. We have great potential in this area. According to the United Nations, by 2050 the world population will reach 9 billion people. Therefore, food security will become an acute issue in further global development. Kazakhstan and Russia have a priceless treasure, which is their huge agricultural land area totalling 435 million hectares, as well as great experience in agricultural science. A variety of climatic zones and fertile soils allow us to be competitive in many agricultural sectors," he said.

Nazarbayev noted that the agricultural and industrial complex of Kazakhstan and Russia has a unique export potential. In his

words, total imports from China, India, the Caspian states and Central Asian countries exceed \$170 billion annually. The two countries have the potential to become leading players in the global food market. Russia ranked third among the world's largest exporters of grain. Today, our country is also part of this market, he added.

Nazarbayev also stressed the importance of cooperating in mutual investments, establishing cross-border joint ventures, building production chains and providing quality transport and logistics infrastructure.

"Kazakhstan is completing the construction of the Western Europe–Western China highway, which crosses the territory of Russia. With its help, we can create centres of food supply expansion. For this, the resources of the Eurasian Development Bank can be used. Out of 12 bank projects funded this year, 10 were agricultural," Nazarbayev informed.

Nazarbayev noted that the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) is going through difficult times and trade turnover has decreased by 20–25 percent because of instability in global markets.

"At the moment, some say that the EAEU has stalled. It has stalled not because it is bad, but because the situation is difficult. Economies rise and fall; we are experiencing crises not for the first time. We should stay calm and find new ways to increase trade turnover," the President said, as reported by Tengrinews.

In addition, Nazarbayev met with the leadership of Russia's Sverdlovsk region and Ural Federal University. Governor of Sverdlovsk Region Evgeniy Kuyvashev thanked the Kazakh President for his great contribution to the development of neighbourly relations between Russia and Kazakhstan and strengthening relations between the border regions.

Chairman of Ural Federal University Victor Koksharov awarded Nazarbayev an Honorary Doctoral Degree in recognition of his achievements in state activity.

Top UN Officials Say Global Nuclear-Test Ban Urgently Needed

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

NEW YORK – An informal meeting of the United Nations (UN) General Assembly marked the 2015 observance of the International Day against Nuclear Tests on Sept. 10 and highlighted the empirical threat posed by nuclear testing, calling for all countries to sign and ratify the international treaty banning testing.

"I have witnessed the lasting societal, environmental and economic damage nuclear tests have caused. Since the first test in New Mexico 70 years ago, the



Honorary Ambassador of the ATOM Project Karipbek Kuyukov (R) shows his paintings to UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in New York on Sept. 10.

world has endured over 2,000 nuclear tests. Those tests devastated pristine environments and local populations around the world. Many have never recovered from the legacies of nuclear testing – including poisoned groundwater, cancer, birth defects and radioactive fallout. Today, let us also send a strong signal that the international community stands united to take action that will lead us to a safer and more secure world – a world free of nuclear weapons," UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said at the meeting.

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Kazakh Deputy PM Outlines Responses for Water Challenges in Central Asia

By Malika Rustem

Kazakh First Deputy Prime Minister Bakytzhan Sagintayev took part in the Sept. 7 conference in Berlin on water and good neighbourly relations in Central Asia.

The event, convened and hosted by German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier, was attended by more than 50 representatives from different German ministries, Central Asian states, the European Union, United Nations, Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and other international and national nongovernmental organisations.

"Water supply will be a key topic in the 21st century and is a task to be addressed by any forward-looking foreign policy. That is why Germany conducts active water diplomacy and, together with the five Central Asian states, promotes regional cooperation on matters relating to water. Together, we now want to initiate the third phase of the 'Berlin Process,'" said Steinmeier referring to an earlier German initiative to address the

multiple water-related challenges in Central Asia.

In his report, Sagintayev outlined a number of proposals initiated earlier by Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev to improve the water situation in Central Asia. One of the suggestions was a meeting of the council of heads of member states of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea (IFAS) with participation of major donors and experts. The ideas also included creating a Central Asian Investment Fund to implement water projects and a regional centre for water security.

Sagintayev also voiced a proposal to jointly develop and sign a pact on water and environmental security in Central Asia, noting the importance of creating an open system of exchange of hydrologic data. He also noted the need to improve the efficiency of the Interstate Commission for Water Coordination of the Syrdarya and Amudarya water basin associations.

The conference adopted a joint statement on strengthening cooperation

in the field of water management and implementing combined projects aimed at sustainable economic development in Central Asian countries.

The German Federal Foreign Office set up the Central Asia Water Initiative (Berlin Process) in 2008 to boost regional cooperation, thus promoting sustainable water management. The focus of phase I (2008–2011) was on political advisory services and strengthening institutions tasked with managing cross-border rivers. Phase II (2012–2014) prioritised support to develop approaches for dealing with the increasing effects of climate change on Central Asian water resources.

The Sept. 7–8 conference on Water and Good Neighbourly Relations in Central Asia marked the start of Phase III (2015–2017), which is set to strengthen regional institutions and processes – above all IFAS, which deals with regional water management. The aim is to create an institutional framework within which the Central Asian states can manage their own water cooperation.

Heroes' Welcome for Int'l Space Station Crew



President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev (L) greets astronauts Aidyn Aimbetov, Gennady Padalka and Andreas Mogensen (from left to right) in Astana on Sept. 12. Read full story on Page A2.

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NATION

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 23, 2015

President Makes New Government Appointments



Dariga Nazarbayeva

By Malika Orazgaliyeva

ASTANA – Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev made new appointments to government positions on Sept. 11, reported the press service of the Akorda presidential residence.

Former Deputy Chairperson of the Mazhilis (lower house of Parliament) Dariga Nazarbayeva was appointed Deputy Prime Minister of Kazakhstan. In this position she replaced Berdibek Saparbayev, who was appointed Akim (Governor) of the Aktobe region. In turn, ex-governor of the Aktobe region Archimed Mukhambetov was appointed Akim of the Kostanai re-



Berdibek Saparbayev

gion replacing its former Akim, who was relieved of his position.

Nazarbayeva, the daughter of President Nazarbayev, is a prominent political figure of Kazakhstan who has focused on social development in recent years, including first as chair of a respective committee in the Mazhilis and then as deputy chair of the body. She has also been the leader of the organising committee of the Eurasian Media Forum, which is in its 13th year this year. She is also known to hold massive charity campaigns helping children.

Saparbayev has vast experience in governing the regions; previously he served as Akim of the Kyzyl-



Archimed Mukhambetov

orda, South Kazakhstan and East Kazakhstan regions. Also, over the years, Saparbayev served as chief of staff in the Prime Minister's Office, chairman of the Customs Control Agency, head of the Customs Control Committee of the Finance Ministry, vice-minister of Economy and Budget Planning and Minister of Labour and Social Welfare.

Mukhambetov graduated from Samara State Technical University and Kazakh-Russian International University. He has a bachelor's degree in finance. In 2008, he was appointed akim of Aktobe city. In July 2011, he became akim of the Aktobe region.

Kazakhstan Increases Crime Fighting Cooperation with the Nations of the Americas

By Talgat Issenov

ASTANA – The Kazakh Senate recently passed the law "On ratification of the Inter-American Convention on Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters."

This law is meant to improve the effectiveness of the fight against crime by establishing cooperation with the countries of the Americas. According to the convention, participating countries will provide each other with mutual assistance in the investigation of crimes.

"The agreement is multilateral. The convention unites 26 countries, including the United States, Canada, Mexico, Brazil, Venezuela and other countries. That means that by this document we will establish relationships with a number of American states," said Kazakh Deputy Prosecutor General Zhakip Assanov.



Chairman of the Kazakh Senate Kassym-Jomart Tokayev holds a Senate session.

He noted that the issue of the extradition of Kazakh citizens convicted in the U.S. is not regulated by the document.

The senate also passed laws ratifying agreements on legal assistance in criminal matters with Bulgaria and Romania.

Astana Celebrates 550th Anniversary of Kazakh Khanate, Holds CCTS Summit

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Nazarbayev said a monument dedicated to the Kazakh Khanate anniversary will be opened in a month in ancient Taraz, a city which has more than 2,000 years of history located in an area where events related to the formation of the Khanate 550 years ago took place.

After the meeting, the Akorda presidential residence held the fifth summit of the Cooperation Council of Turkic-Speaking States (CCTS), reported the President's press service.

The meeting was devoted to the theme of development of cooperation in the sphere of information. Speeches were given by Nazarbayev, Aliyev, Atambayev, Yilmaz and Toilyev, as well as CCTS Secretary General Ramil Hasanov.

In his speech, Nazarbayev said the CCTS fifth summit is an important step towards the integration of the Turkic world. He put forward a number of proposals for the member states.

The Kazakh President suggested accelerating the adoption of the concept of Turkic world integration prepared by the Turkic Academy. He also drew attention to the importance of joint efforts in the fight against terrorist, extremist and separatist threats.

"We are interested in the soonest establishment of peace and stability in Syria, Libya and Iraq. We stand for the settlement of the situation between Palestine and Israel. We support solely peaceful rehabilitation of Afghanistan," he said.

Regarding the development of cooperation in trade and economic spheres, Nazarbayev noted each of the CCTS member states has the chance to become a transcontinental transit bridge connecting the economic and communication networks of China, Russia, Europe, the Middle East, the Caucasus and Central Asia. He also suggested creating a common Turkic integration fund with the support of business communities and sponsors from the member states.

Following the event, the parties

signed the fifth summit declaration as well as decrees on the appointment of the Turkic Council Deputy Secretary General and President of the Turkish Fund of Culture and Heritage.

The participants announced that the sixth CCTS summit will be held in 2016 in Cholpon-Ata, Kyrgyzstan, with the theme of national sports.

The council was established in 2009 as an international inter-governmental organisation with the overarching aim of promoting comprehensive cooperation among Turkic-speaking states. Its founding member states were Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkey.

The same day, Nazarbayev University hosted Mangilik El, an international scientific-practical conference dedicated to the Kazakh Khanate anniversary. The conference was attended by leading Kazakh scholars and their counterparts from Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bulgaria, China, France, Germany, Great Britain, India, Israel, Italy, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Russia, Spain, Switzerland, Tajikistan, Turkey, Ukraine, the United States and Uzbekistan.

The conference was intended to scientifically reveal the role and significance of the Kazakh Khanate in the history of the nation's people and its statehood. The participants considered the issues of preserving Kazakh moral ideals for future generations in the framework of Mangilik El national idea and other important topics.

The day was capped with a large-scale theatrical show in Barys Ice Palace, the city's newly-built sports centre. The event was attended by the CCTS summit participants and thousands of guests. During the performance, the audience was shown the most significant events which occurred during the last 3,000 years on the territory of modern Kazakhstan. One of the brightest parts of the ceremony was the depiction of the 300-year period of the Kazakh Khanate development and its culmination, the establishment of an independent Kazakhstan.

NATIONAL NEWS IN BRIEF

A conference offering international experience in combating and preventing corruption in state revenue agencies coorganised by the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) was held in Astana Sept. 10–11, the OSCE reported. Speakers encouraged intersectoral cooperation in the fight against corruption and the promotion of good governance in the customs and tax administrations. Some 100 Finance Ministry officials from across the country, experts from civil society, academia and the media, and representatives of the World Customs Organisation, the World Bank and the UN Office on Drugs and Crime took part in the conference. Experts from the Caucasus, Europe and the United States presented best practices in the field and discussed ways to improve the implementation of national anti-corruption strategies, specifically in view of Kazakhstan's accession to the World Trade Organisation. Ambassador Natalia Zarudna, head of the OSCE Programme Office in Astana, said that the OSCE sees good governance as an effective way to ensure stability and sustainable economic growth.

Hosting a country office of the World Health Organisation in Almaty will cost Kazakhstan \$2 million a year, according to Melita Vujnovic, WHO representative and head of its Kazakhstan Country Office, Tengrinews reports. The lower chamber of Kazakhstan's Parliament, the Mazhilis, has approved an agreement with the WTO to launch a country office in Almaty with the aim of bolstering primary health care, collect data on health care services, coordinate work of preventive healthcare institutions. The agreement is for a 10-year period, with \$2 million allotted from the government to keep it running, Vujnovic said at a press conference about the agreement. Kazakhstan, Turkey and Russia had responded to the competition to accommodate country offices in their respective territories. Kazakhstan's office will be focused on primary health care, Russia's on noncontagious diseases and Turkey's on response to emergencies, she said.

The board of the Samruk Kazyna Sovereign Wealth Fund has approved the new concept for the group's purchases, the Trend news agency reported on Sept. 8, citing the fund's press service. Previous procurement rules did not comply with World Trade Organisation practices and conditions Kazakhstan took on upon joining the Eurasian Economic Union. The new concept was designed to incorporate global best practices on procurement management and includes a number of significant changes. Procurement of some goods, works and services will be centralised at the level of the fund and procurement of strategic categories is to be optimised in portfolio companies. It is expected that the new purchasing practices will save the fund from \$1.4 billion to \$2.1 billion. The board of directors also considered the progress report on the implementation of the fund's transformation programme, of which the new procurement practices are part.

Safety violations on Kazakhstan's railways are down almost 10 percent for the first eight months of 2015, Bnews reported on Sept. 15. So far, inspection and enforcement activities have temporarily or permanently prohibited the use of 241 units of rolling stock and closed 168 stations. The total number of safety violations has fallen by 44 incidents, from 469 in 2014 to 425. Accidents during water transport have fallen from 11 to 5 cases for the same period in both years.

The Nepali film "Kalo Pothi" ("Black Hen"), directed by Min Bahadur Bham with Kazakh cinematographer Aziz Zhambakiyev, won the Best Film Award at this year's Venice Film Festival Critic's Week, Tengrinews reports. The film was awarded by the Federation of Film Critics of Europe and the Mediterranean (FEDEORA), and marked the first time a Nepali film had won an award of this calibre. Zhambakiyev said that he was happy to share in the important moment for Nepali cinema. The Kazakh cinematographer was recognised at last year's Berlinale Film Festival for his work on the award-winning Kazakh film, "Harmony Lessons."

President Welcomes Crew from International Space Station

By Aiman Turebekova

ASTANA – On Sept. 12, President Nursultan Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan personally met Soyuz TMA-16M crew Gennady Padalka of Russia, Aidyn Aimbetov of Kazakhstan, and Andreas Mogensen of Denmark who were returning from the International Space Station (ISS), at Astana International airport.

The President congratulated the spaceship crew on their safe return, adding that the flight was a momentous event in the year of the 60th anniversary of the Baikonur Cosmodrome, from which the first man flew into space.

"You all were in our thoughts, as we were waiting for you to return. All of Kazakhstan was waiting for the arrival of Aidyn, who was Kazakhstan's third cosmonaut to fly in space. It is a very significant event in the anniversary year of the Baikonur cosmodrome. We are glad that the flight went well, and that you are back," he said.

"With support of Roscosmos and the Russian leadership, we trained our cosmonauts Tokhtar Aubakirov, then Talgat Mussabayev, and now Aidyn for space flights," he said.

According to Nazarbayev, Kazakhstan's space activities will be further developed. As of today, the country has a number of satellites in the orbit. "I am very happy that you, Mr. President, and Kazakhstan's citizens have supported and entrusted me to represent Kazakhstan in the international crew. Kazakhstan's programme of science experiments was fulfilled and I am very glad that Kazakhstan, under the leadership of Nursultan Nazarbayev, is moving forward and developing space activities," said Aimbetov.

"I am happy to come back to the hospitable land of Kazakhstan," said Padalka. The Russian cosmonaut had returned to Earth with the record for having spent the most time in space (879 days in orbit) in the total of five space flights. The previous record, 803 days, was held by fellow cosmonaut Sergei Krikalev.

Mogensen, who blasted off from Baikonur along with Aimbetov on Sept. 2, said the crew had "a fantastic mission" at the ISS, whose nine members represented five different nationalities at the time.

"This is a superb example of what can be achieved together when we work together across borders and boundaries," he said.

"He has been dreaming of flying to space since he was a child," said the mother of the Kazakh cosmonaut, who attended the ceremony in Astana. Aimbetov's son Amir said thanks to his father's flight, he had become "a super star" among his classmates.

Addressing media questions about the profitability of the flight, the President answered, "The space expenditures will not give immediate yield. However, the whole world is striving to master space. This promises great benefits for scientific and technical progress. Any expense of the state that is directed to space will pay off. The whole world is competing for that and Russia is at the forefront. We intend to develop our space agency and work together with Russia, who is our partner, ally and close neighbour."

Nazarbayev also added how proud Kazakhstan was to be able to develop its own space programme as not many out of 200 countries in the world enjoy such a privilege.

Talgat Mussabayev, head of the Kazakh space agency Kazcosmos and a veteran of three space flights, first met the cosmonauts on arrival in the Kazakh steppes near Zhezkazgan and later joined the President

at the airport. "This day is very remarkable for the country. We are very proud of our zhitig (Kazakh for young rider), who successfully completed his mission. He contributed a lot to the development of the space industry."

President of the National Centre for Space Technology of the Aerospace Committee of the Ministry of Investment and Development of Kazakhstan Zhumabek Zhantayev told reporters about the Kazakh cosmonaut's scientific experiments in space: research in ecology, physics and medicine.

"It is yet too early to speak about the results. Aidyn Aimbetov conducted a series of experiments, and the data will be processed on Earth and will be implemented in many fields," said Jantayev.

As the media and assembled guests were waiting for the arrival of cosmonauts, he explained to assembled journalists which experiments were conducted by the cosmonaut. "Experiments focused on four research areas. Firstly, [it had to do with] monitoring the anthropogenic impact on the territory of the Caspian region and mountainous regions with glaciers, in order to understand the climatic conditions.

EURASIA&WORLD

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 23, 2015

EXTERNAL NEWS IN BRIEF

Russia and Kazakhstan want to unify their air defence systems, Pavel Kurachenko, head of the Russian Aerospace Forces, said on Sept 8, the Tass news agency reported. The two countries signed an agreement on creating a unified air defence system in 2013 and are now rehearsing coordination among troops and establishing the legislative framework for the system, Kurachenko said. General Nurlan Ormanbetov, commander of the Air Defence Forces of Kazakhstan, is to command the unified regional Air Defence system. Russia also wants to create a unified regional anti-aircraft defence system with Armenia, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, Kurachenko said.

Kazakhstan's senators have ratified the mutual legal assistance treaty between Kazakhstan and Bulgaria, the Focus Information Agency reported on Sept. 10. The assistance includes serving summonses and other documents; collecting evidence; conducting inspections, search and seizures and examinations; questioning victims, suspects, defendants, witnesses and experts; and transferring objects and documents. In June, Kazakhstan ratified the agreement with Bulgaria on the extradition of wanted persons, signed in Sofia on Nov. 14, 2014. The agreement specifies when an extradition request can and cannot be processed.

Kazakhstan was ranked second in Central and South Asia in the 2015 Global Innovation Index, behind India and ahead of third-place Sri Lanka. The index, co-published by Cornell University, INSEAD, and the World Intellectual Property Organisation (an agency of the United Nations), "looks at 'Effective Innovation Policies for Development' and shows new ways that emerging-economy policymakers can boost innovation and spur growth by building on local strengths and ensuring the development of a sound national innovation environment," according to a press release announcing this year's index. Kazakhstan was ranked 82nd overall in this year's list of 141 countries. Kazakhstan was 79th on last year's list, which ranked 143 countries.

The presidents of Belarus, Kazakhstan and Russia met informally in Sochi on Sept. 15. The Russian and Kazakh leaders were meeting for the Russia-Kazakhstan Inter-regional Cooperation Forum. During the informal meeting, the three leaders exchanged opinions about the functioning of the Eurasian Economic Union and important international problems. The sides agreed to be in contact regularly to monitor Eurasian integration and international issues.

Russia and Kazakhstan are to create a joint regional irrigation system, Bnews reported on Sept. 17. The agreement was signed between the governors' offices of the West Kazakhstan region, the Saratov region of Russia and President of Russia's Bouquet Company Vladislav Burov. The agreement was signed during the Kazakhstan-Russia Interregional Cooperation Forum in Sochi. About 200,000 hectares of land in the Saratov region and 50,000 hectares of land in the West Kazakhstan region are to be jointly irrigated.

The Eurasian Economic Union member states are to develop a mechanism for organising and financing joint research in agriculture, Bnews reported on Sept. 17. A proposed mechanism will be put to the Eurasian Intergovernmental Council for approval. A press release from the Eurasian Economic Commission noted that a list of promising areas in agricultural research had been compiled in July. Kazakhstan's Mazhilis (lower chamber of Parliament) has approved the ratification of the inter-governmental agreement with Russia on the conditions and procedures for using the Balkhash radar node in Kazakhstan's Karaganda region. The radar node is part of Russia's early missile warning system and is designed to continually monitor its zone of action out to space, detecting and tracking missiles and space objects. The agreement was signed in Moscow in December 2014.

Kazakhstan, Tajikistan Sign Agreement on Strategic Partnership

By Nurbek Almashov and Malika Orazgaliyeva

DUSHANBE – President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev paid an official visit to Dushanbe, Tajikistan on Sept. 14, during which several cooperation agreements between the two countries were signed.

During the visit, Nazarbayev held a bilateral meeting with President of Tajikistan Emomali Rahmon. During the talks, Nazarbayev congratulated the Tajik people on their Independence Day and the 3,000th anniversary of Hissar, a famous historical town and fortress near Dushanbe.

"Kazakhstan and Tajikistan have traditional friendly relations based on mutual respect and trust. Our countries have no disagreements in political and economic spheres. Tajikistan for us is a brotherly country, which is why we are interested in its stable development. In the current difficult situation in the global economy, we have opportunities for cooperation," Nazarbayev said.

The President also noted that the two countries pursue common principles in international politics, which can be seen in their close cooperation in organisations including the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) and the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA).

"We are grateful to the Tajik side for the support of our candidacy for the UN Security Council non-permanent membership," the Kazakh President told Rahmon and the media at their joint press briefing following the talks. "Your country also takes a constructive stance on issues of water and energy relations [in Central Asia]."

"A few days ago, we celebrated



Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev (L) and Tajik President Emomali Rahmon in Dushanbe on Sept. 14.

the 550th anniversary of the Kazakh Khanate. Our countries have a common culture and history. Great events that were taking place in our region for centuries are the roots that unite our people," Nazarbayev noted.

"Your visit today will give a new impetus to the development of neighbourly relations between our countries," Rahmon said.

The parties signed a number of documents on mutual cooperation, including an agreement on strategic partnership between Kazakhstan and Tajikistan; an agreement on cooperation in technical protection of information; a programme of cooperation between the Foreign Ministries of Kazakhstan and Tajikistan; and a protocol on making amendments and additions to the current agreement between the two governments on labour protection and migrant workers.

Noting that the new agreements will strengthen the legal basis for cooperation which already includes 80 agreements, Nazarbayev also urged Tajik business people to

participate in Kazakhstan's industrial projects. He said that Kazakhstan is shifting its emphasis from the oil and gas sector to the industrial one and is trying to diversify its economy.

"We would like to invite Tajik companies to participate in our industrial programmes. For instance, Kazakhstan will construct at least 7,000 kilometres of highways and railways through the Nuryly Zhol programme," he noted.

The Kazakh leader added that Kazakhstan is ready to open its transport infrastructure to Tajik businesses so that they could export their products to Europe and other countries.

The Kazakh President also stressed the important role of Tajikistan in combating international terrorism and drew attention to the need for further development of cultural and humanitarian cooperation.

Following the meeting, Nazarbayev laid a wreath at the Statue of Ismoil Somoni, credited with being the founder of a first Tajik state more than 1,000 years ago.

CSTO Member State Presidents Discuss Regional Security in Dushanbe

By Malika Orazgaliyeva

DUSHANBE – The presidents of the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) Council member states met in Dushanbe Sept. 15 to discuss regional security, organisational operations and the results of exercises of the Collective Rapid Reaction Forces.

The meeting was attended by the presidents of Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan, as well as CSTO Secretary General Nikolai Bordyuzha and heads of defence and foreign ministries of the member states.

Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev told the gathering that among the main issues on the organisation's agenda are threats from international terrorist and extremist organisations.

"Unfortunately, we must honestly admit that citizens of the CSTO member states join radical groups and participate in their illegal activities in the Middle East and Afghanistan. This fact requires effective measures from our side," Nazarbayev stressed.

Nazarbayev emphasised the need to provide economic support to Tajikistan, which is located in the foreground of the fight against international terrorism. This year alone, he said, Kazakhstan has sent \$2.7 million in food and construction materials to Tajikistan.

In addition, the President drew the attention of the participants to the situation in Afghanistan.

"Renewal of the military activities in the northern part of Afghanistan raises concerns. In order to adequately respond to the risks and challenges coming from the Afghan territory, it is necessary to increase joint efforts in the framework of the CSTO, both on a bilateral basis and in the framework of other international organisations. Kazakhstan continues to provide technical and humanitarian assistance to Kabul. We annually deliver food, fuel, medicine, as well as educate young Afghans in Kazakhstan's leading universities," he said.

Nazarbayev noted that taking into account the difficult situation in the region, Kazakhstan supports measures to improve the combat capability of the CSTO Collective Rapid Reaction Forces.

"We think it is necessary to hold regular exercises, including unexpected inspections," Nazarbayev said.

Among the session's draft decisions, the Kazakh President highlighted an agreement on cooperation in the field of transportation and other military formations, which regulates the movement of troops, weapons and equipment on the territories of the CSTO member states.

In conclusion, Nazarbayev assured the participants that Kazakhstan is meeting all of its obligations within the CSTO as well as providing humanitarian assistance to the allied countries.

Kazakhstan Brings Message of Dialogue, Pragmatic Solutions to International Issues, Says Deputy FM

By Michelle Witte

ASTANA – Kazakhstan brings to the international stage – and soon, it hopes, to the UN Security Council – an ethos that eschews conflict, that is always ready to sit down for negotiations, and that is interested in finding avenues of cooperation even among the most distant partners, the country's deputy foreign minister told The Astana Times.

"The entire history of foreign policy of Kazakhstan is a demonstration of our ability to negotiate and to reach compromises," said Deputy Foreign Minister Yerzhan Ashikbayev in an interview on Sept. 10. "We clearly have issues where we can take very principled positions, and at the same time, we always demonstrate the ability to negotiate and to reach the desired outcome. ... Some countries hesitate to even demonstrate the willingness to negotiate. This is not the case for Kazakhstan."

Kazakhstan is campaigning for a nonpermanent seat on the UN Security Council for 2017–2018, a seat for which Thailand is also a candidate. What Kazakhstan has to offer, at a time of mistrust between global powers and regions fracturing under protracted conflicts, is a history of solving problems through engagement, Ashikbayev said.

When asked if his country would vote independently of other permanent Security Council members, he said, "We are able to reach desired outcomes not by confronting someone, but by engaging – engaging in dialogue, underlining the importance of trust. [A lack of trust] is one of the main problems of the current world: Nations and leaders just don't trust each other, thereby causing conflicts, causing suspicion, causing instability."

Kazakhstan has demonstrated that engagement and dialogue can be successful, he said, notably in peacefully negotiating all of its



Deputy Foreign Minister Yerzhan Ashikbayev

borders shortly after independence and playing an instrumental role in relaunching negotiations on Iran's nuclear programme. This is the experience Kazakhstan brings to the Security Council.

"We are not dogmatic; we don't have stigmas, previous policies. As a young nation, we are open and flexible. ... It's through engagement and dialogue and cooperation that we would like to solve those issues that we face, to solve those challenges, not through the way of confrontation or conflict. And that's probably an overarching message of Kazakhstan, coming to the UN Security Council."

Through its campaign, Kazakhstan is reaching out to countries it historically has not had much contact with, including states in Africa, Latin America and the Pacific Islands. The expansion is a natural process, Ashikbayev said.

"First of all, Kazakhstan, being the biggest landlocked country; we depend on our neighbours. Clearly, Central Asia is the zone of our substantive national interests. ... But in terms of diversification, we see a great added value in our Security Council campaign in reaching out to the regions, to nations in those distant areas where we don't have diplomatic representation."

might be projects in the economic sphere, these might be cooperation within multilateral institutions – it's very diverse."

The campaign also goes hand in hand with promoting EXPO 2017 in Astana, which Ashikbayev says the country hopes to make a "truly global event."

All of these efforts serve Kazakhstan's interests, he noted. "The more diversified our contacts are the better. We are now just on the verge of becoming a full-fledged World Trade Organisation member – so that will effectively mean that the number of our trade partners will increase. And we need those connections, we need those ties."

And while Kazakhstan would not seem to have much in common with an island like Fiji – where Kazakh Foreign Minister Erlan Idrissov recently attended the Pacific Islands Development forum – there is value in collaborating as "geographically disadvantaged nations," Ashikbayev said. And the need to develop transport and transit potential – a major thrust of Kazakhstan's development at the moment – is common in countries around the world, he noted.

Before either the expo or the UN Security Council vote, however, comes the 70th UN General Assembly (UNGA) and associated summits on countering violent extremism and other topics. Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev will deliver Kazakhstan's traditional messages of engagement, settling conflicts through dialogue and stopping nuclear proliferation – and, as is traditional, is helping a changed nation.

"Each time President Nazarbayev attends the UN General Assembly, Kazakhstan is a different country," Ashikbayev said. "If we look at the way that we've travelled over the past quarter century, Kazakhstan started from being a newly independent state with a very weak economy to its current state as one

of the most active countries in Asia, a net contributor not only to regional but to global security."

At the leaders-level summit on countering violent extremism on the UNGA sidelines, Kazakhstan will call for more work on fighting terrorist ideologies, Ashikbayev said, calling extremism "a threat to the very foundations of our societies."

"You can defeat fighters on the battlefield, but the essential point is to defeat the ideology, and this is the approach that we've taken to that problem," Ashikbayev said. Aspects of an integrated approach were discussed at the regional conference on countering violent extremism in Kazakhstan, he noted, including how to engage national and local governments and nongovernmental organisations.

"Despite the fact that we have been lucky enough to not witness violence here, the threat is imminent, and we are very well aware of it. We are coming to that countering violent extremism summit with the message that the threat is serious, the threat is not only a military one. We need to win back the minds of people, first of all."

Stability is crucial to countering violent messages, he said. "A lot depends on the stability and the successful rehabilitation of Afghanistan. But also, remember, four or five years ago, there were huge hopes for the so-called Arab Spring and what it could bring. And President Nazarbayev at the time was very cautious about such drastic changes in those societies. And he turned out to be right – we've seen how violent events became in Syria, in Iraq. So a moderate approach to a reform agenda would be our choice, and it is our choice here in Kazakhstan. Development can only be based on stability in society."

Kazakhstan's development is attracting attention, he noted. "The experience of Kazakhstan, coming all the way from an underde-

veloped nation with a collapsed economy to its current state, and how we managed our relationships with all our neighbours, is a point of interest for many nations." Many nations have requested bilateral meetings with Nazarbayev on that topic, he said. "There is no universal recipe, but definitely Kazakhstan is seen by many as a success story in terms of nation building, in terms of economic and social development. And from our side, we are very open to sharing that experience."

Kazakhstan, having successfully implemented the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and most of its MDG+ commitments, welcomes the new UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Ashikbayev said. The new goals, which address 169 targets through 17 goals relating to climate change, health, energy, education, agriculture, gender equality and other issues, are due to be adopted during a special conference within the UNGA.

Kazakhstan had already adopted its 2030 Strategy when the MDGs were announced, Ashikbayev pointed out, and the two documents overlapped significantly.

"This time around, we are coming to the SDGs summit with the Kazakhstan 2050 Strategy in our hands," he said. The 2050 Strategy aims to vault Kazakhstan into the ranks of the 30 most developed countries in the world by 2050, in the meantime improving quality of life for its citizens, and covers each and every SDG, Ashikbayev said.

"We have a feeling that Kazakhstan is one step ahead, at least in terms of strategic planning [on] how to make the lives of our people more comfortable, more secure and overall, better. So, as in the case of MDGs and this time around the case of SDGs, Kazakhstan [has] its own strategic planning and its own vision of how to implement those goals on a national level."

ECONOMY

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 23, 2015

EBRD Urges Region-Specific Diversification of Kazakhstan's Economy

By Yerbolat Uatkhonov

ASTANA – Whiteshield Partners, under a programme of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) and the Kazakhstan government, presented a report Sept. 17 with consultancy analyses of the state's 16 regions, identifying challenges and opportunities that can help Kazakhstan diversify its economy and boost its export capabilities.

"Diversification of the economy away from excessive dependence on oil and gas is of the utmost importance for Kazakhstan. To achieve diversification, regions need to work together, building on each other's comparative advantages and economic capabilities," said EBRD Lead Economist Alexander Plekhanov at a roundtable hosted by the Ministry of National Economy in July.

Vice Minister of National Economy Kairbek Uskenbayev agreed



with Plekhanov, saying, "Regional diversification is one of the main elements for successful development of the whole country."

The study examined factors that support the development of knowledge-based export capabilities

in each of Kazakhstan's regions. Analysing over 10 years of detailed regional export data for each sector, the experts compared the development trajectories of the regions and identified region-specific policy priorities. Contrasting

the experiences of three pairs of regions, the report identified specific product areas that each region could potentially develop based on current knowledge and economic capabilities, from hydrometers and pyrometres for Atyrau to electrical light equipment in Pavlodar.

"Kazakhstan has been losing capabilities for many years. For example, in 2002 it had a comparative advantage in shipping and scientific instruments, which was lost in 2013. It doesn't mean that it cannot be used anymore. It means that Kazakhstan doesn't have the comparative advantage. The comparative advantage is a percentage of exports of goods, which is lower than the global average," said Co-Founder and Partner of Whiteshield Partners Fadi Farra at the presentation of the EBRD project on Sept. 17.

He noted that Kazakhstan is still strong in cement and metal production and other core industries, but loses in complex industries.

"The regions' potential is very strong. Their regional capability index is based on three main fundamental values, complexity, diversity and industrialisation, and is very high too. The report specifies what can be done at regional and national levels to diversify the state's economy," Farra said.

The report recommends each region use an individual diversification strategy and take local circumstances into account. Regions that have already succeeded in developing new capabilities over the past 10 years, such as Almaty, now need to focus more on innovation and moving up the value chain in sectors where they have comparative advantages. Regions with less developed capabilities need to broaden their skills and capabilities first, which can be achieved through policies focused on training, improvements in the business environment and better cooperation between regions.

ECONOMY NEWS IN BRIEF

KazMunayGas has received a \$156 million tax bill from the Kazakh government, Rigzone.com reported Sept. 9. The additional charge follows an audit commenced in September 2014 for the period between 2009 and 2012. The bill includes a penalty of 9.7 billion tenge (\$39.8 million, at the time of the report) for late payment, a fine of 10.2 billion tenge (\$41.8 million) and an additional charge of 18.2 billion tenge (\$74.7 million). The company is preparing an appeal and has said it will evaluate the adequacy of its provisions as the case progresses through the court system. KMG's net profit for the six months of 2015 was considerably lower than profit in the same period in 2014: 2.9 billion tenge (\$11.9 million) in 2015, compared to 210 billion tenge (\$862 million) the previous year. KMG Exploration & Production CEO Abat Nursetov resigned on Sept. 8. Chief Financial Officer Dastan Abdulgafarov is currently acting interim CEO.

The Standard & Poor international ratings agency has confirmed Kazakhstan's long and short term ratings in local and foreign currency as BBB/A-2, the Halyk IPO website reports. The S&P report also confirmed the national scale rating of kZAA+. "This outlook remains 'negative' and reflects the agency's view of the significant risks to the budget, external economic and monetary indicators in Kazakhstan," Halyk IPO said. However, the country's budget projections and considerable international reserves are still positive factors, the S&P report said.

Kazakhstan plans to nearly double its output of mineral fertilisers by 2019, Bnews.kz reported on Sept. 22. Chairman of the Committee of Industrial Development and Industrial Safety Amaniyaz Yerzhanov said the output would be increased by 1.7 times compared to 2014 at a recent press conference, noting that the recent transition to inflation targeting had had positive impact on the country's exporters. In the short term, the industry plans to reorient production to the domestic market, increase processing capacity and involve international companies in developing Kazakhstan's chemical processing capabilities, he said. The committee will be actively searching for new markets for mineral fertilisers, he said.

Kazakhstan's Ministry of Investment and Development has announced that 90 projects worth more than 2 trillion tenge (US\$7.5 billion) are being implemented in the country's special economic zones (SEZs), with 16 of them to be put into operation before the end of 2015. The SEZs are designed to be the main driver of investment in the country, and work on building investment attractiveness will be continued, the ministry announced. Over the first eight months of 2015, 13 projects worth 58.6 billion tenge (US\$219.6 million) were launched. The implementation of all the planned projects is expected to create 20,000 jobs, according to the ministry.

The Ministry of Investment and Development announced Sept. 15 that payments made through the electronic government payment system in the country had exceeded 10 billion tenge (US\$37.5 million.) Payments for traffic violation fines made up the biggest share, at 6.8 billion tenge (US\$25.5 million), with payment of state fees comprising the next largest share, followed by tax payments. The e-government portal allows payments for 46 types of fees or services, including utilities, communications and contributions to housing savings programmes.

Vice Minister of Investment and Development of Kazakhstan Albert Rau said that the ideal exchange rate for Russian roubles to Kazakh tenge is 4.5 roubles to the tenge, Bnews reported on Sept. 18. Rau made the statement in response to questions after the Interstate Council for Industrial Security of the Commonwealth of Independent States. That exchange rate will be best for Kazakhstan's industrial and agricultural sectors, he said. The exchange rate at the time of writing was 4 tenge to the rouble.

Kazakh Tenge Rallies Against Dollar Following National Bank Intervention

By Michelle Witte

ASTANA – After sliding to nearly 300 tenge to the dollar on Sept. 16, the National Bank of Kazakhstan intervened and the tenge has rallied to trade at 267 to the dollar at the time of writing. The relatively steady decline and predictions that the currency could fall as low as 400 to the dollar, however, have citizens concerned about the impact the falling tenge will have on their lives.

A report by Bloomberg on Sept. 17 outlined the slide and rally, noting that the currency had traded the day before as low as 299.9 tenge to the dollar – more than 30 percent less than its value when the free-float was launched on Aug. 20 – before the National Bank intervened on the Kazakhstan Stock Exchange by selling \$144 million to deter speculators.

A National Bank statement explained that the bank "does not interfere with the formation of the market level of the tenge exchange rate, but reserves the possibility of participation in the domestic market by foreign exchange intervention, if necessary, to ensure the stability of the country's financial system." Due to volatility in the exchange rate, caused by speculation, it said, the bank had decided to intervene in the amount of \$144 million. The bank intervened again on Sept. 17 with an additional \$270.4 million.

Following the intervention, the tenge rose to 270.5 to the dollar, and has continued to rise, making its biggest gains since Aug. 20. Its swings in value are currently the largest in the world, according to Bloomberg.

Some exchange offices in Almaty and Astana have run out of dollars and euros and stopped selling them, according to an Expert Online report on Sept. 16. One Almaty exchange office manager told the magazine that there were more people wishing to exchange tenge for dollars or euros over the past two days than there had been over the previous week.

Speaking during the Russia-Kazakhstan Interregional Cooperation Forum in Sochi on Sept. 16, President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev acknowledged the economic turbulence, saying crashing export prices were the cause of the decline in trade between the two trading partners, and their currency instability.

"Economies have this tendency – they rise and fall. This is not the first time we are experiencing a crisis," he said, according to a Tengrinews report. "It should be easy to treat this and find a new point to address the issues of increasing trade."

Analyst Anastasia Ignatenko of TeleTrade suggested in the Expert Online report that the new round of weakening of the tenge was due to the decision of the National Bank to reduce the key interest rate to 12 percent to maintain inflation targeting. In February, the bank said it would decrease interest rates by 1 percent each month. "At the moment, the regulator

is completely immersed in the implementation of the policy of inflation targeting to reduce inflation to 6-8 percent in the medium and to 3-4 percent in the long term," Ignatenko said, according to Expert Online.

A weaker tenge will help local companies stay competitive against Kazakhstan's biggest trading partners, Russia and China, according to Bloomberg. Recently, Vice Minister of Investment and Development of Kazakhstan Albert Rau said that the ideal exchange rate for Russian roubles to Kazakh tenge is 4.5 roubles to the tenge in response to questions after the Interstate Council for Industrial Security of the Commonwealth of Independent States. The exchange rate at the time of writing was 4 tenge to the rouble.

While some in the business community have welcomed the new exchange rate, many private citizens are concerned about their decreased purchasing power. Financial columnists and bloggers in the country are beginning to tell citizens to prepare for rates of 300, 350 and 400 tenge to the dollar. In LS Magazine, writer Kuralai Abylgazina, who is predicting a continued decline for the tenge, said "[The free-float] ended the euphoria of 'We are great, we have oil, and the whole periodic table.' Life and market poked our noses into who we really are: third world countries. ... Now we really have to work."

The government has promised to reimburse citizens for losses on tenge deposits and has accelerated plans to raise salaries for public sector employees, which are now to be increased in January. Local officials have been quick to announce agreements with food retailers, promising to hold prices steady, though at the announcement of the free float on Aug. 20, Prime Minister Karim Massimov said that the government would control prices for a few months, but said the market would have to set prices in the long term. The government also recently decided to stop regulating prices for AI 92/93 petrol.

However, Minister of Finance Bakhyt Sultanov told reporters outside the Mazhilis (lower chamber of Parliament) that salaries and purchasing power should not depend on the currency rate, Tengrinews reported on Sept. 18. He said it would take time to adapt to the new principles of letting the market dictate prices and salaries. Asked how Kazakhs can afford to live with the new exchange rate pushing up the prices of imports but without salary adjustments, the minister noted that civil servants' salaries had been raised a number of times in recent years, including a 10 percent raise for public sector employees after the 2014 devaluation.

"Raises should not be connected with the dollar exchange rate, but to labour productivity," Sultanov said, as quoted by Tengrinews. "All expenses of Kazakhs are in tenge. Certainly, imported goods hold a large segment of the market. But the work we are doing to increase the

competitiveness of our domestic enterprises will result in a balance." He did not say when the balance could be achieved.

Bloomberg notes that currency trading volumes are on the rise, with the volume of tenge transactions reaching \$233 million in the Sept. 17 morning session, following an average of \$151 million throughout the year.

Halyk Bank reported on that day that almost 80 percent of the currency-trading transactions it was processing involved selling dollars, not tenge, the report noted.

Halyk Bank called for more transparency in the country's financial markets in a statement published on its website on Sept. 17. The statements said it welcomed the disclosure of trading volumes on the Kazakhstan Stock Exchange, but called it "only a first step to increase the transparency of the financial market of Kazakhstan. Moreover, the National Bank has repeatedly offered to disclose such information to the whole market." The statement also called for the National Bank to increase "professional and correct"

reporting and criticised the bank for publishing incomplete and misleading information. Publishing only general volumes of trading is not enough, Halyk Bank, which was listed as the biggest trader leading up to Sept. 16, said.

"In order to form an objective opinion, we offer to publish in a systematic way, not only the general volume, but the volume of net purchases and sales in the context of market participants. We call upon the National Bank of Kazakhstan to be consistent and to disclose such data exchange trading by banks since August 17, 2015. Moreover, the technical capabilities of the Kazakhstan Stock Exchange allow you to publish not only the volume, but do exchange rates, on which there is the buying and selling of the U.S. dollar," the lender, one of the country's largest, said.

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BUSINESS

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 23, 2015

BUSINESS NEWS IN BRIEF

Kazakhstan is ready to ship the next batch of fifth-generation TE33A locomotives of the Evolution series, built in Kazakhstan, to Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan Temir Zholy reported Sept. 8. An agreement to supply 10 locomotives to Azerbaijan was signed between Azerbaijan Railways and the Lokomotiv Kurastyru Zauyty Company in August, and the first batch of locomotives was delivered to Baku that month. Vice President of the Lokomotiv Kurastyru Zauyty Kanat Nuraly said the company will deliver two locomotives to Baku each month until the end of January 2016. Kazakh-built engines are in use in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Ukraine and Turkmenistan.

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has announced it will provide a five-year loan of \$228 million to develop the small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) sector in Kazakhstan. The loans will be distributed through participating banks and the Damu Entrepreneurship Development Fund. ADB Kazakhstan Country Director Jinlin Yang said the project will focus on lending to businesses in small cities and the regions and will prioritise investment in fixed assets and in supporting women entrepreneurs. The loan agreement was signed by Yang and Chair of Damu's Management Board, Lyazzat Ibragimova. Damu will make the funds available to DeltaBank, KazInvestBank, KazKommertsbank and Tsesnabank, which will extend loans in tenge to their SME clients. The loan is the last part of a \$500 million Small and Medium Enterprise Investment Programme financing facility approved by ADB in September 2010.

Kazakhstan's car-making industry has grown again for the first time since experiencing a 30 percent decline over the past year, Kazinform reported on Sept. 17. Vice Minister of Investment and Development Albert Rau said on the sidelines of the Commonwealth of Independent States Interstate Council for Industrial Safety that the industry had grown by 7 percent in August 2015. There is also growth in the country's machinery sectors, he said, asserting that the growth will continue into the coming fall and winter months.

Astana has hosted the Samsung National Conference of Business Innovation, the Kazakhstan Business Magazine reports, an event that was attended by senior and middle management of government agencies and national companies. The conference was conducted in three sessions focusing on innovation in public infrastructure, education and culture and infrastructure for smart offices. Samsung Electronics Central Eurasia representatives spoke about trends in information technologies and their application in business and demonstrated their latest solutions to specific business challenges, particularly education innovations in use at the Samsung School in Kazakhstan, which combine interactive whiteboards, mobile devices and visualisation systems, as well as other new rugged mobile devices for use in challenging environments, comprehensive management of printing devices, printing outsourcing, innovative video and more.

Meat from Kazakhstan will be sold in Moscow, Bnews reported Sept. 18, following an agreement signed between the Moscow Trading House and Abai Enterprises of Pavlodar at the Kazakhstan-Russia Interregional Cooperation Forum. Abai enterprises will supply up to 2,000 tonnes of meat per month to Moscow, the Moscow regional administration said.

TeliaSonera, the Scandinavian telecommunications operator that is the majority owner of Kazakhstan cellular provider Kcell, has announced that it will pull out of Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Georgia, Moldova, Tajikistan and Nepal, the Wall Street Journal reported on Sept. 17. It is unclear how the withdrawal will affect the service provided by Kcell, one of three licensed GSM operators in Kazakhstan. TeliaSonera CEO Johan Dannelind said that the task will be "difficult and complex."

Start-up Initiative Brings Kazakh Apps to Market

By Julia Rutz

Young and talented programmers Arman Suleimenov, Almas Tuyakbayev and Zhanserik Kenes are enlarging their business after the team received a \$20,000 grant in February as the winners of the Build Your Own Business Start-up competition.

The three friends established the company Zero to One Labs to produce apps for the App Store. They also organised an eight-week summer start-up school where 37 additional iPhone apps were presented. One of the apps, called Kelin, topped the Kazakh App Store, scoring 100,000 users in three weeks and leaving trending apps like WhatsApp, VK, Instagram, YouTube and Skype far behind in terms of local downloads.

Tuyakbayev and Suleimenov graduated from schools abroad and got to know each other only a year before the competition. They met on Facebook to develop Taxi with Friends, a way to transport people to their destinations and let them name the price by the end of the journey.

"Zhanserik is also our partner. He used to be my student. I remembered we had been talking about a couple of ideas, one of which was later realised as the Being Beethoven app-

plication. Another two enthusiastic programmers joined us during the summer school," said Tuyakbayev.

He noted they continued working on new app production and mentoring participants at their school.

"I think it is important to do a project with people you trust. Another necessary condition is to delegate tasks between the team members in accordance with their weak and strong sides. We are all programmers, but, for example, Almas is a good graphic designer. I am more engaged in marketing issues. Each of us has a special talent to bring the company to the next level," said Suleimenov.

The major portion of the grant was used to cover the salaries of the programme's developers. Plans are also underway to rent an office and hire the best employees for the company.

"We don't want to sit and wait, hoping that one of our applications will unexpectedly succeed. We want to cover our expenses while putting the existing apps into operation. For example, the Being Beethoven app has a mechanism for monetisation," said Tuyakbayev.

Suleimenov realises how important it is to attract new users and invest in marketing. While in the United States, he participated in two

projects which failed because of the team's lack of knowledge about promoting a product and making it more competitive in the market.

"We like what we do. This is my stimulus to wake up in the morning. Success is inevitable and we are going to do our best to reach the goal," said Tuyakbayev.

The team is aiming to upgrade some of the apps created during the summer school, like Syntle, Bulbul and Never Drink Alone, which have the highest potential to be promoted in the market, as well as develop a studying programme for the next start-up school.

The Build Your Own Business Start-up competition was established in 2014 by prolific Kazakh blogger and public relations expert Alisher Elikbayev and supported by a prominent businessman, Kenes Rakishev. Kaspi Bank Chairman of the Board Vyacheslav Kim joined the project this year.

"The competition will grow, as well as the prize money and number of investors. It is always difficult to decide who has to win. We see that all the contestants have an entrepreneurial spirit. These are people who want to achieve something in life and the competition is a good opportunity for them," Rakishev said then.



Draft Budget Reveals Lower Growth Expectations

By Michelle Witte

ASTANA – The government of Kazakhstan expects gross domestic product growth of 2.1 percent in 2016, 3.6 percent in 2017 and 2.9 percent in 2018, according to a draft state budget for 2016 – 2018 that was sent to the Kazakh Parliament and seen by Reuters, Reuters and AKIPress reported on Sept. 8.

The new budget reflects a slight scaling back of forecasts for next year and for 2018. Previous GDP growth forecasts were for 2.2 in 2016, 3.3 in 2017, 3.6 in 2018 and 4.1 in 2019, according to AKIPress.

Real GDP growth for 2015 is expected to be 1.5 percent. The draft budget predicts no industrial growth in 2016 and growth

by 3.4 percent and 1.7 percent in 2017 and 2018. Trade turnover is expected to grow by 2.8 percent this year, by 3.1 percent next year, by 4.8 percent in 2017 and by 4.8 percent in 2018, AKIPress reports.

The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU), following the switch to a free-floating exchange for the tenge on Aug. 20, predicts growth in Kazakhstan of less than 2 percent for 2015 and 2016, though it said the move would boost the country's external sector. The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development forecast GDP growth for Kazakhstan at 1.5 percent in February.

Kazakhstan recently announced new subsoil tenders to be auctioned in December, which the EIU says may boost investment. With commodity prices remain-

ing low, the draft budget predicts a decline of 1.3 percent in mining and quarrying from 2015 to 2016, AKIPress reports, with growth resuming at 3.4 percent in 2017.

The draft budget also shows oil production falling to 77 million tonnes next year from 80.5 million tonnes in 2015, Reuters reported.

Deputy Energy Minister Uzbekai Karabalin told reporters on Sept. 9 that Kazakhstan would produce 79 – 80 million tonnes of oil in 2016 if prices remain at \$50 per barrel, Reuters reported that day. If the price drops to \$40, output will be cut to 77 million tonnes; to \$30, 73 million tonnes.

In August, President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev told his government that the country must adapt to oil prices of \$30 – 40 per barrel for the coming years.

Energy Ministry Decreases Five-Year Oil Production Forecast

By Zhaniya Urankayeva

The Kazakh Ministry of Energy has decreased its oil production forecast through 2020 by 11.5 percent. The new forecast has production reaching 92 million tonnes in 2020.

"Oil production will reach 77 million tonnes in 2016 and 92 million tonnes in 2020, which is less than the amount of 3.8 million tonnes and 12 million tonnes correspondingly than were forecasted before," Vice Minister of National Economy Marat Kussainov said at the presentation of the national budget for 2016–2018 in the Mazhilis (lower chamber of Parliament).

The project of the three-year budget is based on the social and econom-

ic development forecast, which was approved by the cabinet in August.

In February, Deputy Energy Minister Uzbekai Karabalin stated that Kazakhstan was planning to increase oil production beginning in 2017, saying, "in spite of the decrease of oil production in the accounting period, it is planned to increase oil production in the following years. In 2017, we plan to increase oil production up to 86 million tonnes and up to 104 million tonnes in 2020. This increase will be connected with development at the Tengiz oil deposit and reopening Kashagan production." Meanwhile, he said that the oil production forecast for 2016 was decreased because of the drop in oil price in the past week.

Businessmen Wary of Changes in Tax Laws

By Adina Nurbergen

ASTANA – The head of Kazakhstan's Lawyers and Entrepreneurs Association Munavara Paltasheva proposed to suspend changes in the tax regime for Kazakhstan's small and medium businesses for the coming three years. A public hearing on tax policy issues in relation to subjects of small and medium businesses involving parliamentarians and ministry officials took place at Kazakhstan's National Chamber of Entrepreneurs (NCE) Sept. 15.

Apart from entrepreneurs, Kazakh Ministry of National Economy and Ministry of Finance officials participated in the event where planned changes in tax administration and NCE proposals regarding an initiative by the government of Kazakhstan in terms of taxation and tax administration were discussed, the press service of the NCE reported. Kazakhstan's entrepreneur associations sent an open letter to Parliament about changes in tax regime.

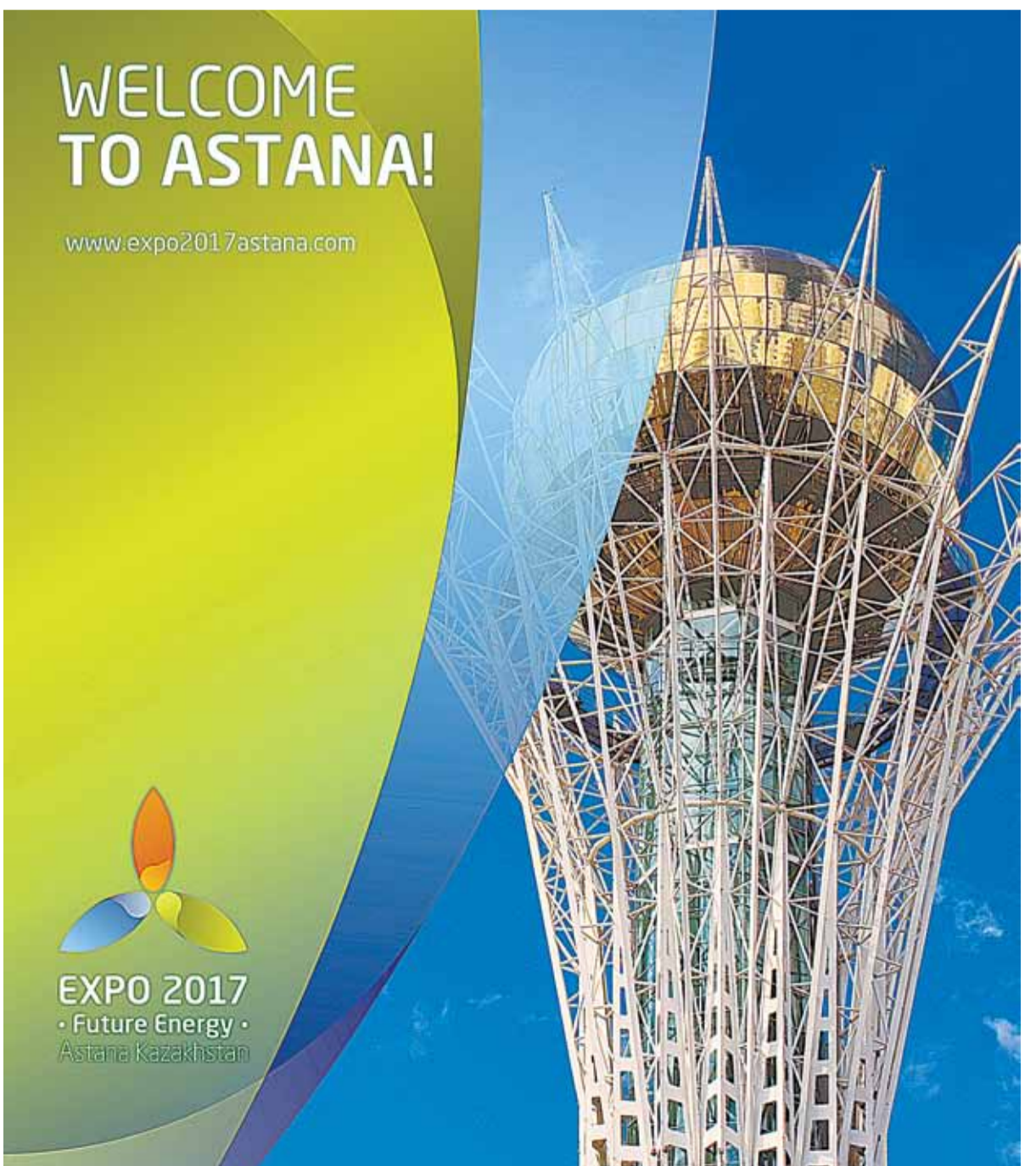
"As company executives and business association members, on behalf of the entire business community, we ask the Parliament of Kazakhstan to pay attention to our concerns over the tightening of tax policy and administration,"

the appeal stated. "When deciding on laws, we ask you to take into account the opinion of the country's business community which creates the economic basis of life for the entire Kazakh society."

It was noted in an appeal that changes and additions to the tax code proposed by ministries of the economic block may put domestic entrepreneurship in unequal conditions compared with business in EAEU member countries and may lead to decreased potential possibilities for Kazakhstan businessmen to become competitive both in domestic and foreign markets.

The head of NCE, Ablai Myrzakhmetov, stressed that there should be no "abrupt moves" in areas like the tariff policy for monopolists and tax policy.

At the behest of the head of state, drastic measures to support domestic entrepreneurship, including changes in the state control and supervision system, simplifying the permitting system, changing legislation to support investment initiatives, financial and non-financial measures within state programmes to support business have been adopted and implemented in the past few years, association participants noted.



EDITORIAL & OPINION

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 23, 2015

Kazakhstan's Bid for UNSC: Time for Younger Nations to Have Louder Voice

On Sept. 15, the 70th session of the United Nations General Assembly kicks off in New York. A record number of heads of state are expected to attend the gathering, mainly in its second week, including President Nursultan Nazarbayev. Established in the autumn of 1945, the United Nations remains the main international organisation and the key political platform for dialogue and interaction for almost every sovereign state in the contemporary world.

The 70th anniversary of the United Nations is an opportunity to reflect, to look back on the UN's history and take stock of its enduring achievements. It is also an opportunity to shine a light where the UN, and the international community as a whole, need to redouble their efforts to meet current and future challenges across the three pillars of the UN's work: peace and security, development and human rights.

Given these factors, the global role of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) and the need for it to reflect the broadest possible range of views, it is surprising that in the 70 years of the UN's existence and in the more than 20 years of independence for Central Asian countries, no country from Central Asia has yet been a member. Kazakhstan rightly hopes to correct this oversight if elected to a two-year term from 2017.

Today, we take the idea of the United Nations for granted, but bringing it to life required huge leaps of statecraft to bridge differences. Every day, the United Nations feeds the hungry, shelters refugees and vaccinates children against deadly diseases. Over the past 70 years, we have witnessed some remarkable achievements: the defeat of smallpox and guinea worm; millions of lives saved by vaccinations, the provision of refugee workers and food aid; the vast improvement in maternal and neonatal health encouraged by the Millennium Development Goals; the brave attempt to shake the world out of its complacency about climate change and the need to preserve ozone, oceans and forests before it is too late.

All of this work is undertaken by UN staff who, each day, do remarkable and often unsung work. People like the UNICEF team in Yemen, striving to vaccinate children; the UNHCR personnel helping unprecedented numbers of people trying to find refuge in Europe this year; the World Food Programme relief teams who saved countless lives after the Nepal earthquake.

The UN has negotiated more than 170 peace deals, kept peace in 60 countries and has fostered democracy in 40. Yet the challenges for the UN in ensuring our collective security, and for the Security Council in particular, are greater than at any time in recent memory. Old tensions that we hoped had been left to history have been revived while new threats have emerged. In Syria and Iraq, we have witnessed the rise of an abhorrent form of violent extremism that threatens the stability of all countries.

It is a world as well in which Central Asia is of increasing importance. As globalisation continues, the region bridges the developed markets of Western Europe and North America with the economic powerhouses to the east. Its rich energy and mineral resources are vital to the economies of partner countries, and its proximity to some of the most challenging countries, such as Afghanistan, means it is on the frontline of global problems like extremism and drugs trafficking.

Given these factors, the global role of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) and the need for it to reflect the broadest possible range of views, it is surprising that in the 70 years of the UN's existence and in the more than 20 years of independence for Central Asian countries, no country from Central Asia has yet been a member. Kazakhstan rightly hopes to correct this oversight if elected to a two-year term from 2017.

Kazakhstan, of course, only became an independent country in 1991, as did four other countries in Central Asia. But in the last two decades, Kazakhstan has shown a total commitment to the principles and mechanisms of the UN.

The nation's history also means it fully understands the importance of tolerance and dialogue. Kazakhstan is home to people of many different backgrounds and faiths who live in harmony within our borders. This respect for tolerance reflects the values the UN has espoused for 70 years. Through initiatives like the Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions and the country's membership in organisations like the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) – both of which Kazakhstan has chaired in recent years – the country does all it can to promote tolerance and moderation internationally.

It is a big step for a young nation like Kazakhstan to stand for the Security Council. But the amount of support the country has received over the last year from countries across the globe demonstrates that it can stand up to the challenge.

Kazakhstan is a successful economy and a stable society. It is a good neighbour and has warm relations with Russia and the United States, with Europe and China as well as developing countries around the world.

Kazakhstan should be determined, whether or not it is successful in being elected to the Security Council, to play its full role in these challenging times of promoting peace and dialogue through the United Nations. But, as the UN looks forward to future milestones, it is also time for Central Asia to have a louder voice in the international community.

General Director of KING: Race for Efficiency Has Started

By Arsen Zhabayev

In this exclusive interview, General Director of the Astana-based Kazakh Institute of Oil and Gas (known by its Russian acronym KING) Dastan Kozhabekov discusses the challenges the oil industry faces and the opportunities the current situation offers.

In late September, the 10th KazEnergy Eurasian Forum "New Energy Horizons: Prospects of Cooperation and Investment" will bring together oil and gas industry professionals from Kazakhstan and many other countries. It is apparent that the industry is going through some turbulent times right now. The world has to face oil price volatility and demand and supply fluctuations. Several countries devaluated their local currencies. All of that builds uncertainty and increases risks for the energy sector. What lies ahead for the Kazakh oil and gas industry and why is it important to have an event like this at such a time? Is this a "feast in time of plague?"

It surely is not a "feast in time of plague!" When are we going to have a better moment to get together and reassess what is going on, if not now? This will be a great opportunity to collectively brainstorm how the industry reacts to the new challenges and how we convert the "race for barrels" of the last couple of decades into the "race for efficiency." This is a unique platform to set up the dialogue between industry professionals and other stakeholders, such as national companies, relevant ministries and other state institutions.

Now we live in times of all kind of divergent forecasts for the future. Some are crying blue murder and some are overestimating how much the crisis is an opportunity. Here at KING we are staying neither pessimistic nor overly optimistic. It is important to evaluate the situation realistically and act accordingly. Yes, there is crisis. Yes, it demands internal changes in the way we do things, but it is obvious that the oil and gas industry will handle it and hopefully come out of it stronger. This is what we are working for.

So you are saying that the oil industry profession will stay in demand no matter what. How about the growing popularity of electric cars all over the world?

The Kazakh Institute of Oil and Gas

The Joint Stock Company "Kazakh Institute of Oil and Gas" (KING) is one of the largest engineering companies in Kazakhstan. It has a great deal of experience, providing various design services and delivering integrated scientific and engineering support for the projects in oil and gas and electric power industries.

The company possesses all the necessary licenses for implementing engineering projects, including the 1st category State License.

Among its clients and partners are the largest and the most respected national and international companies which are running the most advanced projects in oil and gas and energy sectors. The offices of KING are located in Astana, Almaty and Aktau cities. The subsidiary company – JSC NIPI "Caspimunaigas" in Atyrau – is one of the oldest design and engineering institutes in Kazakhstan. This company celebrates 75th anniversary in 2015 and has contributed to almost every large oil and gas project in Kazakhstan throughout the time.

The personnel of KING group is comprised of more than 800 professionals, including more than 500 highly-qualified and experienced engineers.

KING is an active member of a large number of industrial associations such as the National Chamber of Entrepreneurs "Atameken", "KAZENERGY" Association, Association of the Service Companies of Kazakhstan, Union of Engineering Companies, Kazakhstan Association of Energy Auditors and others.

Dastan Kozhabekov, 49, graduated from the Almaty Institute of Architecture and Construction, Industrial and Civil Construction Department with a degree in construction engineering. He received his MBA degree (Innovation and Global Leadership Program) from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT, Boston, USA). He also completed internships at Georgetown University (Washington, USA) and Cambridge University (UK), as well as at Enbridge (Canada).

He started his career as a design engineer, and since 1997 worked in a number of top level management positions at NC KazakhOil, KazTransOil, KazPetroMac, and KING. He was appointed general director of KING in April 2014.



Dastan Kozhabekov

Not only electric cars can be mentioned here. The world is on the verge of a lot of technological breakthroughs. Some trends do seem to have the potential to influence the traditional energy industry. Quantum energy storage units' emergence has a chance of transforming the energy balance in the world by restructuring the oil consumption. Nuclear energy is another area of promising advances. Further development of fast breeder reactors capable of accumulating fissile elements and using high density nitride uranium-plutonium fuel can change the landscape of energy sources.

However, nowadays these technologies are just shaping up; there is not enough computing power and other tools. Lack of the right algorithms is the other side of the problem. At the same time, oil has found so many applications in our life, not only as a fossil fuel source but as a source of a huge number of petrochemical products. So, I am quite confident that the profession will be around for many years to come. But we should all understand that the "oilman of tomorrow" is a very different kind of a professional who is very advanced with IT technologies. Digital oilfield systems, wireless sensors which not only collect the information but also process it in real time and other information technology applications are becoming more and more of an everyday reality in the Kazakh oil and gas industry. KING is staying on top of this trend; we are transforming what a conventional design engineer's workplace used to be. Applying cloud computing to design activities, using parametric modelling and BIM-technologies allow us to stay up-to-date and keep the quality at a very high level.

Is this crisis a threat or an opportunity? We feel like in terms of the

diversification of the local Kazakh economy it is definitely an opportunity. Finally, the oil companies have to really think of how to lower the costs and how to structure the expenditure. "The race for the fast revenues" has to become "The race for efficiency," like we said already. Never before has the need to increase capitalisation and save been so important. But you need to save right and stay smart about the potential threats for your production processes. How do you achieve that? It can be achieved if the technical solutions are provided by people with a skill set combining technical and managerial competence. So, the demand for these competent companies such as KING is increasing under these conditions. We can offer solutions which can help optimise both capital expenditure and operational costs. The clients nowadays are in much need of economically-sound technical solutions and quality engineering is in high demand.

Nonetheless, KazMunayGas has sold KING's shares...

The shares were sold as part of the privatisation plan of Samruk Kazyna. We are looking at this the way that privatisation proves that our company has great potential. The investors apparently agree with us and they see the future in this business as well. And we see another objective confirmation that we are competent and popular and that is, of course, a positive sign for us. It is important to realise that the value of KING is not the buildings or design software packages; it is in the brainpower of our staff, people who ultimately generate that value for our shareholders. The fact that the company was acquired for a decent amount of money proves that KING is valuable in terms of its team, its know-how and its competence and knowledge of the market.

Does that mean that engineers should not be afraid to become unemployed?

When we talk about how KING's team is valuable, we need to realise that we are not only talking about the technical competence of the engineering team. It is also managerial competence which leads the company to success. When the strategy of where the company needs to be going is defined, it is very important for its successful implementation that the organisational chart is aligned with this direction and allows achieving strategic goals.

This is why when I became the General Director, building an efficient managing team was my top priority. I am proud to talk about that because I am no less confident in the top professional level of KING's management than in the qualification of our experienced engineers. But what is the managerial competence? It is the grand total of knowledge, experience and leadership of the people in charge. Leadership is a very important quality of a good manager – to be able to inspire people and lead by example. This is the type of people we have here at KING, because special attention was paid to these quality combinations when the team was being built. We managed to combine previous outside-of-the-energy sector experience (banking sector, logistics, finances, private business, etc.) with the deep understanding of oil and gas industry amongst our top management. We are well balanced with experienced staff members whose expertise roots back to the early ages of the Kazakh oil industry and young energetic IT and engineering professionals who give us an edge in that "smart" oil and gas industry of the future we talked about. So this synergy of the experience and youth allows us to be optimistic about our future.

Do you have your own recipe of

how to develop those leadership traits and not get rusty as a professional?

The recipe is one and only. Work hard and work a lot. Stay open and transparent; try to constantly learn new things, continue to grow and try to pay attention to as much detail as possible about your trade. Gather the best professionals around you and allow them to do their job and they will help you develop as well. When I was studying for my MBA at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), I had some class mates who were 56 years old! While studying in the U.S., I observed the formula which seemed to work great there – every six years you have to go through an education course. This will not only boost your career, but also develop your brain muscle and help to not get rusty.

On a side note, I am now working on a panel of judges for the Innovation Man contest; the winner will be selected at the final stage during the KazEnergy Youth Forum. You should see how many talented, motivated, young and energetic guys take part in that event! I genuinely like participating in such activities because the energy and the optimism there are very contagious. When you see these motivated youth full of spirit and when you understand what they are capable of, you realise that tomorrow these young people will live in a totally different world which they will change themselves. And all that is taking into account that the oil and gas industry is and has always been very conservative. I actually sit on similar committees, scientific and technical boards, award panels and so on quite often. And when you get such exposure it is obvious that the ideas are there, the understanding of the modern world, in all its complexity, is there and Kazakhstan innovators have a lot to offer.

What do you think motivates these guys to go in for science? How do you make the youth more involved in the world of R&D?

The government can play a part in motivating the young guys to pursue a career in science or R&D or engineering. The mechanisms of science and industry synergy should be created and developed by the state, because unfortunately the industry does not formulate the problems for scientists now. There is a gap between what the industry needs and what the R&D researchers work on. A challenging task motivates the scientist more than anything else just by itself. Of course, the state and the companies at their level have to create the conditions for this kind of people to realise their potential. The tasks have to be formulated, the international cooperation channels need to be built and both financial and non-financial incentives have to be developed. The people who pursue a scientific career and plan to receive a long education have to be properly compensated through generous grants and allowances. This would allow them to concentrate on their research activities and not be distracted. On the other hand, this would automatically cut off the people just trying to make their resume look good.

In one of his lectures a few years ago, President Nursultan Nazarbayev mentioned the quote from Winston Churchill, who said in 1943 that "the empires of the future are the empires of the mind." Today, when we create a chance for these young guys, when we give them a platform for growth like the KazEnergy Youth Forum, Innovation Man contest or Tech Garden Cup, when we give them career opportunities within engineering or any other companies for that matter, we are building our own future with our own hands – the empire of the mind of the future Kazakhstan.

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OPINIONS

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Kazakhstan Addresses Security Challenges through Collective Efforts, Top Official Says

By Michelle Witte

How would you describe the level and the focus of cooperation within the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO), and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) for that matter, in fighting terrorism and extremism? How would you summarise the results of the CSTO meetings in Dushanbe on Sept. 14?

Kazakhstan considers the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation and the Collective Security Treaty Organisation as key mechanisms of providing regional security.

From its outset, the SCO was designed as a multifunctional multilateral structure. It does not stipulate military cooperation in the classic sense of the term and is not a military bloc.

In addition, the SCO does not apply the generally accepted principle of collective security in which aggression against one member state is considered an aggression against the other member states ("one for all and all for one").

The priority task of the organisation is countering "three evil forces," i.e. terrorism, separatism and extremism. The Regional Anti-Terror Structure (RATS), which includes experts from all six member states, was created to solve these problems. It coordinates the interaction on identification and assessment of terrorist threats, development of a joint response measures, information exchange and personnel training.

Joint anti-terrorist exercises are conducted regularly under the auspices of the SCO RATS. An agreement on cooperation and coordination of border issues was signed at the SCO's latest summit in Ufa on July 10 in order to block penetration of persons involved in terrorist activities in the territories of SCO member states. In addition, it was decided to elaborate a SCO Convention on Combating Extremism.

The Collective Security Treaty Organisation was established on the basis of the Collective Security Treaty of May 15, 1992 to secure efficient defence against an external military aggression. It has formed a unified system of coordination, which includes combat use planning, control of military contingents, military training and logistical support.

In recent years, the CSTO is being adapted to meet new challenges and threats, such as international terrorism, drug trafficking, illegal migration and cybercrime.

Today, the Collective Rapid Reaction Forces (CRRF) are optimised to fulfil various tasks – from repelling an armed attack from outside to conduction of special operations to combat drug trafficking. The CRRF includes units of the armed forces, police and intelligence services.

At the same time, the CSTO is a military-political organisation, which is designed to participate in the fight against international terrorism by using military means. For this purpose, annually trainings and exercises are held to enhance combat skills and coordination.

In May 2015, such exercises were held in Tajikistan for the first time in the form of a sudden inspection. This included regrouping and de-



Nurlan Yermekbayev

ployment of more than 2,500 troops, 200 items of military equipment and 20 aircraft of different types in the area of the Tajik-Afghan border.

On Sept. 15, Dushanbe hosted a regular session of the CSTO Council. The main theme of the session concerned the issues of countering contemporary risks and threats, as well as considering the results of the CRRF sudden inspection.

During the session, the council signed a protocol on the composition and basing of Collective Air Force and a decision on the system of CSTO Collective Forces management.

As we see it, issues of securing transport needs for joint events and actions in the framework of the CSTO (both on railway and in air) were one of the priorities of the summit.

In a joint statement at the Dushanbe summit, the heads of CTSO member states expressed deep concern over the activities of terrorist and extremist organisations that feed the political, religious, social radicalism and spread of international crime.

Of particular concern is the worsening situation on the borders of the CSTO responsibility zone, unresolved regional conflicts, activation of the ISIS terrorist group and the turning of Afghanistan into one of the world's largest centres of drug production.

The document notes that the CRRF is becoming an important security factor in the CSTO responsibility zone, including control of extremist and terrorist aspirations around the perimeter of the external borders of the organisation's member states.

Some outside observers have recently concluded that neither ISIS nor instability from Afghanistan represent immediate threats to Kazakhstan. Do you think the threat to Kazakhstan is being underrated?

Because of its balanced foreign policy, Kazakhstan does not face a threat of direct military aggression and maintains friendly relations with all states.

At the same time, we should not underestimate existing and potential risks and challenges.

True, in this interconnected world, problems that seem distant can suddenly become close. For example, the long-term socio-political crisis in Afghanistan, instability in the Middle East and some African countries today have become one of the causes of the refugee crisis in Europe, which is located quite far from these regions.

The situation in Afghanistan where the Taliban movement con-

trols about half of the country's territory and accounts for more than 40,000 militants is a natural concern for us. Today, there are eight training centres of the ISIS terrorist group on the territory of Afghanistan. Some of the participants come from the post-Soviet countries.

Radically minded people have begun travelling to Syria and Iraq, where they are brainwashed and trained to acquire terrorist skills. According to experts, today the number of radicals from Central Asia in the Middle East exceeds 2,000.

Several hundred of our citizens, including women and children, left Kazakhstan for the areas in Syria and Iraq controlled by terrorist groups. Dozens of them have already died. This is a result of their tragic delusion. I am quite certain that none of them will have a happy future as long as they are associated with international terrorist organisations.

In the future, our region could face a massive return of bandits who have links to international terrorist structures and have received money from abroad.

In practical terms, the threat posed by ISIS and other international terrorist organisations is connected to the spread of the ideology of violent extremism. This propaganda is not limited to the Middle East region and is conducted not only in Arabic but also in other languages.

Unfortunately, today the terrorists manage to work quite freely in the information field.

Therefore, it is only natural that countering this propaganda was the focus of discussions involving politicians and experts during a number of regional conferences organised in the continuation of the Washington Summit on Countering Violent Extremism.

Kazakhstan supports the international community's efforts in this direction. On June 29-30, Astana hosted a conference of ministers and high representatives of nine countries of Central and South Asia, which was also attended by official delegates of nine partner states and 11 international organisations, international experts and representatives of non-governmental sector to discuss countering violent extremism.

Current discussions about countering violent extremism focus on the need to take an integrated approach in opposing that ideology. What specifically is the Security Council doing to help facilitate cooperation among Kazakhstan's military, legal, penal and social entities in order to effectively counter violent extremist messages?

In Kazakhstan, measures to prevent violent extremism are systemic and based on broad support from civil society.

In order to implement the adopted State Programme on Combating Religious Extremism and Terrorism in 2013-2017, the government has allocated about \$600 million.

The Anti-Terrorist Centre was created to coordinate the work of state bodies in this direction. The priority of its work is prevention and campaigns to raise awareness of the threats associated with extremism, which involve theologians, psychologists and close relatives of

potential recruits for international terrorist organisations.

The government recently helped launch the Akniet rehabilitation centre on de-radicalisation of certain categories of our citizens.

Overall, because of the joint efforts of government and civil society, our compatriots began better realising the futility of a radical ideology. For example, last year more than 80 people changed their minds about going to the regions controlled by extremists.

Kazakhstan's Security Council is an advisory body chaired by the President. Given the diverse nature of the risks, challenges and threats to national security, the Council includes the Prime Minister, Chairs of the Chambers of Parliament, Secretary of State, Head of the Presidential Administration, Secretary of the Security Council, and the leaders of defence and law enforcement agencies.

Thus, the principle of collegiality and interagency cooperation is already laid out at the stage of preparation of proposals to the head of state.

To ensure the authority of the President of Kazakhstan in the field of security, the Security Council coordinates the activities of government agencies involved in national security.

The main format is preparation and organisation of meetings and daily briefings of the Security Council to discuss most important issues. They are not public, but independent experts, representatives of business and academics are involved in the process of preparation.

Supporting institutions are the council of experts, inter-agency panels, which conduct preliminary examination of materials and rec-

ommendations for subsequent submission to the Security Council.

You previously worked as Kazakhstan's ambassador to China. Does your appointment as Secretary of the Security Council signal an interest by Kazakhstan's leadership to work more closely with China on security issues, or to better understand their perspective? How would you assess how China's role in regional security is developing, especially in light of its call last year for a new Asian security concept?

I am not inclined to support a hypothesis on direct correlation between the personnel-related decisions and geographical associations of someone's previous jobs. In those cases, a set of factors is considered.

Kazakhstan successfully cooperates with all states, including on issues of international security.

Along with our main strategic partners, China plays a special role in the system of regional security.

An important contribution of Beijing in this respect is economic assistance. China has become one of the main trade and investment partners for all countries in the region. Its concept of the Economic Belt of the Silk Road suggests implementation of large scale infrastructure projects linking Europe and Asia.

Special funds were created to this end – the Silk Road Fund of \$40 billion and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank with a capital of \$100 billion.

Over the past two years, Kazakhstan and China signed a number of bilateral agreements on investment projects totalling \$73.5 billion.

Kazakh-Chinese cooperation in the field of security is based on three pillars.

The first one is a common interest

in peace and stability in the region, as well as a common vision of challenges and threats to regional security.

The second one is collaboration within international organisations, including the SCO and the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA). The latter is an initiative of the President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev, which he put forward in 1992. Today, China currently holds chairmanship of the conference. It is not by coincidence that at the May 2014 CICA summit in Shanghai, the concept of universal Asian security was proposed.

Finally, the most important aspect is the high level of cooperation and personal trust between the leaders of the two countries.

Earlier in September, Nazarbayev at the invitation of President of China Xi Jinping paid a state visit to China. This is the fourth meeting of the two leaders this year.

During the talks, a joint declaration on a new stage of all-round strategic partnership was adopted. As a result of the visit, Kazakhstan signed \$23 billion in agreements with China. Agreements on the establishment of about 45 new enterprises in the manufacturing industry in Kazakhstan were approved.

A high frequency of meetings is observed between the foreign ministries, intelligence services and law enforcement agencies. Inter-parliamentary, cultural and humanitarian relations are developing well too.

In general, long-term geopolitical factors determine the importance of Kazakh-Chinese cooperation.

In the interview with the Xinhua news agency on Aug. 28 the Kazakh President highlighted that maintaining good neighbourly relations with China is one of the main priorities of Kazakhstan's foreign policy.

"Looking ahead, I see an upward trajectory of the development of our relations," he underlined.



THE REPUBLIC OF KAZAKHSTAN IS SEEKING A SEAT ON THE UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL AS A NON-PERMANENT MEMBER FOR 2017-2018. OUR PRIORITIES WITHIN THE UNITED NATIONS REFLECT FOUR PRIMARY ISSUES FACING THE WORLD TODAY: FOOD SECURITY, WATER SECURITY, ENERGY SECURITY AND NUCLEAR SECURITY.

IN THE 23 YEARS SINCE OUR INDEPENDENCE, KAZAKHSTAN HAS WORKED TIRELESSLY TO ADDRESS THESE ISSUES IN OUR OWN COUNTRY AND BEYOND. AMONG MANY OTHER INITIATIVES AND ACHIEVEMENTS, KAZAKHSTAN IS CURRENTLY:

ONE OF THE WORLD'S LARGEST GRAIN PRODUCERS AND WHEAT EXPORTERS. WE HAVE DISTRIBUTED WHEAT AND FOOD TO NATIONS IN NEED.

A CONSTRUCTIVE INNOVATOR IN WATER SECURITY COOPERATION AND TECHNOLOGIES. WE HAVE MADE GREAT STRIDES IN THE RESTORATION OF THE ARAL SEA.

AN ACTIVE SUPPORTER OF DEVELOPING A GREEN ECONOMY AND ALTERNATIVE ENERGY SOURCES THROUGH OUR GREEN BRIDGE INITIATIVE AND AS HOSTS OF EXPO 2017, THEME OF WHICH IS "FUTURE ENERGY".

A GLOBAL LEADER IN NUCLEAR NONPROLIFERATION, DISARMAMENT AND SECURITY, AN INITIATOR OF ADOPTING A UNITED NATIONS DECLARATION ON A NUCLEAR-WEAPON-FREE WORLD AND A SPONSOR OF THE ATOM PROJECT, A WORLDWIDE PETITION CAMPAIGN TO PERMANENTLY END NUCLEAR WEAPONS TESTING.

These issues are complex and interdependent. They require global cooperation and relationship building. Kazakhstan has come a long way in a short time because we know that cooperation is the key to success. We are dedicated to knowledge and resource sharing in order to help make the world a better, more secure place for its citizens.

The achievement and maintenance of international peace and global security are paramount to the success of the planet and its people. In Kazakhstan, we are ready to do our part to ensure that success as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council.

For more information and a video on Kazakhstan's initiatives, please visit mfa.gov.kz



A diverse career in the military, business, diplomacy and government

Nurlan Yermekbayev, 52, is a sinologist with over 20 years of experience working with or on relations with China, including as a Soviet military staff officer – analyst in the 1980s and an ambassador for an independent Kazakhstan in recent years.

Having graduated from the Moscow-based Military Institute of the Soviet Ministry of Defence in 1986 with honours with a major in Chinese language, he served in the army until retiring in 1991. According to his official biography, Yermekbayev worked in various private banks and companies in Kazakhstan until 1999 when he set up the first representative office of the Halyk Bank, one of Kazakhstan's biggest second-tier banks, in China.

In 2003, Yermekbayev was tasked with setting up Kazakhstan's first diplomatic mission in Singapore and worked on organising President Nursultan Nazarbayev's state visit to that country two months later. In 2004, he was appointed the head of the newly established Centre for Foreign Policy at the Akorda Presidential Residence, assuming also the position of an advisor to the President in 2006. In 2007-2010, he served as deputy foreign minister of Kazakhstan, overseeing bilateral and multilateral relations with countries in Asia and Africa, where he was known for promoting the idea of Kazakhstan's chairmanship in the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) and where he headed a working group developing the country's Foreign Policy Concept.

Yermekbayev served as assistant to the President for foreign policy in 2010-12, a period marked by such important international initiatives and events as Kazakhstan's chairmanship in the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in 2010 and in the OIC in 2011-12.

As ambassador in Beijing in 2012-14, he was credited with contributing to the expansion of commercial ties between Kazakhstan and China, including through the signing of \$70 billion worth of bilateral deals in the following years. Kazakhstan's diplomacy also scored success as China decided to assume the chairmanship in the Conference of Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA), an important initiative of Kazakh President, from 2014 onwards.

Yermekbayev has served as Assistant to the President – Secretary of the Security Council since Nov. 2014.

EURASIA&WORLD

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 23, 2015

US Focus on Central Asia Waning as Nation's Security Interests Dissipate, Experts Warn

By Michelle Witte

ASTANA – The United States security interests in the region are dissipating along with the country's focus on Central Asian and Kazakhstan policy, said U.S. scholars at the Sept. 9 New Security Trends in Central Asia conference at the Library of the First President in Astana.

"There's a sense right now, that I think is pervasive in the world that I operate in, that Central Asia is becoming less of a priority for the United States," said Jeffrey Mankoff, associate director and fellow with the Washington-based Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) Russia and Eurasia Programme.

American experts Mankoff, Research Associate William Carter from the CSIS, Academic Dean and Professor of Central Asian Studies Roger Kangas of the Near East South Asia Centre for Strategic Studies (NESA) and Associate Professor of Central Asian Studies at NESA Brianna Todd emphasised that they were presenting expert opinions, not U.S. government policy. Still, a few themes emerged: rather than facing new threats, the region was still grappling with the

challenges of decades past; security aside, relationships between the U.S. and the region had not developed significantly and the ability of external actors to influence the region is limited.

"In focusing on the security aspect of the relationship, a lot of the things that underpinned the U.S. policy in the previous era [pre-9/11] fell by the wayside, including a lot of the emphasis on economic reform, liberalisation and democratisation, an area where the countries of Central Asia have not made, for the most part, terrific progress in the years since they became independent," Mankoff said in his presentation. "And I would argue that that lack of progress is in some ways a liability, both in terms of security issues and in terms of the future of American engagement in the region."

The U.S., after its engagements in Iraq and Afghanistan, is tired of being involved in overseas conflicts and challenges, Mankoff said. The rationale for U.S. engagement in Central Asia that has operated for the last 15 years is losing relevance and the security and economic case for continued engagement has not yet been made. Unless a compelling case can be made, U.S. engagement will lapse in the post-2015 period –

not a good outcome for the region or for the U.S., he said.

Some of this exhaustion may come from dealing with a region that has grappled with the same challenges for 20 years, as Todd noted. "This past week, Dr. Kangas and I were here with many experts from the region to discuss new security challenges in Central Asia. ... And what we came to the conclusion of, is that many of the things we are calling 'new security challenges' are in fact many of the issues that have been challenges for the past 20–25 years," she said. "Everything from environmental concerns, such as managing water resources; climate change here in the region; demographic changes resulting from migration and population shifts in these countries; and economic development and integration or lack thereof."

Since independence, differences between the Central Asian states have grown rather than shrunk, some experts noted, and despite talk of increasing connectivity, deep divisions remain. "We often talk about how regional cooperation is something we need more of ... but our group decided that what we've seen over the past 25 years, is really regional disintegration," Todd said echoing earlier messages from

regional officials, including Kazakh Foreign Minister Erlan Idrissov. "A lot of the countries in the region are taking [unilateral or bilateral] approaches to these problems ... and we're not seeing the regional approaches that perhaps are needed."

She also noted that external pushes for regional integration – or any other goal – can't be successful without regional will. "I think one of the takeaways from this past week has been [is that] the policies of external actors matter less than one would think. Because really [what] it comes down to [is] what are the policies of countries in this region? How can they work together or not work together, and what are the consequences for the countries as a result of that? The U.S. will always have interests in the region ... but that matters less than ... Kazakhstan's interests in the region, or Uzbekistan's. And I think ultimately, those are the issues that have to be resolved."

The experts also denied the existence of a new "Great Game" in Central Asia, saying that Russia, China and the U.S. are not vying for interest in the region and that such an effort would be unprofitable for the U.S.

"If we start competing, if we start seeing it as a zero sum game, ultimately we're at such a disadvantage,

it becomes a problematic dynamic for us," Kangas said in response to questions, noting that the U.S. is in some ways an outsider in the region. "But the U.S. can play a role as an innovator; as an economic partner, when needed; as a supporter of different efforts in the region [on developing] economic ties, developing militaries, developing civil societies. The U.S. has quite a few resources and a good deal of experience in these areas that we've applied elsewhere, and it could obviously fit well in Central Asia."

The U.S. in the past has sometimes made the mistake of seeing things as a choice of one external model or another, he said, and must abandon that in favour of working with states on their unique development trajectories. "I think ultimately what we're looking at is, can we help make the Kazakh model better? Can we help make the Uzbek model better? Can we work with countries in the region as partners?"

"At the end of the day, the U.S. is not going to be the major driver of political or economic developments either inside the countries of Central Asia or in the region as a whole," Mankoff said. It's simply too far away, has too many other challenges and doesn't have the

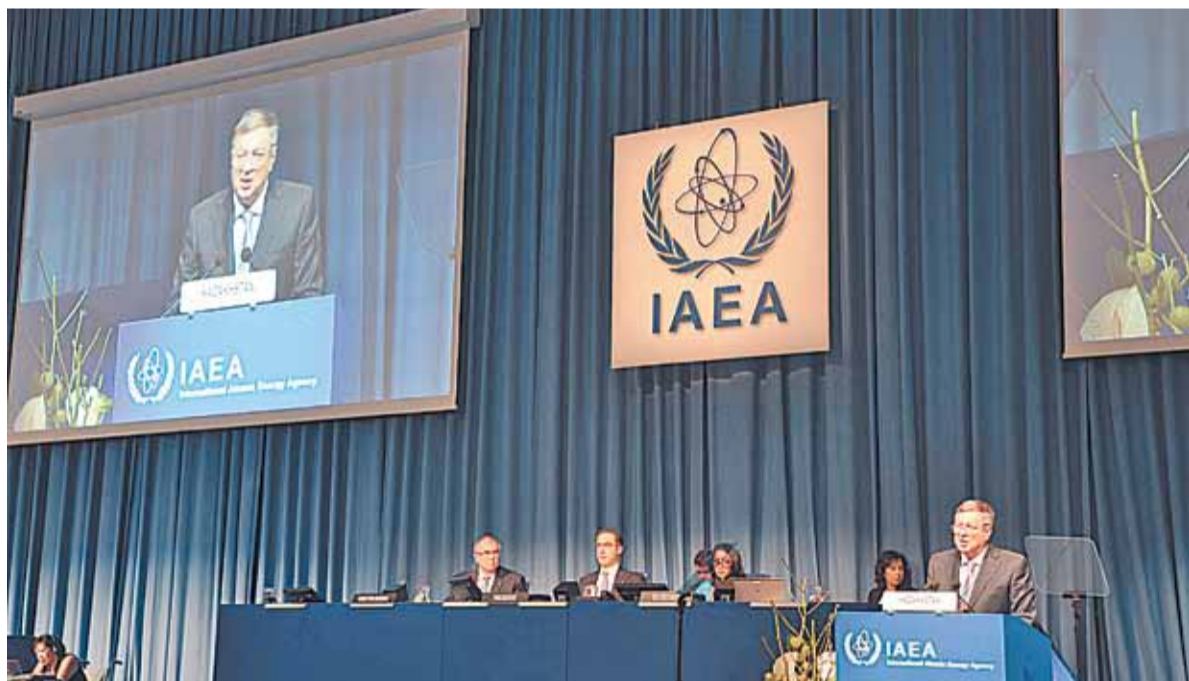
interests in the region that China – now the largest single trading partner of four Central Asian states – and Russia do.

"However, the U.S. can do things to contribute in a positive way to the development, stabilisation and security of Central Asia," he said, while not framing its engagement as a struggle for influence with the region's neighbours.

What the U.S. can contribute, Mankoff said, is "soft infrastructure ideas," including best practices in border and customs processes, for example, or training on ensuring that contracts are enforced to ensure the legal environment in the region is attractive to business. In many ways, he said, the U.S. and the Chinese approach – which currently focuses on bigger, physical infrastructure projects – are very compatible: one eliminates physical barriers, the other process-based ones. The challenge will be for the two powers to find a way to integrate their two strengths in regional projects, he said.

Cybersecurity is another area in which the U.S. could play a useful role. With an increasingly digitised government and plans to create an international financial centre in Astana, cybersecurity must be given proper attention, Carter said. Governance, energy and finance are some of the areas that draw the most cyber attacks. The U.S. could play a helpful role as a partner for education and training in how to identify and respond to threats. "The U.S. wants to engage with the rest of the world [on cybersecurity]," he said.

Kazakh Delegation Presents Efforts on Nuclear Energy, Security at IAEA General Conference in Vienna



Minister of Energy Vladimir Shkolnik addresses the IAEA General Conference in Vienna.

By Malika Orazgaliyeva

ASTANA – The 59th session of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) General Conference opened in Vienna on Sept. 14 and will continue until Sept. 18, the press service of the Kazakh Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) reported.

This main annual meeting of delegations from the agency's 165 member states will consider the IAEA Annual Report, which covers the agency's activities in peaceful nuclear energy use, international cooperation in ensuring nuclear and radiation safety, nuclear safeguards and the nuclear nonproliferation regime. Delegates will also discuss the programme and budget of the IAEA and the staffing of the Secretariat.

"The agency has so much to offer in this area that I often summarise our work as Atoms for Peace and Development," Director General of the IAEA Yukiya Amano said in his opening remarks distributed by the organisation. "We make peaceful nuclear technology available to improve the welfare and prosperity of the people of the world."

After welcoming Guyana, the Republic of Djibouti and Vanuatu as newest member states of the IAEA, Amano pointed out the clear links between the work of the IAEA and the 17 new United Nations Sustainable Development Goals that are

expected to be adopted by governments in New York next week. "Areas covered by both include energy, food security and nutrition, human health and environmental protection, as well as the management of water resources," Amano said. "I very much welcome the fact that there is explicit recognition in the new development goals of the importance of science and technology in advancing development."

"Last month, I signed a Host State Agreement and a related technical agreement with the government of Kazakhstan, establishing an IAEA bank of low-enriched uranium (LEU) in that country," Amano continued. "A second technical agreement was concluded with the operator of the IAEA LEU Bank. This is a significant step forward. The legal framework is now fully in place and we can move toward full-scale implementation."

"The IAEA LEU Bank will serve as a supply of last resort. It is a mechanism to provide confidence to countries that they will be able to obtain LEU to make fuel for nuclear power plants in case of an unforeseen disruption to their supplies that cannot be remedied by commercial means. I am grateful to the government of Kazakhstan for hosting the IAEA LEU Bank," Amano added.

A delegation from Kazakhstan led by Minister of Energy Vladimir Shkolnik took part in the conference. It includes senior representa-

tives from the MFA, President of national atomic company Kazatomprom Askar Zhumagaliyev, officials from the National Nuclear Centre of Kazakhstan and other entities.

At the opening of the general conference, Shkolnik reflected on the achievements of his country in nuclear disarmament and nonproliferation and the effective cooperation between Kazakhstan and the IAEA on peaceful nuclear energy use. Participants were informed about Kazakhstan's plans to develop its national nuclear energy programmes and atomic sphere. The member states' attention was also drawn to the initiatives of President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev in the field of nuclear nonproliferation, including the ATOM Project.

On the sidelines of the conference, Shkolnik held bilateral meetings with Amano as well as with the heads of delegations from Iran, the U.S., Japan, France, Russia and India to discuss a wide range of bilateral and multilateral cooperation issues, including preparations for the international specialised exhibition EXPO 2017 in Astana. Kazatomprom is hosting an exhibition at the Vienna International Centre for the duration of the conference. Overall, several dozen exhibits and side events are scheduled from Sept. 14–18.

The IAEA was established in 1957. Kazakhstan became the 121st IAEA member state on Feb. 14, 1994.

Top UN Officials: Global Nuclear-Test Ban Urgently Needed

Continued from Page A1

Ban voiced support for Kazakhstan's efforts in nuclear-test ban activity, emphasising its leading role and the role of the nation's president in this activity.

Kazakh Permanent UN Representative Kairat Abdrakhmanov echoed his comments.

"Despite being the largest producer and supplier of natural uranium in the world, Kazakhstan's irrevocable refusal to join the nuclear club proves that harmony and cooperation can be stronger armaments for global peace and security than any weaponry," he said.

The secretary-general noted the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), which was adopted in 1996 as an essential building block for achieving this goal as a legally-binding, verifiable means by which to constrain the quantitative and qualitative development of nuclear weapons, must enter into force in order to be truly effective. He called on all remaining nations to sign and ratify the instrument, including China, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Egypt, India, Iran, Israel, Pakistan and the United States.

UN General Assembly President Sam Kutesa highlighted the importance of the treaty.

"Nuclear tests and weapons consti-

tute an existential threat to humanity and contradict some of the fundamental principles of the UN. In its current session, the General Assembly reiterated its firm commitment to the treaty. I would like to use this occasion to stress the importance and urgency of realising the CTBT's entry into force without further delay," he said.

The speech by The ATOM Project Honorary Ambassador Karipbek Kuyukov was equally compelling. The famous Kazakh artist and nuclear test victim discussed the suffering and damage caused by nuclear tests to his family and millions of people around the world and called on the participants to achieve the entry into force of CTBT and sign the online petition of The ATOM Project, an campaign launched in 2012 to help galvanise public opinion against nuclear testing and achieve the early entry into force of the treaty.

UN Acting High Representative for Disarmament Affairs Kim Won-soo also emphasised the need to universalise the norm against nuclear testing.

"It is true that we live in an increasingly complex security environment. Yet we cannot allow the security environment to prevent us from making progress on nuclear disarmament. We should remember the lessons of the Cold War, when arms control agreements provided valuable lessons to

reduce strategic tension. We cannot delay in taking the path to nuclear disarmament. We must act with urgency to reach our goal of zero nuclear weapons and we must do so with a sense of compromise and our common responsibility to rid the world of these devastating weapons," he said.

The reception held at the Kazakh permanent mission was the highlight of the day. Abdrakhmanov, a popular figure in local diplomatic circles, aroused the interest of his high-profile guests – including Ban Ki-moon – by posing an informal quiz on nuclear testing. The guests were quick to answer the questions on various stages in global nuclear testing and the impact on the environment. All the guests, including the top UN officials, visited Kuyukov's exhibit devoted to nuclear test and nuclear test survivors.

At Kazakhstan's initiative, in 2009 the UN General Assembly declared Aug. 29 as the International Day against Nuclear Tests. The day aims to raise awareness about the dangers of nuclear tests and calls for a total ban. The date marks the first Soviet nuclear test conducted at the Semipalatinsk nuclear test site in 1949, as well as the site's closure by Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev in 1991. Kazakhstan is seeking a two-year nonpermanent seat in the UN Security Council for 2017 and 2018.



THE ASTANA TIMES

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Nation & Capital

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 23, 2015

CULTURE

Astana Opera to Premiere New Version of 'Abai' This Month

B3

SOCIETY

Invatxi Marks Progress, Introduces Future Plans

B5

SPORTS

Ski Federation Eager to Start Season under New Management

B7

Kazakh Eli Square Transformed to Historic Village for Anniversary of Kazakh Khanate



By Zhazira Dyussebekova

ASTANA – Astana's Kazakh Eli Square was the site of most of the Sept. 11–13 celebrations of the 550th anniversary of the Kazakh Khanate. More than 1,500 representatives from across the country came to the capital to participate in the celebration, according to the website of the Astana Akimat (city administration). Fifty yurts were positioned

across the square, each of which demonstrated features of a region. The yurts housed collections of Kazakh literature and artifacts that were on loan from local museums and private collections, including clothes, jewelry and household items, musical instruments, paintings and wooden and ceramic functional and decorative items. Dance and theatrical performances were held on stages located inside the collection of yurts.

On Sept. 12, representatives of Kazakh regions gathered for a parade and dressed in national clothing. The opening of the celebrations was launched by Deputy Akim (Mayor) of Astana Yermeke Amanshayev. "I congratulate everyone on the 550th anniversary of the Kazakh Khanate. We pay tribute to the memory of deeds of our ancestors and remember that the history of our sacred land has several millennia. The 550th an-

niversary of the Kazakh Khanate is a national treasure of the whole country and excellent momentum for conquering new peaks in the history of our state," he said, the akimat reported.

The celebrations also included a concert performed by representatives of the different regions of the country, a fashion show titled, "History of the people through the story of the Kazakh national costume" and an interactive lecture from each region named "Journey on the magical Tulpar" (flying horse in Kazakh mythology). Also held in Kazakh Eli Square were the Sikirly bi Alemi dance festival, the Birligimiz Zharaskan concert dedicated to the friendship of the people of Kazakhstan and the Gasyrlar Uni ethnic music concert.

Other sites within the city also hosted events as part of the celebratory weekend. The Atameken Ethno-Memorial complex held a celebration of kumis (fermented horse milk), where the national drink could be sampled, and musicians, singers and dancers performed. There were also quizzes about kumis, arm wrestling and kumis-drinking contests. An exhibition of carpets made of camel's hair with Kazakh ornaments and a runway show of women in national costumes were also held, the akimat reported.

Country Advances Green Energy Movement with Solar, Battery Projects

By Michelle Witte

ASTANA – Two major renewables projects have been announced recently in Kazakhstan: the provision of solar panels to a 50 megawatt solar power plant and a project to test a 25 MW flow batteries system in the country.

Schneider Electric announced Sept. 9 that the company had been selected as the "solutions provider" for Kazakhstan's first large photovoltaic power plant, the biggest in the country and in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS),

according to a company press release. Construction on the plant began in August 2014 and was ready for grid connection in April of this year, according to Schneider Electric. (It is unclear whether the plant has been connected to the grid or when that might happen.)

Schneider contributed 32 of its photovoltaic boxes, which are designed to be ready to connect when they arrive on a site. The company also built a sub-station for the project, according to the press release. Project management and engineering was done by Schneider Electric Germany. **Continued on Page B4**

Qatar to Build Rehabilitation Centre for Victims of Nuclear Testing

By Anna Vladimirova

ASTANA – Director of the Nursultan Nazarbayev Fund for Education, Culture and Social Programmes and Mazhilis (lower house of Parliament) Deputy Kanat Saudabayev and Qatar Minister of Foreign Affairs and Chairman of the Fund for Development Khalid bin Mohammad Al Attiyah recently discussed in Doha Qatar's offer to build a rehabilitation centre for Kazakh victims of Soviet-era nuclear weapons testing.

The talks follow a 2014 agree-

ment reached in Astana between Nazarbayev and Tamim ben Hamad Al Tani, the sheikh of Qatar, on creating the centre in Semey (formerly Semipalatinsk), near what was the infamous nuclear test site.

According to the Kazakh fund, it is believed that more than 730,000 residents of the East Kazakhstan, Karaganda and Pavlodar oblasts (regions) are in need of treatment and rehabilitation from the adverse effects of 40 years of Soviet nuclear testing at the Semipalatinsk test site.

Ambassador of Kazakhstan to Qatar Askar Shokymbayev also participated in the meeting.



Idrissov Opens 2015-2016 KAZGUU Academic-Diplomatic Club Session

By Kamila Zhumbabayeva

ASTANA – Kazakh Minister of Foreign Affairs Erlan Idrissov launched the Aug. 8 opening of the 2015-2016 session of the KAZGUU University Academic-Diplomatic Club. He shared his thoughts in a lecture on the country's foreign policy and its role in multilateral organizations.

"We are a part of China's new policy 'One Belt, One Road' through the Silk Way economic belt that is unfolding quite successfully. The focus on economic and infrastructure connectivity was clearly seen during our recent negotiations there," Idrissov stated in his speech, as published by the ministry. "By the year 2030, we are going to bring our economy up to 30 percent and by 2050, to 50 percent. This is a very serious commitment that was imprinted on our practical activities in legislation."

Kazakhstan played a significant role in reaching an agreement on Iran's nuclear program, hosting two rounds of negotiations that came to a promising conclusion, he added.

"We believe that the implementation of the agreement will be changing again both globally and regionally... This may open a lot of economic and connectivity opportunities," said Idrissov.

Kazakhstan continues to develop partnerships, concentrating on congruence as a new feature of its foreign policy.

"Kazakhstan embraces opportunities that EAEU gives in terms of connecting the countries economically, industrially and socially, and the concept of China's leaders of the Silk Way economic belt," the minister stressed. "The country sees a lot of connectivity opportunities... Kazakhstan, Iran and Turkmenistan have a part in railroad-building. We discussed pro-

jects relating to energy resources and electricity transportation with India and a massive infrastructure project with Pakistan."

Representatives of the diplomatic corps, international organisations, academics and students attended the event where diplomats and students asked questions on various topics, reported the KAZGUU press release.

Special attention was paid to the upcoming EXPO 2017. Swiss Ambassador Mauro Reina suggested organising a meeting between representatives and ambassadors of the nations participating in the exhibition, while Macedonia's ambassador proposed simplifying the Kazakh visa regime, stated the press release.

"The academic-diplomatic club has become an integral part of KAZGUU and plans to conduct a number of important and significant events for the upcoming year," the university's Director of Postgraduate

Programmes and International Relations Department Renata Faizova told The Astana Times. "We expect guest lectures from ambassadors and ministers of foreign countries, an event dedicated to 70th anniversary celebration of the United Nations, Mahatma Gandhi's birthday, a traditional meeting of representatives of BRICS member countries, joint roundtable discussions, conferences with embassies and international organisations and much more."

Established May 5, 2014, the KAZGUU Academic-Diplomatic Club is a free platform for discussing topical issues on international relations in the field of politics, economics, culture and education, according to the press release. The club's mission is to create strong cooperation and friendly relations among people of different cultures. The club conducts monthly discussions, conferences, public lectures, business forums, cultural events and more.

The Ritz-Carlton, Almaty Announces Club for Newlyweds

By Bakhytbek Narimanov

ALMATY – The Ritz-Carlton Almaty launched its new Wedding Club on Sept. 1. Club members – couples who have held a wedding in the hotel – are given access to benefits including parties and special offers at the hotel. This is only the second Wedding Club to be launched by the Ritz-Carlton; the first was started at the Ritz-Carlton Hong Kong.

"The Wedding Club is not just a system of discounts and benefits; it is primarily a community of young people committed to The Ritz-Carlton brand and who appreciate its high level of service. We are pleased to provide comfortable stays for our guests and to give residents of Almaty the opportunity to become part of our brand and our values, having made the most important day in their life memorable, and remain in contact



with them further," said Ekaterina Sowa, marketing and sales director at The Ritz-Carlton, Almaty.

The Wedding Club cardholders enjoy benefits such as a 20 percent discount at restaurants in The Ritz-Carlton, Almaty, a 10 percent discount for events at the hotel, discount vouchers, free room upgrades and also discounts at the Six Senses Spa. Newlyweds who hold a wedding at The

Ritz-Carlton, Almaty for at least 10 million tenge can join the Wedding Club. Membership cards are awarded following the celebration and there is no membership fee.

One of the closest events on the calendar is the New Year's party, which will give members of the Wedding Club an opportunity to ring in the New Year together.

The Ritz-Carlton, Almaty also

offers a Wedding Concierge service. The Wedding Concierge will help the happy couple make their wedding dreams come true, with, for example, a rehearsal dinner, a church wedding or wedding ceremony. The concierge also provides information about all the advantages of holding a wedding at The Ritz-Carlton, Almaty, recommending the best suppliers, planning the best schedule for the big day, choosing the best dishes and other aspects of making a remarkable wedding ceremony.

Holding a wedding at The Ritz-Carlton, Almaty

The Ritz-Carlton, Almaty provides wedding packages that offer the most convenient and comfortable conditions thanks to the close proximity of locations and the hotel's professional team. The hotel can host weddings and ceremonies on the territory of the hotel and in its halls, the total area

of which comprises 788 square metres with a capacity to host up to 500 people. The wedding menu includes a wide variety of dishes and drinks and the hotel's food tasting service allows the happy couple to taste and choose all dishes for their celebration in advance, giving consideration to the tastes of guests and their own preferences. The Ritz-Carlton, Almaty's, famous cakes by Vitaly Medvedev, the hotel's confectioner, are made to design and are created based on the wedding's colour theme and ensure an individual approach to the smallest details.

The Ritz-Carlton, Almaty has more than 145 guest rooms and suites and is located on the top ten floors of the Esentai Tower. The five-star superior hotel offers unique rooms and exceptional service of the highest level. Featuring sleek room and suite accommodations, the opulent Six Senses Spa, and sumptuous dining

at the hotel's signature Laurent Tournel restaurant, LT Grill, The Ritz-Carlton, Almaty, possesses a unique style unlike other hotels in Almaty. Modern style has been blended with traditional Kazakh elements, while an extensive collection of works by emerging and established Kazakh artists provides further insight into the country's rich and dynamic culture.

The Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company, L.L.C., of Chevy Chase, MD, currently operates 90 hotels in the Americas, Europe, Asia, the Middle East, Africa, and the Caribbean. More than 30 hotel and residential projects are under development around the globe. The Ritz-Carlton is the only service company to have twice earned the prestigious Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award in the United States which recognises outstanding customer service. The Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company, L.L.C. is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Marriott International, Inc.

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 23, 2015

Successful Italian Restaurateur Sees “Enormous Potential” for Business in Kazakhstan

By Dmitry Lee

ASTANA – The mentality of the people and the enormous potential were the two big reasons that compelled Enrico Nappini to do something he has not regretted: to found the Italian restaurant Pane & Vino in Astana, which turned out to be one of the best and most frequented among others.

“I started my career working for one of the largest wine exporters in Italy about 35 years ago,” Nappini told this reporter in an interview. He was relocated to Moscow with the job to build a distribution line in Russia. Later, he opened his own restaurant Spago, and in 2004 together with his partner, Russia’s top restaurateur as claimed by numerous media sources Arkady Novikov, opened Cantinetta Antinori. Both restaurants are still open in Moscow.

Nappini, who has 25 years of experience in the restaurant business, was invited to Almaty first in 2013 by the Antinori family to start a new project and later moved to Astana.

“Cantinetta Antinori is a chain of four restaurants in Florence, Zurich, Vienna and Moscow – all of them are owned by the Antinori family expect for the one in Moscow. I was the only one who was given the right to open it [there]. But then I liked it so much in Kazakhstan that I decided to stay here.”

Asked what he liked the most, Nappini said: “The mentality of the people, their attitude. In terms of business, I liked the enormous potential. In a way, Kazakhstan is a very young country in the restaurant business with an attitude to



learn fast. So here [one] can find the right soil to build something.” He also added that he liked the fact that the new Kazakh capital is calm and not as stressful as some other large mega cities, which also influenced his decision to open Pane & Vino in Astana.

Although, no matter where one opens a business, there are always hardships and challenges, including Astana.

“I didn’t find any difficulties in terms of bureaucracy. I would say the [rights] here in Kazakhstan are very well settled. Because if you prepare properly the papers and documents, nobody can stop you.

It was very simple. Perhaps one of the challenges was to find the right products. If you are speaking about international cuisine, definitely you need to import something. If you speak about the quality of meat, it’s excellent, but unfortunately it is of no stable quality. So there are many things that make this kind of business very [hard] if you want to properly maintain it.” Nappini stated that he imported up to 90 percent of products from abroad, such as green salad, meat and fish among many others.

With the new free-floating tenge policy, Nappini said it is now extremely hard to continue importing

products as their prices remain in foreign currencies, such as U.S. dollars or euros, while the national currency keeps fluctuating.

“The prices in the menu should be increased according to the price of the [U.S.] dollar. But this is something I didn’t do yet. I will wait. But that’s only one problem; the other problem is that the main exporter has stopped exporting to Kazakhstan because they don’t know what rate to apply. So they just stopped.”

The Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) is unlikely to be of great help to Nappini’s situation, as Russia is facing more rigorous sanc-

tions by the West and “Kazakhstan was like a little paradise as there were no barriers for importing in the country,” Nappini continued. “But right now the problem is the dollar,” he added.

Kazakhstan’s accession to the World Trade Organisation and the EAEU could be of some help to businesses such as Nappini’s, but only in terms of state-wide economic improvement on the whole and not his specific business, said Nappini, as the restaurant business is closely connected to the national economy.

“In many countries the situation is chaotic. There are very expen-

sive restaurants or fast food. Kazakhstan needs a middle class and the country has just built it up.”

As for the smaller-scale challenges of operating a successful restaurant in Kazakhstan, such as the quality of restaurant service in the country, Nappini says the workers need better training.

“Kazakhstan is a very young country, we need to understand that. In my restaurant, my whole service staff has started with me. I did it on purpose; I want to train my staff from zero. I suggest this to all, start from zero and spend time with the staff, show them yourself how to do things, follow them. There are no other ways.” Some courses in the service area would also help, he said. “These [courses] would help people understand that waiting is a serious job.”

In terms of his restaurant’s menu and specialties, Nappini says he has a few surprises in store.

“I will not tell you anything about the surprises, I want people to come and discover them for themselves,” he said.

Given Nappini’s extensive experience in wine importing to this part of the world, Pane & Vino is still importing some exclusive Italian wines that are not to be found anywhere else in Kazakhstan.

Pane & Vino opened in December 2014 and has quickly become well-known in the city, especially among foreigners. Nappini, however, said he likes to keep the buzz about the restaurant understated.

“I would like to apologise to some of my clients as it is hard for some of them to locate my restaurant because I don’t advertise a lot. I prefer the word of mouth advertising; it is the best advertising one can have,” Nappini concluded.

Nine-Year-Old Kazakh Boy Does 550 Push-Ups, Breaks Record

By Meruert Nurgazinova

ASTANA – Nine-year-old Amir Makhmet celebrated the 550th anniversary of the Kazakh Khanate by doing an equal number of push-ups and breaking his previous record in the process.

Makhmet is a two-time champion in the Kazakhstan Information Encyclopaedia Directory (KInES), setting his first record at the June 1 opening of the Street Workout summer season. He followed it with a second record at the Akmol region Street Workout championship by performing 50 push-ups in 30 seconds.

Eminent Kazakh athletes such as weightlifter Ilya Ilyin, boxer Serik Sapiyev, Federation of Jiu-Jitsu and MMA President Anatoly Kim and karate and MMA world champion and Presidential Professional Sport Club Astana General Manager Aidar Makhmetov, who is the uncle of the boy, came to the event to support Makhmet.

“The boy did really well; he is a

great example for our young people. It is good that our people are trying to distinguish themselves in a good way. It is great that there is a book – Kazakhstan Information Encyclopaedia Directory – which fixes such records. It is a world-wide practice. I think we need to develop it more,” said Ilyin.

The young athlete’s mother, Kalamkas Makhmetova, was more worried about her son than anyone else in attendance. Makhmet is an impulsive, purposeful and hyperactive child who became seriously involved in sports one year ago.

“My husband is responsible for the child’s activities and it is his merit. They talk a lot and plan something all the time. I’m just watching after his school studies. He got engaged in sport when he was eight years old. The first record was set at that age,” said Makhmetova. “I do not worry about whether he will do the required number of push-ups; I worry about his health at the moment when he will do it and after.”

She added he has repeatedly met with Olympic champions and wants to emulate them. The young athlete likes boxing and judo and has excellent grades in school.

“I hope he will grow up a good citizen of our country and will be a world-famous athlete. When it comes to me as his father, I will always be around, I will support,” said Anuar Makhmetov.

“Today, we are pleased to fix a new record of our young hero. To tell the truth, the whole editorial board and research department is very excited. Kazakhstan’s Record Book focuses on the most positive developments in the life of the Kazakh people. We try to fix records that elevate the spirit of the people and raise human culture. This book, which will be released in two months, includes a photo of Amir. We do not fix records like the biggest number of pies eaten or beer drunk, only sane ones. This book has only the most successful achievements of the people of our society,” said KInES representative Kuandyk Kudaibergenov.



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CULTURE

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 23, 2015

Astana Opera to Premiere New Version of 'Abai' This Month

By Kamila Zhumabayeva

ASTANA – A grand debut of "Abai," the story of Kazakh poet and philosopher Abai Kunanbayev, will be held Sept. 25-26 at the Astana Opera. The modern interpretation of the opera promises to provide the audience with maximum open stage space, 3D video installations and luxurious costumes and decorations, according to the company's press release.

"The identity of Abai Kunanbayev is very important to our nation," said Ruslan Baimurzin, assistant to the chief conductor of the production Alan Buribayev, in an interview with The Astana Times. "Abai" is in its first production in the Astana Opera, but was previously at Kulyash Baisseitova National Opera and Ballet Theatre.

Considered to be one of the best achievements of Kazakh opera, "Abai" incorporates classics penned by composers Akhmet Zhubanov and Latif Khamidi. Social activist, professor and Soviet honoured academic Mukhtar Auezov authored the libretto. The premiere was held in 1944 and



Actors rehearsing on stage for the premiere of "Abai."

critics named the work a musical masterpiece.

The plot tells the story of the

outstanding poet, educator and cultural reformer, his passionate love and the tragic death of his student,

Aidar, who was killed by a deadly poison poured into his drink by envious individuals.

"Things that are interesting for any person regardless of his nationality are told in this opera, while the music is so emotional and beautiful that the public won't be disappointed. I invite all to the premiere," said Buribayev as quoted in the statement.

The updated version is the concept of the son of well-known opera singer Mario Del Monaco and director of the production Giancarlo Del Monaco, together with director-consultant, People's Artist of Kazakhstan and professor Es-mukhan Obayev.

Preparation for the premiere is currently underway in the theatre, according to the press release. The wardrobe and decorations have been created in the Astana Opera and Italian and Astana masters sewed 97 costumes. The art decoration has been completed by Kazakh and Italian craftsmen, led by modern set designer Ezio Frigerio and costume designer Franca Squarciapino.

Kazakh audiences will be treated for the first time to such a large-scale show with grand decorations, with the play using all the

stage's technical equipment, noted the statement. Twenty-five Italian craftspeople and specialists from the Astana Opera artistic and production department are working daily with Frigerio's team to create complex constructions of aluminium, steel, wood and other materials with a total weight of 33 tonnes.

The "Abai" premiere is a major event this year in the cultural life of the country. The nation's opera critics note the performance should cause great resonance, said the statement.

"Either way, Kazakh opera arts continue developing without forgetting their tradition. Currently, there are a lot of amazing composers who try themselves in this genre. The three big opera theatres in Almaty, Astana and Shymkent are big indicators of the respect and love for opera arts in Kazakhstan," noted Baimurzin.

He added Kazakhstan's opera arts are among the most significant on the international scale in the plan of their operas, singers and theatres and will go very far showing themselves to the world.

Kazakh Diaspora Chooses Unique Ways to Maintain Identity, Ties with Homeland

By Kamila Zhumabayeva

ASTANA – Kazakh diaspora in diverse parts of the world chose different ways of maintaining their identity and traditions. Associations and student communities organise various events to celebrate Nauryz and Independence Day holidays. They have also shared traditions which have become outdated to maintain them in the countries where they reside.

The Kazakh American Association promotes the strengthening of Kazakh diaspora permanently residing in the United States as well as supporting those who are temporarily in the country. The association manifests itself in different spheres of social life and presents national-cultural spheres by coordinating different events.

"Special attention goes to children adopted from Kazakhstan by American parents and constant meetings give those children an opportunity to familiarise themselves with their roots and traditions," active organisation member Ainur Rodgers told The Astana Times. "The association holds Nauryz celebrations and family picnics each year where compatriots, their families, children adopted in the U.S., diplomatic workers and all other people who are interested in Kazakhstan are invited."

Among those opportunities include a BalaUSA Kazakh-American children's choir organised by the association.

"The choir held their first rehearsal in this school year. The children performed anthems of both countries in honour of Kazakhstan's Independence Day," she said.

Strengthening ties between compatriots contributes to a prompt integration into a new life. The group is also involved in fundraising efforts, the latest of which was to help flood victims of the Karaganda oblast.

"We have increasingly been holding fundraising for medical treatment or for emergency needs of Kazakhstan people. The association collected and sent funds for treatment of the severely ill and contributed to solutions of immediate problems for many in the U.S.," Rodgers stated.

"As one of the main elements of national identity, Kazakh language is very important to me. In order to preserve our language among those abroad, I usually speak Kazakh with my compatriot friends on a daily basis," said another member of the association who gave his name only as Nurbek.

The nation's identity is not only in its language but also in its con-

sciousness, character and perception of the world, noted member Lazat Davlet.

"So, although we externally are modern, we are internally quite conservative; it is a combination of cosmopolitanism and love for past traditions and history," she said.

"Briefly, we celebrate Nauryz and the independence of Kazakhstan and someone celebrates religious holidays. We put on national costumes when it is possible and tell about the culture of Kazakhstan to everyone here," said Davlet.

"Being a Kazakh abroad, representing my nation and culture means feeling an enormous responsibility for my country. It is necessary to understand that each of us is judged not only as an individual, but also by our country as a whole. I, therefore, believe our names should always be associated only with good deeds," said political science student at the University of Vienna, president of the Kazakh student community in Austria and editor-in-chief of Sakssauyl Kazakh-Austrian magazine Nursultan Akhmediya.

He added he always tries to be a part of everything related to Kazakhstan, while noting the special role of the Kazakh student community that unites people from Kazakhstan living in Austria. Registered as an NGO by the Austrian Ministry of Justice, it pays special attention to relations between Kazakh people in Europe.

"Teams from a number of Kazakhs studying in Austria, Poland, the Czech Republic, Germany, France and Hungary, as well as representatives of Kazakh diaspora that moved to Austria back in the 1970-80s, participated in a football tournament held by the organisation in April of this year," said Akhmediya.

As in many other countries, Kazakhstan's Embassy in Austria organises various events.

"Apart from annual Nauryz celebrations, we held sports tournament on the Asyk Atu national game for the first time this year and timed it to Kazakhstan's Independence Day," said Akhmediya.

Although the Kazakh culture is very unique, there are some aspects which he believes do not suit modern life.

"I would relate fancy wedding celebrations to it, because of which organisers get themselves into debt. I believe spending a huge amount of money on such an insecure event is dumb and irrational," he said. "Judging by statistical data regarding divorces, a few newly-married couples are happy to pay huge debts in the beginning of family life."

Candidate of philosophical sciences and associate professor at the Russian State Humanitarian University Gulshat Urazaliyeva is a Kazakh citizen living in Russia since marrying her husband in Moscow in 1990. She is concerned and interested in political and governmental processes in her native country.

"Kazakhstan's presidential elections are always topical for me. I also continue being interested in economic, political, legal and cultural spheres. As my historical homeland, the problems of Kazakhstan also remain at the centre of my attention," said Urazaliyeva. "After all, all of my family and relatives live in Kazakhstan. I am the only one living beyond its borders. These are my roots and my native element."

She added she has not attempted to westernise her looks.

"If talking about appearance and anthropological attributes, I did not change. I did not have any plastic surgery, do not hesitate due to my Asian appearance and did not colour my hair to become blond," said Urazaliyeva.

She remembers her ethnic roots and loves Kazakhstan's culture, music and cuisine to which she treats her Moscow and foreign friends.

"We have beshbarmak, manty (dumplings) and bayursak on our table during holidays," she added.

For her, being a Kazakh in Moscow means being on a high level professionally and personally and in communication with other people.

"I follow the current situation in the country on social networks like Facebook and actively discuss all current challenges in Kazakhstan with my real and virtual friends," said Urazaliyeva.

When it comes to her participation in Moscow's scientific conferences on the subjects of interethnic relations and conflicts, she does not refuse but always remembers her ethnic identity. Urazaliyeva is part of the Kazakh diaspora in Russia and actively participates in functions of the Moscow Kazakh cultural centre, events dedicated to memorable dates and well-known cultural figures.

"I was reading the poems of Ilyas Dzhanisugurov along with other Muscovites at a memorial evening of the great Kazakh poet. We have such cultural events quit often," she noted.

She also supports traditions of Kazakh hospitality.

"I remember my mother's mandate, 'you cannot ask guests whether they want tea, you should put a samovar out,' that is to say turn on an electric kettle," she said.

Urazaliyeva added traditions of

reverence by status became outdated.

"More attention goes to the elderly, but not because of high financial and social status. I believe increased attention to tribal divisions in modern Kazakhstan is a relic," she stressed. "Moreover, making souvenirs, seals of all genus and archaics of genus stratification harms unified Kazakh ethnic identity."

She also believes the tradition of stealing and abducting brides is very shameful for Kazakhs.

"Resurgent interest and justification of bigamy not only humiliates women, but also men. The medieval archaic can lead our nation to degradation," she stressed.

Other traditions which allow modern Kazakhstan to develop are being born.

"Respect for scientific knowl-

edge, native, Russian and foreign languages and people who become successful by their own efforts and not at the cost of symbolic and financial capital of a family, genus or proximity to authorities," Urazaliyeva added.

"I love all my relatives and friends and remember and cherish them. I was and will remain Kazakh, daughter of my parents and, I hope, my nation."

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WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 23, 2015

Kazakh Cardiac Surgeons Share Experience with European Colleagues

By Zhazira Dyussebekova

ASTANA – The unique surgical methodology to implant Heart Mate 3, a left ventricular assist device, was shown Sept. 2-3 during master classes at the National Research Cardiac Surgery Centre (NRCSC). Kazakhstan was the first country to perform such operations, reported the centre's press service.

Similar master classes have been organised for more than a year. This time, NRCSC Chairman and cardiac surgeon Yury Pya and his colleagues demonstrated artificial heart transplantation to 30 surgeons from Croatia, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Switzerland.

"Favourable conditions for innovation were created due to the policy of the President and the government; not every developed country has it," said Pya in an interview with kazpravda.kz. "Last year, Kazakhstan was among five countries to be included in the international project for the introduction of artificial hearts of the third generation into clinical practice. And today, our centre has the most experience in the world in implanting Heart Mate 3. It has good results, so we can host the leading specialists of Europe. They come to us to study and adopt Kazakhstan's experience. [They] master their skills on the hearts of animals, take part in the operations, and they will be able to implement the technology back home in the future."



Yury Pya performs a surgery.

"Europe and the U.S. cannot use this technique, they do not have permission, but Kazakhstan has. Our country is the first country in the world which uses this technology and uses it very positively and effectively. We now share our success and our experience with our foreign colleagues," said NRCSC department head Serik Bekbosunov in an interview with Kazakh TV.

According to the NRCSC press service, in the past five years, Kazakh cardiac surgeons have successfully performed more than 150 surgeries on artificial heart ventricle

implantation and transplantation of donor organs.

The first day of the master classes included performing a series of operations on the installation of Heart Mate 3. The following day, participants discussed the issues of selection and postoperative stages of patients with the implanted devices. Pya shared his experience of such operations with his European colleagues, who were also able to practice their skills on installing Heart Mate 3 on a pig heart in a simulation laboratory.

"We liked everything in Astana. There is the highest level of cardiac

surgery. You are several years ahead of us. Our clinic is planning to carry out such operations only after two years," said German master class participant Martin Muller in an interview with Khabar TV.

"In our country, we use devices of the first and second generation and you are already working with the latest model. Well done that you took a chance and went ahead. The technique is very progressive," Croatian surgeon Zeljko Sultic told Khabar TV.

After the master class in Kazakhstan, European surgeons will be required to secure a license. Only then they will be able to conduct such operations, according to Khabar TV.

NRCSC has implanted first and second-generation devices in the left ventricle as an alternative to heart transplantation since 2011. During this time, Kazakhstan's cardiac surgery capability was ranked among the top 20 in the world and the country became one of the leading places in the world in the number of high-tech operations performed. The centre also has JCI accreditation, which confirms international recognition.

Heart Mate 3 is made by Thoratec Corporation, a U.S. company that produces devices for advanced heart failure patients. Its main difference from previous devices is that it pulses, a feature which is technically very hard to create. The NRCSC is the only centre in Central Asia and the post-Soviet space that implants such devices.

Military Demonstrates Remote Firing System

By Aiman Turebekova

Representatives of the Kazakh military-industrial complex took part in the Sept. 9-12 10th Russia Arms Expo 2015, an international arms, military equipment and ammunition exhibition in Nizhny Tagil, reported the Kazakh Ministry of Defence press service.

More than 400 exhibitors and representatives of military authorities, defence ministers and chiefs of general staffs from more than 50 countries participated.

The Russia Arms Expo offers a shooting range that allows participants to showcase the combat and performance characteristics of their arms and equipment, deliver fire aimed at targets of various degrees of complexity and assess the performance of military products on a real-time basis.

Kazakh specialists showcased the stabilised, remotely operated weapon station (SROWS), which drew interest from exhibition visitors. This system allows 24-hour

per-day remote monitoring and firing in all weather conditions. Monitoring is done with an integrated electro-optical system, which combines a thermal imaging camera, daylight camera vision, a laser range finder and weather sensors.

Kazakhstan ASELSAN Engineering, the Petropavlovsk Heavy Engineering Plant and the West Kazakhstan Engineering Company will jointly mass produce the system. In this exhibition of arms and military equipment, with a total area of more than 400,000 square metres, Kazakhstan was represented by Kazakhstan ASELSAN Engineering, which is part of the Kazakhstan Engineering group of national companies.

Kazakhstan ASELSAN Engineering was established April 18, 2011. The founders of the company are Kazakhstan Engineering (50 percent), the Turkish company ASELSAN (49 percent) and the Committee of Defense Industry of Turkey (1 percent).

Country Advances Green Energy Movement with Solar, Battery Projects

Continued from Page B1

"We are proud to have provided high-tech Schneider Electric solutions and products for the first large PV power plant built in Kazakhstan," said General Director of Schneider Electric Kazakhstan Irina Dmitrenko, per the press release. "For this project, Schneider Electric has provided the full electrical conversion chain, from grid to DC connection, with fully trained and experienced staff."

The country is also looking into options for storing its renewable-sourced energy. Through a multi-year strategic cooperation agreement, Samruk Energy, a subsidiary of the Samruk Kazyna Sovereign Wealth Fund, has agreed to purchase 1,250 zinc-bromide-based, single-tank energy storage systems, totalling 25 MW or 100 megawatt-hours, from Primus Power, Yahoo Finance reports. Primus is a specialist in grid-scale energy storage technology. The storage systems are to be assembled inside Kazakhstan and are expected to help the country reach its goals of getting 30 percent of its energy from renewable sources by 2030 and 50 percent by 2050.

Chairman of Samruk Energy Almassadam Satkaliyev said, "We expect that the joint work with Primus Power, the leader in the development of energy storage technologies, will accelerate the development of renewable energy in Kazakhstan, and will provide us with opportunities for practical implementation of innovative solutions in the electricity sector," according to a story by Yahoo Finance.

Primus Power announced on Sept. 9 that it had secured \$25 million in its Series D funding round, a late-stage round of funding usually used to help startups expand. I2BF Global Ventures led the round and the Russia-Kazakhstan Nanotechnology Fund (RKNF), a fund managed by I2BF, participated in the offering, Primus reported in a press release.

The company has also received strategic government grants totalling \$20 million from the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), the Advanced Research Projects Agency-Energy (ARPA-E), the Bonneville Power Administration (BPA), the California Energy Commission (CEC), and the U.S. Department of Defence (DOD) through its En-

vironmental Security Technology Certification Program (ESTCP).

"Storing electrons safely, inexpensively, and with virtually no battery degradation, has long been a strategic imperative for the global energy industry, drawing world-class brains to find a winning solution," said Ilya Golubovich of I2BF in the Primus press release. "We are convinced that Primus Power has developed the ultimate electron warehouse. The technology is field-proven and the company is at the right stage for I2BF to double down, and for RKNF to take a position."

Primus Power CEO Tom Stepien noted the importance of the agreement with Samruk Energy in the company statement. "Primus is very fortunate to add another high-caliber international investor to our syndicate. Their participation highlights the need for low total cost-of-ownership energy storage solutions, and the commitment by major global players to support deployment of market-ready technology. Joining forces means we can accelerate our product shipments in North America, respond to important needs in countries with significant renewable energy plans like Kazakhstan, and form strong technology partnerships with innovative companies such as Samruk Energy."

Stepien spoke with Greentech Media on the funding and noted that Kazakhstan was moving toward more solar and wind power and working to update its grid.

The company has begun working out the details of fitting its batteries into the existing grid and expects to ship the first batteries to Kazakhstan by the end of this year or early next year, with eventual plans to assemble the systems in-country, he said.

Primus claims its batteries will last for 20 years or more. The six-year-old startup uses a single-loop flow battery design, which plates zinc on titanium-based electrodes to perform the key energy exchange, Greentech Media explained. Most other flow batteries run electrolytes through membranes, which Stepien said eventually must be replaced, unlike in Primus's batteries.

Kazakhstan generated about 20 gigawatts of power in 2015, according to Greentech Media, mostly generated in coal-fired power plants. The country expects to produce 28 gigawatts by 2030.

Government Proposes Introducing Mandatory Health Insurance

By Nazgul Zhenis

ASTANA – Implementing mandatory social health insurance will improve the quality and availability of medical services in Kazakhstan, reported the press service of the nation's Ministry of Health and Social Development.

Minister of Health and Social Development Tamara Duyssenova presented the draft bill "On mandatory medical insurance" Sept. 7 in Parliament. The task of preparing such a bill was envisioned under the 100 Concrete Steps programme announced earlier this year by Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev.

According to the ministry, the legislation will concentrate on priority development of primary health care, measures to facilitate development of private medical services and enhancing competition among medical organisations. In addition, officials hope establishing a social health insurance fund, with the government

as the founder and sole shareholder, will contribute to reducing informal payments in the healthcare system.

The draft envisions the introduction of two packages of medical services: basic and insurance. The first, available to all citizens, is expected to be financed by the state budget. It would include access to ambulance and medical aviation services, health care for socially-significant diseases and preventive vaccination (in case of emergency). The insurance package, provided by the health insurance fund, would include outpatient and inpatient care, medical rehabilitation, palliative care, nursing care and high-tech help. All permanent residents of the country, on whose behalf contributions would be transferred to the fund, would have the right to benefit from the package.

The government will be carrying contributions for the economically-inactive population. Employers will pay for their employees; self-employed citizens registered with the tax authorities will pay for themselves, said the ministry.

The state contribution rate for citizens of particular categories (for socially-vulnerable layers of the population) accounted for 7 percent of average monthly salary. In this case, the figure will gradually increase: 4 percent in 2017, 5 percent in 2018, 6 percent in 2023, and 7 percent in 2024.

The employer's total contribution will be 5 percent of income, with deductions starting at 2 percent in 2017 and hiking to 3 percent in 2018, 4 percent in 2019 and 5 percent in 2020. Considering the contributions will be deductible when calculating corporate income tax, the actual load on the employer will be 1.6 percent in 2017, 2.4 percent in 2018, 3.2 percent in 2019 and 4 percent in 2020.

The employee's contribution rate is 2 percent of income; deduction will start at 1 percent in 2019 and 2 percent in 2020.

The contribution rate of self-employed people (individual entrepreneurs, private notaries, private bailiffs, lawyers, professional mediators

and individuals who receive income under contracts of a civil nature) will be 7 percent of their income. This equates to 2 percent in 2017, 3 percent in 2018, 5 percent in 2019 and 7 percent in 2020. The interest deduction will not exceed 15 times the minimum wage.

Children, mothers with more than five children, veterans, the disabled, the unemployed, students, non-working pregnant women, parents on parental leave, pensioners, military personnel, law enforcement officers and prisoners will be relieved from contributing to the social health insurance fund.

Not all participants, however, expressed support for the bill. The leader of the pro-business Ak Zhol Democratic Party's parliamentary faction Azat Peruashev felt that some entrepreneurs would begin to take employee's wages in the shade, thus trying to remove any unnecessary financial burden. This would mean taking one step forward and two steps back, he said, according to the 31st TV channel.

New State Corporation to Deliver More Documentation Services in One Place

By Nazgul Zhenis

ASTANA – During a presentation before the Kazakh Parliament of the draft law "On amendments and additions to some legislative acts concerning the provision of public services," Vice Minister of Investment and Development Saken Sarsenov announced citizens will soon be able to receive all government services in one place as part of the creation of the government for citizens state corporation, reported a Mazhilis (lower house of Parliament) press release.

Establishing such an organisation was envisioned in the 100 Concrete Steps programme of large-scale reform announced earlier this year by Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev.

The main objective of the proposed innovations is to legislate the norms regulating the relations

connected with the provision of public services to individuals and legal entities according to the one window principle, where all services related to issuing government papers for citizens would occur.

Improving the quality of public services is ensured through the development of two key tools – the citizen service centres (CSC), better known among residents under its Russian acronym TSON, and electronic government, a website offering a wide range of information and documentation services.

CSC provides front office services only, receiving applications and giving results. Creating the government for citizens by merging key service providers in the fields of social welfare services, land relations and real estate registration would allow the office not only to accept applications, but also to perform them, said

Sarsenov in presenting the legislation.

"At the initial stage, it is proposed to transfer the most important state services in the sphere of land relations, real estate, social and pension payments [with the use of] the Canadian experience," he added.

Thus, the draft legislation stipulates assigning organisational functions of the CSC national state enterprise centre for servicing the population by providing public services to individuals and legal entities according to the one window principle. The move would also consolidate the services of the research and production centre of land cadastre, centre for real estate and state centre for pension payments of the state corporation.

Merging four state enterprises into one may result in a reduction in staff, said Mazhilis Deputy Maira Aisina when commenting

on creating a new corporation, reported Tengrinews.kz.

"I think there will be a reduction, it is certain, because one corporation will be created from four enterprises. Therefore, all of the supporting positions will be cut. There are administrative bodies and [departments of] budget and finance and personnel in four such entities, so there will be no reduction of [core] employees. That is why there will be optimisation," she said.

It is difficult to estimate number of employees who will be cut, she added.

"They now need to review the work of all these four state enterprises and conduct an audit. They need to see what staff size will be needed for the new corporation," said Aisina.

She noted the corporation would presumably begin providing services in the first quarter of 2016.

SOCIETY

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 23, 2015

Instagram – Astana’s Online ‘Yellow Pages’

By Botagoz Tanatova

ASTANA – The addition of social media is not lost on Kazakhstan. Among all popular social platforms in the country, the highest growth rate is among Instagram users. Even though there is still a place for selfies and life moment posts, more and more Astana residents find Instagram to be their online reference guide.

According to the Pew Research Centre, 31 percent of Instagram users worldwide are women between the ages of 18-29.

“There is no information on demographics in social media in Kazakhstan, but according to our information the majority of Instagram users in Kazakhstan are also young women,” said MediaTime.kz Business Development Department head Assel Suponova in a Sept. 4 interview.

Elena Smolnikova is one of them. Following our Sept. 7 meeting, she proposed taking a selfie, then slightly elevated an eyebrow, smiled and took the picture of us by touching a button on the front of her camera.

“You need to hold your smartphone at 45 degrees just above your eye line,” she taught me. “The pose is important and your smile says you are not taking it too seriously.”

A law school student, Smolnikova spends most of her free time on Instagram.

“It is a minimum of four hours per day,” she noted.

She admitted it is an addiction, but at the same time does not want to quit.

“It’s almost like a visual diary. I can look back and see what I looked like at a particular time, what I was wearing. There are no friendship boundaries between followers and you do not feel social pressure as on Facebook. You can make your account private and follow only those who you like,” said Smolnikova.

Aliya Issenova is also a frequent Instagram user. The mother of two children, she has been using the platform for more than three years. She calls Instagram her family photo album and more than 11,000 followers have never missed a turn in her life.

“I first learned about Instagram

from my ‘mommy’ friends. They always chat about what they saw on Instagram and suggest each other follow some accounts. Instagram is my open microphone now. Usually I post pictures of my children, but most of the users follow me just because they like to read the descriptions I write under the photos. I speak openly about everything that happened or is happening in my life. I think it is a rare phenomenon in Astana when people tell their true opinions and are honest with each other in social media. Most of the users just got stuck on the topic of ‘how cool I am,’” said Issenova in a Sept. 4 interview.

Most of her friends have come from Instagram. She meets and reads them every day and claims Instagram is the best communication tool for her.

“As a mother of two children, employee and wife, I do not have enough time for myself and for my friends. So it is easy for me to share my problems with people on Instagram and get support and nice comments from my followers. Most of them want to meet me personally

and I am always happy to see them in real life. I meet them when I travel around Kazakhstan; when I was in Paris and in Moscow I met my followers as well,” she said.

Evgeniya Garkushina is also a busy mother who is now on maternity leave. Her initial experience with social media was for work and at first she was very skeptical about Instagram.

“I thought it was just a platform for people who like to take selfies. However, when all the people I am surrounded by started to use it, I decided to open an account there as well. I realised how useful it can be; I found a nice cosmetologist there, kindergarten for my child and all my followers now help me and share information with me that I need,” she said in a Sept. 3 interview.

Garkushina was originally a passive Instagram user, but now she has her own community.

“I always liked to buy things online, but the price for shipping to Kazakhstan is quite high. So one day I decided to announce that I was going to order things online. I asked

people if they wanted to order everything together and just divide the cost of shipping between us. People liked the idea because most of them just wanted to buy one thing abroad and did not want to spend the time for the whole process of ordering. After my announcement, the number of my followers rose rapidly. I even made my account private in order to protect my followers’ information. And now I have my own business based on Instagram; it is not profitable, but I enjoy helping people and being useful for my family as well,” she said.

Suponova confirmed Instagram is becoming the favourite communication and public relations instrument for small entrepreneurs.

“One of the biggest benefits to using Instagram as a marketing tool is that it is completely free and very simple. Many small businesses use Instagram as a storefront to ‘display’ new products and ideas. Most of the sellers, pastry masters, hairdressers and barbers do not give customers their business card in their first meeting, but tell them their Instagram pages. The use of

correct hashtags gives people the information: where to go, what to buy and what service to use in Astana,” she said.

She added @shodim_ASTANA (Where to go in Astana) has around 40,000 followers and posts three-four announcements daily. The same types of accounts exist in every Kazakh city. Aizhan Kozhakhmetova follows @shodim_ASTANA accounts and many others: her designer Instagram, family accounts, online stores, doctors and even some pets.

“Instagram is a very useful platform. We can find everything we need there. I am a small businesswoman and I found the way to sell my handmade jewelry via Instagram. So now I have quit my office job and finally do what I love. I did not invest money to promote my business. Instagram is a free platform; you just have to know how to take nice pictures and be quick in replying to comments. I was. So now I can even afford to pay the person who helps me with delivering my products to customers,” she said in a Sept. 10 interview.

ADVERTISEMENT

Company Founder Finds Happiness in Cooking

By Lyaziza Mukasheva

In Kazakhstan, locals are consuming products of TsinKaz in growing numbers.

TsinKaz Ltd. is a company engaged in the agricultural and deep processing industry. This multinational enterprise gets government recognition, consumer confidence, and gold product quality awards in Kazakhstan. With a share of 40 percent in its segment of Kazakhstan’s market, TsinKaz was the first to achieve an ISO9000 certification. All of the success that TsinKaz has achieved is due to the leadership of its founder, Qigang Chen. His innovation in how he manages the company as well as his ideas and strong attention to cultural nuances is what made TsinKaz successful in Kazakhstan.

Mr. Chen is one of the most prominent entrepreneurs managing multinational corporations. TsinKaz is the leading enterprise in the production and sales of tomato products and canned vegetables in Central Asia. Today, TsinKaz products are seen in many family kitchens in Kazakhstan. TsinKaz products are also considered to be gifts by family and friends during holidays and anniversaries. This innovative idea has earned recognition and honor for TsinKaz as the company has been awarded “Choice of the Year in Kazakhstan” and “Producer No. 1 for 10 years in Kazakhstan”.

Along these many awards Mr. Chen has brought an innovative new management model to Kazakhstan. Differing from the classical series of transnational management, the innovative HPM strategy is sourced from the practices Mr. Chen has summarized in his experiences in establishing and managing the transnational corporation, and has raised it to a theoretical height of which “H” is “HR Management Localisation,” “P” refers to “Product R&D Serialisation,” “F” means “Financial Budget Management,” and “M” stands for “Marketing Network.”

He encourages his employees to further learn and develop their skills thus creating more benefits for the employees. TsinKaz was rewarded by the Committee of Labour Protection and Supervision of Kazakhstan for its outstanding contributions to creating jobs for the local communities.

It has always been Mr. Chen’s priority to see what his consumers are interested in. Because of this and his strong sense of social responsibility he turns his focus on food safety and modern food production, processing, circulation and consumption across bounda-

ries of countries and regions. Food trade has always been an important component in international trading. Mr. Chen, because of his strong sense of social responsibility, works to ensure the safety of the food, manpower, and material resources to provide the consumers full quality goods. Along the way, he works to establish the “from the farm to the kitchen” production process. His social responsibility does not end with



Qigang Chen

his consumers but also includes the man power as well and to ensure their protection, a new mode of cooperation is established for farmers that includes planting development, protocols, and technical training in cultivation. With periodic guidance of experts, minimum annual income grows.

The effects of Mr. Chen’s innovative ideas not only benefit his own enterprise but also the whole industry. Whenever he starts to

The effects of Mr. Chen’s innovative ideas not only benefit his own enterprise but also the whole industry.

bring about a new product, he researches thoroughly and studies local culture and tradition to have a better understanding of his market and consumer. From collections of folk recipes, suggestions from experts in the food processing industry, and preferences of customers through taste tests and evaluations, he has improved the way to develop products and meet the needs of his consumers. Furthermore, large-scale and standardized production enable the enterprise to realise product serialisation.

The way he worked on the product “Cobra” serves as an example of how Mr. Chen brings about a new product. The Cobra sauce is used in various meals and recipes, including noodles, dumplings, and fried rice. Housewives and cooks would make the Cobra sauce out of scratch due to the fact

that the cobra sauce was unavailable in the market. Upon seeing this Mr. Chen saw the opportunity and decided to produce Cobra Sauce in order to save time and energy by this being available on market shelves.

The product “Adgika” is also a creation of Mr. Chen, which is now a must for local family kitchens in Kazakhstan. Both of these products have been awarded as “Best Product of Kazakhstan” during a contest, which has been organized by the Ministry of Industry and New Technology. The Mayor of Almaty has presented the certificate for this award personally.

Determined to create a brand new concept called “Happy Cooking,” this concept’s purpose is to make cooking easier and more pleasant through semi-ready products. His extraordinary ability helps Mr. Chen grasp the chances he has in the market. He turns his focus to the new demand of the generation now and future generations of his market in Central Asia who are reluctant to spend so much time in the kitchen and are not willing to pay too much for dining out either. Based on a good understanding of Western food and Asian cuisine, Mr. Chen has realised that behind the simplified way of cooking is a vast market. He is dedicated to move the fast food at home with new ideas, new products, and new managerial skills.

Mr. Chen ensures that the completeness of the raw materials and original taste of ingredients were preserved to its maximum extent. In addition to an easier operation, now the whole catering industry can benefit from his newly developed products, the diced tomatoes processed by a microwave oven, the spicy sauce, ketchup, etc. makes the time of cooking more efficient and the kitchen cleaner. This makes housewives and cooks everywhere happier, more cost efficient, and satisfied.

Given his accomplishments, achievements, and successes, Mr. Chen is here to remind us that through hard work, dedication and perseverance everything is possible. He is an innovator willing to take risks and accept the changes going on around him, adapting to this and modernising society. He is not only an innovator but also a concerned citizen, changing the lives of the families in Kazakhstan by making cooking easier, more accessible, and cost efficient as well as improving the economic status of the country. This is a true success he has accomplished not only to himself or his company but also to the country of Kazakhstan and to its people.

Invataxi Marks Progress, Introduces Future Plans

By Julia Rutz

Invataxi, a special free taxi service for passengers with disabilities, was established in Almaty in 2009 after the Sabi charity fund purchased 14 specially-equipped Volkswagen Caddys and Transporters and donated them to the Almaty City Society of Persons with Disabilities. The funds used to acquire the vehicles were raised during a charity auction of paintings created by Kazakh artists, as well as attained from private sponsors.

The Almaty office is managed by veteran of the Soviet conflict in Afghanistan and person with disabilities of the second degree Sergei Makhshashev. The facility, which has operated at private expense for two years, is now receiving public funding.

Invataxi is available to all wheelchair users in Almaty and its database includes 1,068 registered clients. To obtain the right to use the service, a potential patron must bring an ID card, certificate of disability, individual rehabilitation programme certificate and certificate No. 035/y to the office. The taxi service is available after 9 a.m. and orders need to be registered a day before the planned transportation.

In addition to cars, which are able to transport one person in a wheelchair and one person in the back seat, the office also offers a Volkswagen Crafter bus to carry three persons in wheelchairs and three more in the rear.

“I like my job, as it is always nice to do good things for others. It may be challenging sometimes to find an individual approach to our passengers; however, you just have to start communicating with them. Usually, I transport people to the medical centres for treatment and rehabilitation. I work every day, as well as on weekends, depending on the schedule,” said driver Shauket Usmanov.

According to Diana Baiturova, whose 14-year-old daughter is a regular Invataxi client, they order a

cab twice a week and are very satisfied with the service. They live in a remote district far from the city centre and it is a challenge to use public transport to get to the ARDI Medical Centre.

“We use the taxi service each time we need it, as this type of transportation is much more convenient for us. Unfortunately, it is not always possible to order a taxi. At 9:30, all the cabs are usually no longer available, so we have to call at 9 a.m. from several phones in order to get a car. I think they have a great flow of customers,” said another client, Bazan Mazhitova.

The taxi service offers a special monthly schedule for those with disabilities who are studying or working, so the person doesn’t have to call and order a car each time.

“I am studying law in Turan College, so I use Invataxi every day. I also order a car on the weekend to go to the park to get some fresh air,” said 23-year-old Zhasulan Umirkazinov.

Invataxi also offers work opportunities for citizens with disabilities. Svetlana Kerimbekova has been a call operator since 2010.

“I can implement only seated work, so I was very grateful when the Society of Disabled People of Medeu District appointed me here. We have a very friendly collective,” said Kerimbekova.

According to Invataxi deputy head Tatiana Shvachunova, the company does not have enough cars to service all those who need transportation. The total amount of public funding allows only 10 trips per car, so the office is unable to send more vehicles even when clients are waiting to order them.

“We send reports to the Labour and Social Protection Department of Almaty every month asking them to increase the financial support. However, the answer is always negative. The authorities used to claim that the budget is limited and they have to sponsor other

projects for the disabled population as well. That is why we can cover only about 10 percent of all calls received in the office,” said Shvachunova.

One of Invataxi’s initiators and Kazakh Union of Organisations of Disabled People Chairman Ali Amanbayev said he saw special taxi cabs for the first time in the United States when he was there in the 1990s.

“Our service is free, while, for example, in Moscow people have to pay for that. At the same time we experience a lack of financial support, so four of our cabs are not operating. Right now our capacity allows us to transport 120 persons a day, but the experience shows that the demand is much higher. Kazakhstan ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on Jan. 20 this year; I hope this will change the situation. There is also a positive change, as the Invataxi service is now available in other cities of the country like Pavlodar, Aktobe, Kokshetau, Temirtau, Ust-Kamenogorsk, Uralsk, Kyzylorda, Ekibastuz, Taldykorgan, Zhezkazgan, Turkestan, Karaganda, Semei and Petropavlovsk, where the Invataxi office has two cars. Three cars are available in Atyrau and Kostanai. Shymkent and Astana have four and six cars, respectively,” said Amanbayev.

He also stressed the importance of teaching local bus drivers how they should help passengers get into the vehicle.

“We need to explain that they must come out of the bus, put forward a special ramp and help people with disabilities entering the bus. We have also proposed introducing a special stop button on the bus stop to send a signal to the driver saying that a disabled passenger wants to get into the bus. This is the only way we can meet the transportation needs of people with disabilities in Almaty and in Kazakhstan,” said Amanbayev.



Invataxi users.

TOURISM&EXPO 2017

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 23, 2015

Astana, Almaty Among Top 10 Most Visited Cities by Russian Tourists



Astana's iconic skyline.

By Zhazira Dyussebekova

ASTANA – Almaty and Astana have been among the top 10 most visited cities by Russian tourists this year, according to a survey by Russian website Travel.ru.

Minsk, Kiev, Baku, Yerevan, Vitebsk, Bishkek, Tashkent and Chisinau were also among the top 10, according to online bookings made without the aid of a travel agent.

The survey also showed that the number of online bookings for hotels in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) increased by almost 1.5 times in the last year.

Aktau and Aktobe were listed among the top 20 of the most visited cities of the CIS. Belarus's Brest, Grodno and Gomel; Ukraine's Lviv, Odessa and Kharkov; as well as Turkmenistan's Ashgabat and Tajikistan's Dushanbe were also on the list.

The research showed tourists spent an average of \$73 per day for a hotel in Minsk, \$87 in Kiev, \$84 in Almaty, \$78 in Baku and \$63 in Yerevan.

Astana was named the most expensive capital of the CIS with hotel prices at \$115 per day while the

average hotel budget in Bishkek is only \$30 per day.

According to Travel.ru, Kazakhstan was ranked as the third most visited country after Belarus and Ukraine. Sixteen percent of Russian citizens travelling to the CIS chose Kazakh cities as their destination. Thirty-seven percent went to Belarus and 22 percent headed to Ukraine. Azerbaijan and Armenia were also in the top five.

On average, Russian tourists spent four days and \$80 per day for hotels in the countries visited.

The Borovoye resort is among the most visited places during the summer season, as well as Issyk Kul in Kyrgyzstan, Lake Narach in Belarus, the village Nabran in Azerbaijan and Sevan in Armenia.

The most visited attractions in Astana include the Baiterek Tower, Akorda, Hazret Sultan Mosque, Astana Opera, the Palace of Peace and Harmony and the Khan Shatyr Entertainment Centre. Astana is famous for its modern architecture, while Almaty offers more history. Almaty attractions include the Medeu Skating Rink and Ski Resort, beautiful lakes, the Kasteev Art Gallery, Panfilov Park and the Kok Tobe Cable Car.

Vietnam Considers Visa-free Regime for Citizens of Kazakhstan

By Staff Report

ASTANA – Vietnam's Tourism Association President Nguen Huu Tho announced during a recent meeting with Kazakhstan's Ambassador in Vietnam Beketzhan Zhumakhanov that Vietnam is considering introducing a visa-free regime for Kazakh citizens for up to 15 days, according to the press service of the Kazakh Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The meeting came as Kazakh diplomats participated in an international tourism exhibition in Ho Chi Minh City.

The sides discussed bilateral tourism cooperation and attracting Kazakh tourists to Vietnam. The Vietnamese tourism association has expressed interest in cooperating with Kazakhstan's tourism association.

The issue of whether Vietnam will participate in EXPO 2017 was also discussed during the ambassador's meeting with Vietnamese Minister of Culture, Sport and Tourism Hoang Tuan Anh.

The minister said Vietnam will provide a written agreement to participate in Astana's exhibition



Photo credit: dnevnik.bigmir.net

soon and a commissioner responsible for the country's national pavilion at the exhibition will be appointed the following month.

Within the tourism exhibition, Kazakhstan's embassy together with Vietnam's national administration on tourism held roundtable discussions with the involvement of Vietnam's major tour operators and airlines, such as Saigontourist, Vietravel, FocusTravel, IndochinaHeritage and VietJetAir. Exhibition participants

were briefed on Kazakhstan's tourism market development with an emphasis on attracting Vietnamese tourists to the expo.

Vietnam, with a population of more than 90 million people, has a strong tourism market. Vietnam hopes its tourism market will be improved by an agreement signed in May concerning free trade between the Eurasian Economic Union and Vietnam. The availability of direct flights between Almaty and Ho Chi Minh cities, which are

serviced by Air Astana, will also promote trips between the two countries.

During roundtable discussions, Vietnamese tour operators discussed their intention to visit Kazakhstan with a tourism delegation at the end of October, in order to participate in the seventh session of the Kazakh-Vietnamese Intergovernmental Commission. The delegation will include major tour operators, the press and cultural figures.

Rail Company Seeks State Support to Establish 'Hotel on Wheels'

By Staff Report

ASTANA – The Turan Express passenger rail company recently sought state support from the Kazakh Ministry of Investment and Development to launch a "hotel on wheels."

"We can form a tourist train that will simultaneously be a 'hotel on the wheels' and will service the Khorgos – Almaty – Taraz – Shymkent – Turkestan – Kyzylorda – Baikonur tourist railway route with a mandatory visit to Astana," Director General of Turan Express Roman Botabekov said, according to the ministry's press service.

The company is seeking state

support in terms of tax benefits, subsidisation of transportation and preferential lending. The company hopes to launch the service in

2016. The ministry is considering the request.

"Similar tours, especially within the 'Silk Way' programme, would



be useful for school students during holiday periods. This would be extra knowledge of the nation's history and culture and a solution for issues of child summer holiday arrangements," said Minister Asset Isekeshev.

In 2013, Turan Express organised specialised travel trains along Almaty – Alakol Lake – Dostyk routes. The demand for similar routes was high, so the company is seeking to expand the geography of transportation and range of services.

In particular, the company would like to establish routes along Kazakh and Central Asian historic and cultural sites.

Silicon Valley Companies Demonstrate Strong Interest in EXPO 2017, UNDP Confirms Participation

By Murager Sauranbayev

SAN FRANCISCO – EXPO 2017 Commissioner and Kazakh First Deputy Foreign Minister Rapiil Zhoshybayev completed his 10-day trip to the U.S. with visits to New York and San Francisco.

If his focus in the Big Apple was on the United Nations family of organisations, he paid much more attention in the Golden Gate City to luring America's leading high tech companies like Google to presenting their know-how at the Future Energy-themed forum in Astana.

The good news from the meetings in New York was official confirmation from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) of its participation in the expo. The announcement was made as Zhoshybayev held talks with UN Under-Secretary-General and UNDP Administrator Helen Clark. The UNDP thus became the seventh international organisation so far to confirm its planned presence at the exposition.

Talking with Clark, Zhoshybayev highlighted the expo's main theme and three sub-themes: reduction of CO2 emission, energy effective lifestyle and energy for all. Both agreed the topics are of global concern and would contribute towards implementing the UNDP's initiative of "Sustainable Energy for All." Clarke added she would encourage the participation

of UN memberstates in the event.

The parties reportedly also discussed priorities of cooperation in the framework of KazaAID, a soon to be launched national operator for Kazakhstan's international development assistance. Clark welcomed KazaAID's potential to help increase cooperation along the South-South axis and said she looked forward to a successful implementation of the Kazakhstan-UNDP partnership programme for 2016-2020.

After moving from coast to coast, Zhoshybayev held talks with top management leadership and founders of companies such as Google, Obscura Digital, Planet Labs, Global Thermostat, C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group and GenYES. He also had sessions in the San Francisco Mayor's office and at Stanford University.

At the meeting with Google, it quickly became clear the company was expressing significant interest in EXPO 2017. According to Brian Sullivan, Programme Manager at Google Ocean and Earth Outreach, the tasks and aims of the event correspond with Google's mission. He added the corporation has begun cooperating with the UN on countering climate change and examining the best ways to use its technologies to help solve the issue. The American company plans to present its proposals related to the Google Earth project at the

UN Climate Change Conference in Paris, scheduled for Nov. 30. Technical opportunities provided by Google Earth can be used to observe climate change on the planet through the decades, said Sullivan.

Google's interest in participating in EXPO 2017 may offer a good opportunity for Kazakhstan to engage in joint projects with the global company and extend support to the world's scientific and environmental community by providing access to quickly process huge chunks of data.

At the San Francisco mayor's office, Zhoshybayev was briefed on the city's leadership in advancing energy-saving technologies. California's fourth-most populated city hosted an expo 100 years ago and considering its history and experience, Zhoshybayev suggested sending a delegation to EXPO 2017 to present the best practices devised by the city in promoting sustainable urban development.

At Stanford, one of America's most prestigious universities, the expo commissioner visited some of the advanced labs in the Department of Mechanical Engineering which actively engage in energy research.

Zhoshybayev spoke with department Professor Friedrich Prinz on ways to engage educational communities in preparations for the Astana expo. In turn, the academic shared his vision for development

in the field of energy for the next 15 years, predicting the share of renewable sources in energy production will increase up to 30 percent. In this context, Prinz said the share of coal in global energy balance would decrease and that of natural gas would grow, while consumption of petroleum would stay the same and see no major changes.

The commissioner also had a meeting with prominent climate change expert Graziella Chichilinski, best known for proposing and designing the carbon credit emissions trading market underlying the Kyoto Protocol.

The founder of Global Thermostat, one of the world's most innovative energy companies, presented a prototype of the industrial installation designed to catch carbon dioxide from the burnt gas on thermoelectric plants or directly from the air. According to the prototype description, carbon dioxide is caught by blowing the burnt gas and air through special membranes, with the polymeric spattering catching the CO2. This technology is commercially viable, as the clean carbon dioxide emitted can be re-used for food industry needs, producing dry ice and in the oil and gas sphere to raise the debit of the old fields and create industrial gas. The company currently has 16 international patents in 147 countries and a module structure

which facilitates its integration to existing thermal power plants.

Based on the results of the meeting, the parties agreed to install carbon negative technology equipment on the EXPO 2017 field which will catch carbon dioxide from the air with the further possibility of using it in bio-fuel. The American side expressed interest in presenting its inventions at the exposition.

In the Silicon Valley, Zhoshybayev met with the management and founders of Obscura Digital, which is engaged in creating large-scale 3D projections throughout the world. In addition, the company creates LED panels for stadiums and huge multimedia touchscreens and is very popular among Internet users. Obscura Digital's most successful projects are the main mosque in Abu Dhabi, the video show on the roof of the Sydney Opera House, which had 32 million views in four hours, and a show on the Empire State Building in New York which had more than one billion watchers. Considering the professionalism of the collaborators and scale of the projects, these inventions could be successfully introduced at the expo. At the end of the meeting, the company indicated its readiness to present its opportunities at the exposition and render technical assistance for the event.

The large U.S. energy and industrial companies demonstrated a

positive attitude towards participation in the exposition and are ready not only to show but also to implement their recent technologies in the field of energy saving and effectiveness.

In New York, companies such as C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group and GenYES also demonstrated enthusiastic interest in the exposition, assuring they will propose a row of projects on CO2 emission reduction and renewable and alternative sources of energy to demonstrate in the expo's best practices zone.

Following completion of the West Coast programme, the expo commissioner flew to South America where he held talks in the hope of securing the participation of Argentina and Brazil in the Astana event.

EXPO 2017 will be a major display of technological achievements, demonstrating the newest inventions of the 21st century in the field of alternative and renewable energy. The Kazakh government is paying significant attention to running successful preparations for the event.

To date, 49 countries and seven international organisations have confirmed their participation in the exposition to be held June 10-Sept. 10. It is ultimately expected that no less than 100 nations and 10 international organisations will take part in EXPO 2017.

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 23, 2015

Two Kazakh Wrestlers Win Bronze, Gain Olympic Bids at Las Vegas World Wrestling Championships

By Michelle Witte

ASTANA – Two Greco-Roman wrestlers from Kazakhstan brought home medals from the recent World Wrestling Championships in Las Vegas and earned the right to compete in the Rio 2016 Olympic Games.

Doszhan Kartikov, wrestling in the 75 kilogrammes weight class, beat Alvin Musaliyev of Azerbaijan to take home the bronze, in the process earning himself an Olympic Games spot, Express.kz reported. Almat Kebispayev, competing in the 59 kg class, also won bronze and an Olympic spot with his victory over Soslan Daurov of Belarus, Vesti.kz reported.

During the event, which ran Sept. 7–12, Kebispayev defeated fighters from Egypt and Norway before losing to Cuban wrestler Ismail Borrero Malino in the semifinals. Kartikov overcame wrestlers from Ukraine, Moldova and World Champion and Olympic champion

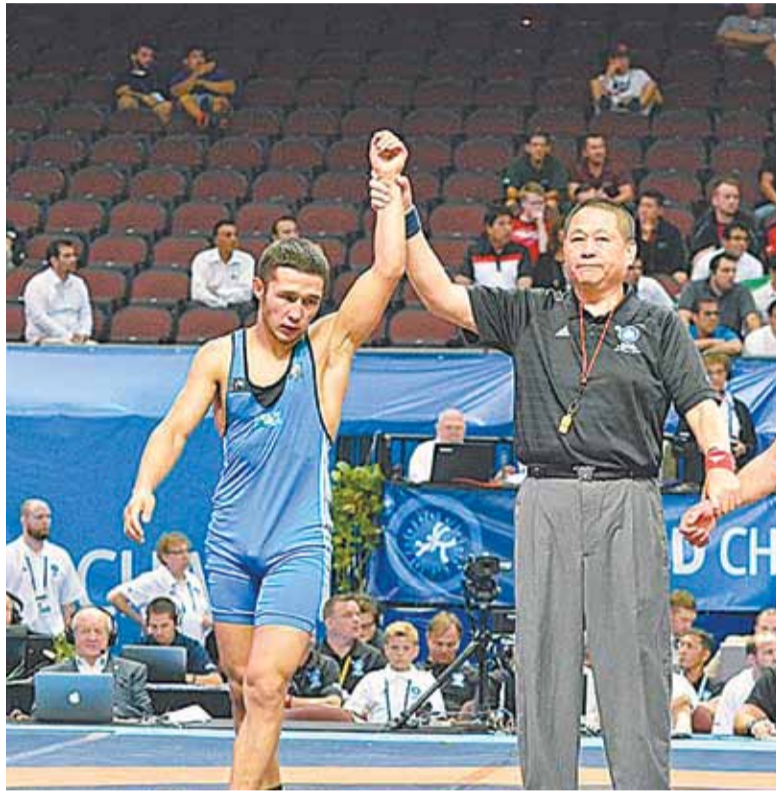
KIM Hyeon-Woo of South Korea before falling to Russian silver medalist Roman Vlasov.

Among Kazakhstan's other Greco-Roman wrestlers, Askhat Dilmuhamedov (80 kg) conceded in his bronze medal match to Yousef Ahmad Ghaderian of Iran.

The Kazakh Greco-Roman team came in fifth overall out of 10, with 23 points, trailing Russia, Azerbaijan, Ukraine and Iran.

On Kazakhstan's freestyle wrestling team, Artas Sanaa (57kg) lost the bronze medal match to Bekhbayar Erdenebat of Mongolia. Nurlan Bekzhanov (70kg) and Darkhan Bayakhetmetov (71 kg) competed for slots at the bronze medal matches in their weight classes but were defeated by opponents from Turkey and Armenia, respectively.

Sergei Beloglazov, two-time Olympic champion and multiple world and European championship winner was named the head coach of the men's freestyle wrestling team in June, taking over from Ruslan Umraliyev.



Almat Kebispayev is declared the winner in a match at the World Wrestling Championships in Las Vegas.

Kazakh Weightlifters Win Six Medals at Senior Asian Weightlifting Championship

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – Kazakh weightlifters earned three gold and three bronze medals at the recent 26th Senior Women's and 45th Senior Men's Asian Weightlifting Championships in Phuket, Thailand.

Kazakh athletes Yermek Omirtai, Aidar Kazov and Rustem Sybai won gold in the men's 85 kg, 77 kg and 94 kg categories, respectively. Omirtai lifted 364 kg (161 kg + 203 kg) and had a failed try at lifting 206 kg. Sybai lifted 383 kg (167 kg + 216 kg), showing the best result in the jerk competition. Kazov lifted 350 kg (156 kg + 194 kg) as did his main rival from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, but Omirtai won the gold medal because he weighed less than his competitor, according to Vesti.kz.

Kazakhs Faina Sivanbayeva and Assem Sadykova won bronze in the women's 63kg and 58kg category. Maira Faizulayeva lifted 226 kg – 101kg in the snatch and 125kg in the clean and jerk – and edged out Wan Ting Hung from Taipei. She



Rustem Sybai

became the last weightlifter from Kazakhstan to clinch bronze in Phuket.

The Amateur Weightlifting Association (TAWA) of Thailand hosted the Asian Weightlifting Championship from Sep. 3 through 12. The Asian Weightlifting Championships were held in Kazakhstan in Almaty, Taldykorgan and Astana in 2004, 2009 and 2013.

The Asian Weightlifting Championships is a weightlifting championship for athletes from Asian countries that is organised by the Asian Weightlifting Federation. It was established in 1971 and in 2008 the championships provided the official qualification for Asian competitors in the 2008 Beijing Olympics.

Ski Federation Eager to Start Season under New Management

By Dmitry Lee

ASTANA – The winter season is right around the corner and unfortunate as it may seem for some, winter sports lovers are surely excited. For Ski Federation of Kazakhstan (SFK) President Vladimir Smirnov, who has spent his whole life on skis, this just means setting new goals for the organisation and preparing to popularise the sport this season.

In an exclusive interview with The Astana Times, Smirnov, who assumed the post July 1, shared his plans for the upcoming winter and shed some light on the current situation of the sport in the country. The 1994 Lillehammer Winter Olympic Games gold medalist, Smirnov also secured four silver and two bronze Olympic medals, was a four-time world champion and champion of numerous races in the USSR.

"In general, the situation is tough because our team is not reaching the goals that have been set by the management. The goal is to make it to the top 15-20 at the World Cup competitions and top 10 at the World Championship; however, Alexei Poltoranin is the only skier who has lived up to expectations. For the upcoming season, we have refreshed our roster with young talents and in the coming years we hope we will help them meet our planned results. We also set the goal not only to be the best in Kazakhstan, but also to find our role in the world community," said Smirnov.

The SFK is spending funds to supply the skiers with proper gear and training and finance regional federa-

tions, he added, explaining the federations are extremely important as they supply the national team with young prospects. Smirnov emphasised promotion of the sport should start early in school.

"We need to fully promote the skiing sports in schools like in the 1980s, where it was a part of the curriculum," he said. "The children's sports schools are open for kids who want to sign up for skiing; such schools are located in each region. They offer the necessary gear and coaches, though they struggle with a shortage of gear and qualified coaches who can't stay due to low salaries."

Under Smirnov's guidance, the SFK is actively working on hosting high-end events to promote sports and the country's image abroad. One of such competitions is the Kazakhstan Cup, which will be held at the Almaty Biathlon and Cross-Country Ski Complex Dec. 22-26 under the auspices of the Fédération Internationale de Ski (FIS, or International Ski Federation).

In his life away from the slopes, Smirnov is an activist against nuclear weapons. He has promoted a nuclear weapons free world on several occasions, including with The ATOM Project, an online petition launched by Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev in 2012 to raise awareness in the global community and advance the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT).

Earlier this year, Smirnov participated in Bike Away the Atomic Bomb, a ride from Washington,

D.C. to New York City, finishing in front of the United Nations headquarters. The organisers sought to attract attention to the tragic consequences of nuclear weapons testing and urge the international community to move more resolutely towards abolishing nuclear weapons.

"I was invited to take part in a similar event five years ago. A Nor-

wegian group held a bike race from Beijing to Oslo via Almaty and in Almaty I joined the cause. Later, I took part in a race from Semipalatinsk to Astana and this time from Washington to New York."

At the end of the interview, Smirnov wished "every Kazakh citizen to be joyful, cheerful and have family happiness."



Vladimir Smirnov

Barys Starts 8th KHL Season Similar to Previous Early Efforts

By Eran Zhanayev

Twelve games into the Continental Hockey League's (KHL) eighth season and with 60 games to play, the Astana Barys hockey club's early performance has been similar to the 2014 season.

The players for new Head Coach Eran Sagymbayev have achieved four wins at the start of the season, including three regular time wins and scored in seven games. The players have scored 23 goals and missed 32. The total amount of points is 14. These results are similar to the start of seasons past and after the summer holidays, the club has also improved.

A distinctive feature of this season is the work of Barys's coaches with young players. This is not surprising as Sagymbayev and his assistant Evgeniy Koreshev have

more than half a decade experience working with youth hockey players. Another coach, Andrey Shayanov, was also involved in the formation of such players as Roman Starchenko, Evgeniy Malkin, Anton Khudobin and Nikolai Kulemin while working in a children's and youth hockey.

From the beginning of this season, a chance to shine at a senior level has been given to Dmitry Grenz, Nikita Mikhaylis, Damir Ryspaev, Daniyar Kairov and Maxim Baranov. Each of them has spent more than five minutes on the ice, although in some games, some of them reached 10 minutes. Moreover, participation by the younger breed does not depend on which opponent opposes Barys.

Despite a strong start to the season, Barys players and coaches say they are seeking even better results in the rest of the season.

Astana Pro Team Rider Wins Vuelta a España

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – Astana Pro Team's Fabio Aru recently won the 70th Vuelta a España. It was the first grand tour win for the 25-year-old, who finished second behind Alberto Contador at this year's Giro d'Italia. The win confirms his status as one of the best young riders in the sport.

"This is not just a triumph for Aru, this is about the victory of a team. On paper it seems easy, but the reality is that it was very tough," Astana Director Alexander Vinokourov said, according to RTE Sport.

Aru wasn't even Astana's leader in the beginning of the race but moved into contention after his compatriot Vincenzo Nibali, the 2014 Tour de France champion who won the Vuelta in 2010, was disqualified for hanging onto the Astana team car after a crash on the second stage. Aru avoided the accident to seal victory in the last major event of the cycling season. Germany's John Degenkolb won the last stage itself. Aru's triumph was made after he overtook leader and Dutchman Tom Dumoulin in the race's mountainous stage 20. Aru and his teammates launched a series

of attacks that saw the Italian finish almost four minutes clear of Dumoulin.

Aru said after the race he would like to participate in the 2016 Tour de France but he needs to meet with Astana team officials to decide on the year's objectives.

"Nibali is a great rider; he's won grand tours. So in our team, it's not a question of being a leader or not being a leader. He was in the team here, but he had to leave in the second stage. But if he had been in the race, we'd both have raced to get a top result because we're both professionals," Aru said, as reported by RTE Sport.



Fabio Aru (C) is congratulated by his competitors.

CAPITAL

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 23, 2015

Men's Grooming Intends to Occupy Niche in Country's Beauty Industry

By Zhazira Dyussebekova

ASTANA – Although men's grooming is usually considered to be a modern fashion wave, its origins trace to ancient Egypt where it became an inherent part of hygiene and health. Men's salons and barber shops have succeeded in western countries and Kazakhstan's entrepreneurs have decided to embark on a new direction of the country's beauty industry.

Canadian native and long-time Kazakh resident Kevin Freake has launched Esquire, the capital's first male grooming salon. He opened the shop in November 2014 despite warnings from industry professionals that the idea would fail because the market in the city was a small one, and women spend more than men on their appearance.

"I began thinking of this concept, a gentleman's hair salon, several years ago while sitting in an Astana hair salon surrounded by women clients when a male friend came and asked if I, too, was waiting for my wife. I didn't tell him that I was actually waiting for a stylist. I discretely left. That's when I began to search for a men's salon, a place that would feel masculine and specialise in men's grooming. Even though there are many good stylists in Astana, I couldn't find a salon that felt masculine. That's when I started to think of launching my own salon," said Freake in a recent interview with The Astana Times.

"First, I wanted to create a place where a gentleman would feel at



Inside Esquire male grooming salon in Astana.

home. Secondly, a place where a gentleman would receive the finest haircuts and experience a premium traditional straight-razor shave. Thirdly, a place where a gentleman could purchase the ultimate in hair care and shaving products. I believe I have done that with Esquire Male Grooming Salon. I want to take service to another level not seen before in Astana," said Freake.

The new salon promises to pro-

vide an "old-world gentleman's club atmosphere" and ensure clients' privacy in their surroundings. The shop does not have specific business hours.

"Simply call our 24/7 service concierge number to arrange a time suitable to you," said Freake.

The client is welcomed by the concierge team and either escorted to his private styling or spa space or the library for a pre-styling beverage. Each man is offered a per-

sonalised shirt to wear upon entering the styling room, and his jacket is steam-pressed and ready for him when it is time to leave. The salon says, "The days of sharing a room with other men and women are over for you."

Male grooming salons appeared after traditional barbershops, which originally were places for men to get a shave and haircut. Barbershops were known as spots where men could socialise.

Entrepreneur Andrey Plastun has launched Chop-Chop barber shops in the capital and Almaty. He owns a franchise in a company that operates in more than 50 barber shops in different cities of the Commonwealth of Independent States.

"We don't want to be called a beauty salon. We provide services only for men. We cut beards, we do shaving and we do haircuts," said Plastun.

His decision to open a barber shop was due to his dislike of unisex beauty salons, which he described as locations where "you can still get a Soviet-style haircut."

"That's why I wanted to launch a barber shop. They represent new service for customers in Kazakhstan. I can definitely say that they are popular and getting more popular day by day. I think people go there because of the service, atmosphere and affordable price. And there is something special about the environment, nothing like traditional beauty salons," he added.

The entrepreneur is sure the market will expand and contribute to the rise in quality of the services provided. The city and Almaty are on the verge of something great in the men's industry, he added.

Freedom Island, the capital's trending new venue, hosted a Sept. 9 event dedicated to the discussion of male fashion, where participants shared their thoughts on the capital's new grooming spots.

Malik Ismagulov, 42, a director of men's clothing stores, thinks it is becoming a trend now. He feels

it is part of showing respect to other people in society.

"A man should always look good, especially these days. Such salons have been operating abroad for a while now and they finally reached Kazakhstan. I think they have a great future," he said.

Baurzhan Kozhaliyev, 41, a manager in the oil and gas sector, said he would like to visit such a place, adding it sounds interesting.

"I would like to get groomed, for example, for a special event. In some ways, I am conservative. For example, I am not ready to go to a salon to get a manicure. But it is something new; I would definitely try it," he said.

Yerlik Karazhan, 37, a businessman, noted the services are ones that are needed. "I have never heard of such salons existing in Astana. In my opinion, men need some privacy while getting groomed. I would love to try. I think it is a very good idea and it should be developed. Moscow showed us a real example; demand there is really high," he said.

Marat Mukhamedsaliyev, 42, PR director at an energy holding, said men have a natural need for this kind of service.

"I belong to a conservative generation, and I usually prefer to do everything by myself, except a haircut. Anyway, I would give it a try," he added.

Men's grooming may be a new wave in Kazakhstan's culture, but it has already aroused great interest and received positive feedback.

BKS, Air Astana Marathon Brings Together More Than 500 Runners



Kazakh Prime Minister Karim Massimov and Astana Akim (Mayor) Adilbek Dzhaksybekov joined others at the marathon.

By Zhazira Dyussebekova

ASTANA – The streets of Astana served as the course Sept. 13 for a charity marathon organised by the British-Kazakh Society (BKS) and Air Astana. Kazakh Prime Minister Karim Massimov, Minister of Culture and Sport Arystanbek Mukhamediyul and Akim (Mayor) Adilbek Dzhaksybekov participated in the race.

"This is a great event for our athletes and for those who want to maintain a healthy lifestyle and to join the sport. On instructions of the President, all conditions are being created in Astana for development of sport and maintaining a healthy lifestyle. This helps the residents of Astana to take up the healthy lifestyle. Today all the participants are the winners, because first of all they have won themselves, their laziness and improved their health. I congratulate all those

who participated in the marathon. I urge all Astana residents to take part in such events," said Dzhaksybekov, as reported by the Astana Akimat (city administration).

Famous Kazakh athletes Arman Chilmanov, Kirill Pavlov, Serik Sapiyev, Gani Seidildayev and Askhat Zhitkeyev congratulated the participants and ran the whole distance despite the rainy weather, reported zakon.kz.

"Being engaged in sports and attracting others to a healthy lifestyle is very important. Our children will grow up healthy and will choose sport after looking at you. Please accept our sincere congratulations on this holiday," said Sapiyev, Kazakhstan's 2012 Olympic boxing champion, during his speech at the closing ceremony.

More than 500 runners decided to test their endurance during the marathon. In excess of 100 of them were foreign participants from 18 different countries, including Chi-

na, France, Germany, Italy, Russia and the United Kingdom.

All the money raised will be donated to the Ayala Charity Fund's Room-Doctor project, which provides assistance to the state children's medical and educational institutions. Room-Doctor structures the environment in a special way, filling it with different kinds of stimulants that affect all the child's senses – sight, hearing, smell, touch and taste. Soft colours, soft light, fragrances and soothing music – these offerings in the sensory room help the child relax and calm down, which is especially important for youngsters with various disabilities, according to the marathon's website.

BKS will hold marathons in Almaty and London on Sept. 19 and Oct. 31, respectively. The society has been developing such races since 2009 and the recent event was the very first full-length marathon in Astana.

Ark of Taste Conference Seeks to Preserve National Dishes

By Dmitry Lee

ASTANA – In today's fast-paced world, having a quick bite has become a regular thing. Food courts are overpopulated with fast-food outlets and people often pay little attention to what they eat while on the go. A recent conference, however, reminded city residents of their favourite traditional foods.

"The Ark of Taste in Kazakhstan" was held at Seifullin Kazakh AgroTechnical University in conjunction with the nonprofit group Slow Food International, Slow Food Astana and the Otbasym National Values Centre (Kazakh for "My Family"). The meeting was also supported by the National Commission for Women, Family and Demographic Policy under the President of Kazakhstan and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in the country.

Slow Food strives to promote healthy food globally and remind diners of the pleasure of gathering around the table. Founded in 1989, the organisation is making efforts to "prevent the disappearance of local food cultures and traditions, counteract the rise of fast life and combat people's dwindling interest in the food they eat, where it comes from and how our food choices affect the world around us," according to www.slowfood.com.

Slow Food's approach to agriculture, food production and cooking

is based on the concept of quality ingredients defined by the inter-related principles of taste, tradition and the honest pleasures of food.

"Tasty means fresh, full-flavoured and seasonal food, capable of awaking emotions and being part of our local culture; tradition means food made in harmony with the environment and human

Ark of Taste is 'kospa.' This is the dairy product similar to cottage cheese which is very popular in the Akmola region and the northern parts of Kazakhstan. The residents of Southern Kazakhstan do not consume it so often, but this is the one of the dishes that is being lost in time," said Akhmetova.

Nurlan Sagandykov, founder

AKHMETOVA: "Tasty means fresh, full-flavoured and seasonal food, capable of awaking emotions and being part of our local culture."

health; honest means food available through prices that are affordable to consumers and fair salary provisions for small-sized producers," said Slow Food Astana leader Khanym Akhmetova in a press release. In an interview with Kazakh TV, she added, "Slow Food is the organisation that strives to provide people all over the world with organic food that has no nitrates, preservatives or genetically modified organisms (GMO), when food is grown without using chemical fertilisers or pesticides."

The international movement, uniting nearly 160 countries worldwide, is becoming more popular in Kazakhstan.

"One of the most outstanding dishes we want to include in the

of the Zhibrayev enterprise, was among the speakers. His 70 honeybee colonies, supported by a UNDP grant, produce six to ten tonnes of environmentally-clean and organic honey per year.

"We used the money to buy equipment, ordered printed products, made appropriate packaging and started selling honey. We hope to have long-term cooperation with the UNDP. I would like to note the high professionalism of the staff; they get to know all the details of our projects," said Sagandykov.

The conference closed with a tasting and an exhibition, "The Ark of Taste: Our History, Culture and Traditions," to showcase disappearing traditional foods.

