



Nuclear Security Summits Should Continue, Nazarbayev Says



By Zaura Zhanabayeva

WASHINGTON, DC – Although four nuclear security summits held at U.S. President Barack Obama's initiative since 2010 have produced a remarkable legacy in strengthening the security of dangerous materials around the world, more remains to be done to make mankind safer in the face of the threat of a nuclear apocalypse,

Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev said April 1 in Washington.

"We believe the holding of nuclear security summits should continue. This is the only way we can change the world, leaving a safer planet for future generations," the Kazakh leader told international leaders who gathered for the fourth Nuclear Security Summit in the U.S. capital on March 31 – April

1. He stated his country's readiness to help progress work in this direction by hosting a summit.

Nazarbayev was among the more visible figures at the gathering of more than 50 world leaders, as well as heads of the United Nations, the International Atomic Energy Agency, Interpol and other major international organisations.

Nazarbayev, as head of a country with one of the more robust

records in advancing nuclear security and disarmament, was privileged to be among the early leaders to be given the floor at the summit's opening session.

In his remarks, Nazarbayev drew the attention of the participants to the fact that Kazakhstan is among the top 20 countries with the highest level of security of nuclear facilities and materials.

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Kazakh President's Visit to Iran Results in \$2 Billion in Agreements

By Malika Orazgaliyeva

ASTANA – Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev's visit to Tehran on April 11-12 resulted in the signing of 66 bilateral agreements worth more than \$2 billion. The deals are in the areas of metallurgy, mining, agriculture, transport and logistics, tourism, science and education, as well as medicine.

The documents were signed following meetings with Iranian President Hassan Rouhani and Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei.

During a joint press conference after the talks, Nazarbayev and Rouhani noted the importance of strengthening collaboration in transport and logistics, as well as in environmental protection, tourism development and Caspian Sea navigation.

They also indicated they discussed increasing cooperation in agriculture, science, technology and culture as well as simplifying the process for issuing visas to business people.

In addition, they noted the need to fight against extremism and terrorism and ensure stability in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria and Yemen based on political decisions.

Nazarbayev congratulated Rouhani and all the Iranian people

on achieving success in resolving the nuclear issue and the lifting of sanctions, which opened great opportunities for the country.

Iran and Kazakhstan are connected in three logistical ways – railway, highway and the Caspian Sea – which positively influences further development of bilateral relations, said Nazarbayev. He added the Kazakhstan-Turkmenistan-Iran railway project was implemented thanks to Rouhani's personal participation.

"The first container train from eastern China to Iran arrived in 12 days. Transport by sea would take twice as much time," said Nazarbayev.

In turn, Rouhani noted that since gaining its independence Kazakhstan has been his country's friendly neighbour. He added the need to ratify the new documents, which will open opportunities for free trade between the countries and form-preferred tariffs for Iran and the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU).

In meeting with Khamenei, the sides exchanged views on the most pressing issues on the international agenda, noting the importance of the fight against terrorism and extremism.

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Eurasian Media Forum in Astana to Examine Economics, International Issues and Culture

By Tatyana Prilepina

The global economic crisis, the situation in the Middle East and society's enslavement by the television and cinema industries will be the main themes of the XIII Eurasian Media Forum (EAMF), to be held April 20-22 in Astana. EAMF Director Ruslan Zhemkov talked about who will be attending this year to address the most pressing

world events and the expectations of the upcoming forum.

The EAMF has traditionally been a platform to discuss topical international events. Asked what are the most interesting topics this year, Zhemkov said this year the forum is focusing on the meaningfulness and maximum efficiency of our discussions; therefore, in addition to hot debates, the speakers will offer solutions to the current situations.

According to him, "the forum

will appeal to what the world community, Europe, Russia and the West should do in order to achieve harmony."

The EAMF agenda has remained the same for many years: a discussion of current international events from different perspectives. According to the Forum's organisers, more than 400 delegates from more than 50 countries around the world will have a chance to speak. This year, there are more

than 30 main speakers. These are prominent international politicians, economists, journalists and public and political figures, as well as representatives of the media and expert organisations.

"We always try to invite parties with polar opinions in order listen to the different views. It helps the audience to form some sort of a consensus," the EAMF Director says.

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In Brussels, Nazarbayev Discusses EU-Kazakhstan Partnership

By Malika Orazgaliyeva

ASTANA – President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev paid a working visit to Brussels March 30, meeting President of the European Commission Jean-Claude Juncker and President of the European Council Donald Tusk and laying flowers at a memorial to those killed in the recent terror attacks in Brussels.

"With my friend President Nazarbayev, we discussed topical issues of Kazakhstan and the EU, as well as problems in Central Asia and the role of Kazakhstan in the

region. In addition, we talked over the close ties of Kazakhstan and the EU. Our relations demonstrate the important international role of Kazakhstan," Juncker said during the joint press statement.

Nazarbayev and Juncker welcomed the signing of the Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (EPCA) between the EU and Kazakhstan last December and announced the completion of procedures required to start the provisional application of the agreement between Kazakhstan and the EU.

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100 Concrete Steps Yields Positive Results

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – The first results for practically implementing Kazakhstan's 100 Concrete Steps initiative were announced March 30 during the Central Communications Service opening press conference.

Deputy Prime Minister Dariga Nazarbayeva, Minister of Civil Service Talgat Donakov, Minister of National Economy Yerbolat Dossayev, Presidential administration deputy head and national commission on modernisation

representative Marat Beketayev, Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan (APK) Deputy Chairman and secretariat head Yeraly Tugzhanov and Senate Deputy Chairman Askar Beisenbayev presented the interim effects of the Plan of the Nation.

A new legal and institutional environment formed by adopting 59 laws and more than 400 regulations has been enacted in the country this year, said Nazarbayeva.

"Colossal work was carried out during this time for the start of the five national reforms. In particular,

the transfer to the three-tier system of civil service selection has been adopted. A career model for civil service and a method of administrative civil service assessment providing remuneration based on the results has been introduced," she added.

The Deputy Prime Minister noted the transition from a five-tier to a three-tier judicial system was provided as part of the Plan of the Nation. The Supreme Judicial Council has started working as an autonomous public institution with its own administrative office. A lo-

cal police service was established and terms of permits in the construction industry were dramatically reduced.

"The work to improve the investment climate is currently underway. For example, a single window is provided for investors. Foreign entrepreneurs can get about 350 public services in one place. A new concept of development and reforms was taken up at the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan," said a member of the national commission.

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Kazakhstan amidst Four Major Transformations in Eurasia

By Kassym-Jomart Tokayev

Being geographically located both in Asia and Europe, Kazakhstan considers itself a Eurasian country. In this article, based on my opening remarks at the annual Singapore Forum on April 2, I share some insights on the Eurasian perspective and Kazakhstan's efforts to harness the fundamental changes on the continent.

Eurasia, a backbone of the modern world, is undergoing a sweeping transformation which will have far-reaching consequences for the entire world. There are four major

transformations that I would like to single out.

First. We witness the unprecedented transformation of Russia with whom Kazakhstan shares the world's longest land border. The new geopolitical posture of Russia has been shaped by the changing global landscape. Western sanctions have affected the Russian economy and caused tension in the relations between Russia and the West, first of all, the U.S. As a result, some experts argue that the world is sliding into a new Cold War.

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Polish Envoy Supports Silk Road Project

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – During the last 24 years, Poland and Kazakhstan have signed a number of bilateral agreements and set up an effective institutional framework, creating favourable conditions to develop economic, cultural and scientific cooperation. The topics were among those discussed by Polish Ambassador in Kazakhstan Maciej Lang in an exclu-

sive interview with The Astana Times.

"Due to the complimentary character of our economies and efforts made by authorities, bilateral trade turnover exceeded \$2.2 billion in 2014. Later on, due to external factors affecting the global economy, this indicator dropped, but we believe the obstacles are of course only temporary and our trade exchange will be back on the right track soon. In brief, today Poland and

Kazakhstan have built friendly relations based on mutual respect and true partnership," he said.

Kazakhstan and the European Union (EU) recently signed an Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (EPCA).

"With its vibrant economy and strategic position in the heart of Europe, Poland is an attractive partner for Kazakhstan and other countries of the Central Asia region. The trade part of the EPCA attracts the most attention, but

when looking deeper into the agenda, you'll see that there are other fields where Poland is particularly active. For example, in 2015 we assumed the leading role in the academic dimension of the Central Asian Education Platform (2015-2018). We fully understand Kazakhstan's interest in the visa facilitation programme. Of course, such agreements always require laborious and time-consuming negotiations.

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NATION

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 13, 2016

Deputy PM Nazarbayeva Briefed on Transition to Academic Freedom

By Zhaniya Urankayeva

ASTANA – Kazakh Deputy Prime Minister Dariga Nazarbayeva, while recently visiting social objects of the capital city, commented on the transition of universities to academic freedom.

Nazarbayeva visited Saken Seifullin Agro-Technical University, where she met professors of educational institutions located in Astana and discussed international accreditation issues, as well as employment opportunities for graduates.

“The autonomy of universities means a transparent, democratic and collegiate management system for universities, budget and funding and priority development. It also helps to synchronise all processes in the economy. The task of the government is to ensure the efficiency of our universities for the benefit of the country and its economy and, consequently, reduce the finan-



cial burden of the state budget,” Nazarbayeva said.

During the meeting, Kazakh Minister of Education and Science Yerlan Sagadiyev discussed plans to create a united grant

university system, which was proposed to be introduced using vouchers so students can choose any university, and if the tuition fee is exceeding the value of the voucher, the student will pay the rest. However, this is only a draft proposal and the grant system needs further development.

“The introduction of Kazakh universities to the new academic freedom system will be realised step by step during a four-year period,” said Sagadiyev.

Apart from the university Nazarbayeva also visited the Astana Utariya Production Innovated company and met its female personnel.

According to a press statement from the Astana city akimat (administration), the company organised a special tour for the distinguished guest to the production halls and reported on the company’s activities. The official could also estimate the quality of clothing produced on the base of the company.

100 Concrete Steps Yields Positive Results

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Nazarbayeva stressed a solid foundation was created to further implement the Plan of the Nation. Successfully executing the plan will enable Kazakhstan to achieve a new level of development, create new conditions for economic growth and improve the lives of its entire people. The ultimate goal of the reforms is to join the list of developed countries.

reducing corruption offenses, increasing the level of public confidence in government institutions and ensuring decent salary, career advancement and efficient state apparatus in terms of implementing the state’s new economic policy, noted a national commission member.

The second institutional reform as part of the Plan of the Nation raises issues concerning improvements in the law enforcement system, said Beketayev.

stan, but throughout the world. The prices have reduced for raw materials and Kazakhstan needs to develop new approaches to attract investors. Last year, four projects were implemented with the participation of transnational corporations. The six companies made reinvestments in existing production in Kazakhstan. The total amount of investments reached \$250 million,” he said.

Dossayev added the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has started economisation of its diplomatic activities and identified the ten states where efforts will be focused to attract new investors. The changes also affect Kaznex Invest, the national export and investment agency. The main innovation will be providing services in remote offices in the countries where businessmen reside rather than in Kazakhstan.

“The number of documents in the commission of export-import operations was reduced to facili-

tate the conduct of foreign trade procedures. The approach to the application of the risk management system with the introduction of three categories of participants with low, medium and high levels of risk in foreign economic activity has been revised,” said a commission member.

Green Corridor, a pilot project on customs clearance for the 300 largest taxpayers, has been launched by the Ministry of Finance together with the National Chamber of Entrepreneurs.

A new legal framework aimed at strengthening the unity and identity of the Kazakh people has been adopted to realise the fourth reform, according to Tugzhanov.

“The changes and amendments have already been introduced to the law of the APK. A new concept of strengthening and developing the Kazakhstani identity is also approved. It is basic and fundamental throughout the fourth reform, because it provided clear algorithms and specific

measures for the implementation of all quarter reforms, set specific targets for all the local authorities and all the institutions of civil society and non-governmental organisations are involved in the entire work,” said Tugzhanov.

Beisenbayev announced five open government portals will operate until the end of the year.

“The authorised bodies on the issues of the internal public audit and financial control were appointed at the beginning of this year. These are the Committee of Financial Control of the Ministry of Finance and the Accounts Committee for control over execution of the national budget. The general public audit and financial control standards have been approved,” he said.

The law requires public authorities to place information about their work, with the exception of classified data, in open access. State authorities are prohibited from imposing restrictions on access to information.

“The work to improve the investment climate is currently underway. For example, a single window is provided for investors. Foreign entrepreneurs can get about 350 public services in one place. A new concept of development and reforms was taken up at the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan,” said a member of the national commission.

The first institutional reform proposed by President Nursultan Nazarbayev is related to modernising the state apparatus, said Donakov.

“A method for assessing the personal qualities ensuring a competent approach in the selection of employees has been introduced this year. A mandatory probation and mentoring for successful adaptation of newly-hired civil servants have been included. A legislated payment based on the results of work has been adopted to improve the motivation and efficiency of civil servants. The law allows hiring the foreign specialists to the country’s state bodies,” he added.

Civil service reform is aimed at improving the competence and professionalism of civil servants,

“The powers of private law enforcement have been significantly expanded. They have already received 250,000 cases within a two-and-a-half month period, which is two times more than the same period last year. In general, the prison population fell by 21 percent since 2013. The rate of recurrence of offenses among persons who are registered at the probation office decreased by 33 percent,” he added.

Seven prisons are expected to close as a result of the reduced population. The available budget funds and staff will be spent on developing a probation service and introducing electronic bracelets.

Dossayev plans to invent new methods to attract investors to the country.

“At present, the changes are taking place not only in Kazakh-



Eurasian Media Forum in Astana to Examine Economics, International Issues and Culture

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In fact, the EAMF always gathers a number of respectable experts. According to Zhemkov, British economist Simon Anholt, former Greek Minister of Tourism Olga Kefaloyanni and Russian political scientist Maksim Suchkov will discuss the global financial crisis. The former President of Afghanistan

Hamid Karzai and generals of the British and Lebanese armies will discuss the geopolitical consequences of the transformation process in the Middle East. Futurologist Ray Hammond and representatives of the U.S., Chinese, Russian and Kazakh film industries will gather to discuss how such a phenomenon as television and cinema addiction affects society.

“It is very important for us to show that we are the country which is open for dialogue, that we are initiators of this dialogue, that we are the force and the country that not only brings conflicting sides to peace, but also encourages them into agreement and unity. Our mission is based on the statements of President Nazarbayev,” argues Zhemkov. According to him, this year the

organisers have prepared a few surprises for the participants. The details have not been disclosed.

“We are only saying that the most interesting speakers will give master classes, whereas all the guests of the forum will be offered a tour around Astana, including the EXPO facilities and an overview of Kazakh history,” the organiser told The Astana Times.



Ruslan Zhemkov

NATIONAL NEWS IN BRIEF

A contest of ecological projects was launched in Kazakhstan, Kazpravda reports. Young people 14–29 years old can take part in the event, organised under the Green Economy state policy. The event is seeking practical solutions to water supply problems in villages across the country. All participants are counselled by experts and the winner of the contest will get a grant worth 1.3 million tenge (US\$3800).

In 2016, Kazakhstan will hold Army Games on its own territory for the first time, the Ministry of Defence press service reported. Kazakhstan’s military are going to finish construction of all the necessary facilities by July 1. The event will take place at the Gvardeiskiy training base in the Kordai district of Zhambyl region from Aug. 2–9. As of today, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Belarus, Venezuela, Russia and China have already confirmed their participation in the games.

Chairman of the National Bank Daniyar Akishev said that the mid-term and long-term task of the National Bank is to reduce the annual inflation rate to 4 percent by 2020, according to the press service of the National Bank. The National Bank has already begun working on the task, following the instructions given by President Nursultan Nazarbayev. According to Akishev, all measures to improve monetary policy are taken to increase trust in the national currency. He highlighted that the National Bank has fixed the base rate, which is the main instrument of the monetary policy the bank uses to target market rates. Also, the National Bank regulates the short-term liquidity of the banking system and accordingly the money supply.

Deputy Prime Minister Dariga Nazarbayeva paid a working visit to the Akmol region, where she participated in a roundtable meeting on the development of preschool education in Shuchinsk, Kazinform reports. The roundtable meeting discussed the development of preschool education and was attended by teachers from all the districts of the region. Earlier, Nazarbayeva had visited Akkol town, where she took part in the opening of a new hospital and visited a local orphanage. Head of the newly commissioned hospital Ada Lishchinskaya stated that the hospital is able to serve at least 250 patients a day. The deputy prime minister also visited Koshyulov Secondary School in the Kogam village of the Enbekshilder district, a multi-purpose inter-district hospital in the Burabay district and the Meray Orphanage in Shuchinsk.

Akim (governor) of East Kazakhstan region Dania Akhmetov said that it is planned to launch production of new Lada car models in the region in the first half of 2016 at a briefing focused on implementing the 100 Concrete Steps Plan of the Nation. He highlighted that Kazakhstan’s car-making industry is suffering now because approximately 300,000 cars were brought to Kazakhstan from Russia over the last two years. This has resulted in a reduction of production by Kazakhstan’s car producing plants. Akhmetov said that corresponding meetings with representatives of Kyrgyzstan, Azerbaijan, Tajikistan and Mongolia were organised to preserve the market and local production. According to him, it is planned to produce the Granta, Kalina, Priora, Vesta, X-Ray and Largus models.

Kazakhstan occupies the 60th place in military expenditures according to data provided by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI). The institute reported that the state spent \$1.9 billion in 2015, which is \$400 million less than in 2014. SIPRI is an independent international institute dedicated to researching conflict, armaments, arms control and disarmament. It was established in 1966 and provides data, analysis and recommendations based on open sources to policymakers, researchers, media and the interested public.

EURASIA&WORLD

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 13, 2016

EXTERNAL NEWS IN BRIEF

Kazakhstan is one of the leaders in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) in the quality of the internet and social media usage of its Foreign Ministry, according to the Digital Diplomacy rating. Kazakhstan occupies 38th place according to the ranking, ahead of Kyrgyzstan (96th place), Tajikistan (106th place), Uzbekistan (124th place), Norway (41st place) and Ireland (53rd place) among others. Russia leads in the CIS and occupies fourth place. The U.K. is the best, according to Digital Diplomacy.

Commissioner of EXPO 2017 Rapol Zhoshybayev paid a visit to Malaysia in early April, Kazinform reports, meeting with Chief Secretary to the Government of Malaysia Ali Hamsa; Secretary-General of the Ministry of Energy, Green Technology and Water Loo Gee; and representatives of the scientific and business circles of the country in Kuala Lumpur. Bilateral cooperation in trade, economic and scientific fields was discussed. The parties agreed to work on green technologies together, to attract Malaysian tourists to EXPO 2017 and to encourage the active participation of Malaysian companies in the exposition. Gee highlighted that Malaysia is ready to present its most up-to-date technological solutions in clean fuel production using biomass and solar power stations. Zhoshybayev also met with Kazakh students studying in Malaysia and encouraged them to actively participate in the promotion of EXPO 2017.

Kazakhstan continues to actively participate in the consortium of the Eurasian transcontinental transport corridor, along with China, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey, Kazakh TV reports. Kazakhstan is developing transit options between China and Europe, as well as to Iran, according to Minister of National Economy Yerbolat Dosayev. In 2016, Kazakhstan plans to increase transportation through the country up to 90,000 containers per year. Kazakhstan's government has said that there is potential to increase the volume to 1.9 million containers per year by 2020. It is expected that traffic volume will be increased from the current 18 million tonnes to 33 million tonnes by 2020.

In February, investments in fixed assets in Kazakhstan reached 601.9 billion tenge (US\$1.8 billion). The rate of growth of capital investments remained at last year's level (7 percent), according to Ranking.kz. From the beginning of the year, 40 percent of investments were attracted from abroad, so the appreciation of foreign currencies against the tenge had a significant impact on the statistics. Foreign investments in tenge in the first two months of this year amounted to 243.2 billion tenge (US\$712.8 million). Domestic investments showed higher growth rates: by 10.2 percent to 358.7 billion tenge (US\$1.1 billion).

United Nations Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative for Kazakhstan Norimasa Shimomura commented on Kazakhstan's initiative to transform the organisation at a meeting with Secretary of State of Kazakhstan Gulshara Abdykalikova in Astana, according to Kazinform. Shimomura said that Kazakhstan is doing a lot both on the national and international levels, highlighting the country's five institutional reforms, the 100 Concrete Steps Plan of the Nation and the proposal to transform the UN made by Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev. Shimomura called the President's initiative to transform the UN very practical. Abdykalikova touched upon Kazakhstan's bid for a non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council for 2017-2018 and emphasised that the state will make an even greater contribution to solving the problems humanity faces today and attracting the attention of the international community to the problems of Central Asia if it is chosen.

Nuclear Security Summits Bring Positive Results, Should Continue, Nazarbayev Says

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"We have implemented a set of measures to ensure physical nuclear security at the national level. Our export control system of nuclear materials has recently been strengthened further. We are working on the establishment of a Nuclear and Radioactive Materials Identification Centre. Research reactors at the Institute of Nuclear Physics in Almaty have been switched to low-enriched fuel. A similar project at the National Nuclear Centre will be fast-tracked. All our nuclear facilities are under the comprehensive oversight of the IAEA," Nazarbayev said at the event.

According to a transcript of his remarks released by the Akorda's press service, he stressed that today Kazakhstan is the world's largest producer of uranium ore and is determined to play its part in the global technological chain of nuclear fuel production for peaceful use. That is the reason why the country is working with the IAEA on the establishment of a Low Enriched Uranium (LEU) Bank under the organisation's auspices.

Nazarbayev noted that, having relinquished the stockpile of nuclear weapons it inherited from the former Soviet Union in the early 1990s, Kazakhstan continues to lead efforts to reduce their numbers around the world.

According to him, a world without nuclear weapons should become the main goal of mankind in the 21st century.

"People of Kazakhstan know the disastrous costs of the military atom. There are still tens of thousands of people suffering from diseases caused by radiation. There are 1.5 million hectares of radioactively contaminated soil. Even today, the soil contains plutonium – 239,100 times more than the norm and the concentration of tritium in waters is 40 times higher than the average. We seek the expansion of systematic international support on the rehabilitation of our people's health and the decontamination of land and

water at the former [Semipalatinsk] test site," Nazarbayev informed.

"By shutting down the Semipalatinsk Test Site [in 1991], we wrote a new chapter in global anti-nuclear history. This year marks the 25th anniversary of that decision. Let me invite to the commemoration of this anniversary the leaders of the P5 nations, the guarantors of the nuclear weapon-free zone in Central Asia and high-level delegations from the countries that share our goal of achieving a world free from the threat of nuclear destruction," he added.

On the same day, 18 nations issued a joint statement welcoming the establishment of the IAEA LEU bank in Kazakhstan. Leaders of Canada, China, the Czech Republic, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Norway, the Philippines, the South Korea, Spain, Sweden, the UAE, the United Kingdom and the United States approved the announcement.

The joint statement highlighted the IAEA LEU bank in the eastern Kazakh city of Ust-Kamenogorsk as part of a global effort to create an assured supply of nuclear fuel to countries in case of disruptions to the open market or other existing supply arrangements for low enriched uranium.

The document noted the significant progress that has been made over the past year towards establishing the IAEA LEU bank, particularly the signature of the agreement between the IAEA and Russia for the transit of nuclear fuel for the bank and equipment to Kazakhstan through Russian territory in June 2015, as well as the signing of the host state agreement between IAEA Director General Amano and Kazakhstan's Foreign Minister Erlan Idrissov on Aug. 27, 2015.

Nazarbayev also used the gathering in Washington to discuss nuclear security, along with bilateral matters, with fellow leaders in attendance.

At a meeting with Prime Minister of Japan Shinzo Abe, Nazarbayev noted that Japan is a partner of Kazakhstan in many areas, praising

Japan's long-standing record of assistance in the rehabilitation of the victims of the Semipalatinsk Test Site. The sides agreed that during Nazarbayev's visit to Tokyo this fall, a special plan on the development of bilateral economic cooperation in different sectors would be adopted.

Following the meeting, the two leaders issued a joint statement on achieving the early entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). The two nations co-chair the Ninth Conference on Article XIV Conference on CTBT and the document echoed a similar call made following Abe's latest visit to Astana last October.

"We welcome the fact that the CTBT has achieved near universal adherence with signature by 183 States and ratification by 164 States as of today, and urge all states that have not yet done so to sign and ratify the treaty as early as possible. In particular, we urge the remaining eight Annex 2 States, whose ratification is necessary for the entry into force of the CTBT, to sign and ratify the treaty without further delay and without waiting for others," the statement said.

"Pending the entry into force of the CTBT, we call upon all states to continue the moratorium on nuclear weapon test explosions, the process on which the closure of the Semipalatinsk test site in August 1991 had positive impact," it noted.

The Kazakh-Japanese statement deplored North Korea's nuclear tests in 2006, 2009, 2013 and 2016 in clear violation of its international obligations and urged Pyongyang to refrain from conducting further nuclear tests. It strongly urged the North Korean government to fully comply with the relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions, including the most recent resolution (UNSC/RES/2270) and the Joint Statement of the Six-Party Talks issued on Sept. 19, 2005 and to take concrete steps towards denuclearisation.

According to the Akorda, Nazarbayev also held shorter meetings with President of Finland Sauli Ni-

inistö, Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, President of China Xi Jinping, President of Turkey Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev, King Abdullah II of Jordan, President of Ukraine Petro Poroshenko, President of Armenia Serzh Sargsyan, President of Lithuania Dalia Grybauskaitė, President of Mexico Enrique Peña Nieto, President of Chile Michelle Bachelet, Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi, Prime Minister of Singapore Lee Hsien Loong and U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry. A day earlier, the Kazakh President attended a formal dinner for world leaders hosted by President Obama.

"The summits carried out at the initiative of the U.S. President have brought significant benefits... Today [however still] there remain a large number of nuclear weapons in the world, which are enough for destruction of the entire planet many times over. Therefore, the issue of disarmament determines our future and the future of our descendants," Nazarbayev said at a briefing for Kazakh media following main discussions at the summit.

He added that every two years, thanks to the summit, the heads and representatives of more than 50 countries have come together to address the most pressing issues of nuclear security.

"As a result of such negotiations, decisions are made within the framework of the UN. Every state has an opportunity to talk about the measures taken in this sphere. The next such meeting could be held in Kazakhstan in view of the fact that our country closed the test site and abandoned one of the largest nuclear arsenals," Nazarbayev noted.

In earlier remarks delivered at the Washington-based Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Nazarbayev underlined that the practical result of the six-year process of the Nuclear Security Summits helped freeze the threat of a nuclear collapse for the second year in a row as the Doomsday Clock, a symbolic measure used by scientists to imagine proximity of a nuclear war threat, remained in the same

position. However, there are serious negative tendencies too, of which Nazarbayev gave a few frightening examples.

"The [Comprehensive] Nuclear Test Ban Treaty has not yet entered into force. The testing of nuclear weapons and missiles is happening on the Korean peninsula. A number of politicians publicly discuss who can 'wipe others into nuclear dust' and who can 'strike first.' Many have started to quickly forget a simple truth: In the nuclear age, no one will win a global war. All will lose, because our planet will be destroyed! Humankind's central task should be to become a world free from the threat of war as a means of interstate relations. This is the only way we will ensure a breakthrough in promoting genuine and sustainable nuclear security of the planet," Nazarbayev stated.

In this respect, Nazarbayev announced the publication of a special manifest, in which he proposed to adopt a comprehensive programme "The 21st Century: A World without War," that was distributed at the event and was placed in Russian on the Akorda's official website on April 2.

Among a number of proposals, which in the author's opinion, can help humanity curb the nuclear war threat, the manifest suggests adapting a regime of non-proliferation and disarmament to contemporary conditions by including into the so-called nuclear club all de jure and de facto nuclear states. This would help avoid the treatment of many international decisions adopted these days as only favouring the five UN Security Council permanent members who created nuclear arsenals ahead of others and also encourage all of them to take parallel steps to advance the actual cutting of their nuclear weapons stockpiles and not limit non-proliferation as has been the case for nearly two decades now.

Nazarbayev has also called for legally prohibiting the creation of new weapons of mass destruction resulting from new scientific discoveries and for developing an international convention for the purpose.

Nazarbayev: Constructing World without Nuclear Weapons Would be Act of Supreme Wisdom

By Aiman Turebekova

ASTANA – "Construction of a world without nuclear weapons must be the main goal of humanity in the twenty-first century," said Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace in Washington D.C. He was in the American capital to attend the fourth and final Nuclear Security Summit.

During the visit, Nazarbayev outlined his vision for a secure nuclear future, with special focus on the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), the role of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Low-Enriched Uranium (LEU) Bank and his nation's contributions to international efforts to curb nuclear terrorism.

Since the Nuclear Security Summit in 2014, Kazakhstan has taken a set of practical steps to strengthen nuclear security, non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and peaceful use of atomic energy. Nazarbayev shared some of the results of the country's achievements at a meeting with analysts, diplomats and politicians, drawing attention to the phenomenon that lack of trust between players has become a primary cause of global security crises.

Former U.S. Secretary of Defence William Perry, former U.S. Senator Sam Nunn and California Governor Jerry Brown, as well as CNN founder Ted Turner, were spotted in the audience.

"I am deeply convinced that a path to a fair, transparent, multi-polar world order is meaningful only through participation of all countries in discussions and searching

for political rather than military solutions to global problems," said the Kazakh leader.

The President added adoption of the United Nations (UN) Universal Declaration on the Achievement of a Nuclear-Weapon-Free World is a new and important step towards achieving this goal.

"I believe that the document, which is enshrined in general principles and obligations on nuclear disarmament and supported by the international community, is able to become a bridge between different views in order to build a future world without nuclear weapons," he said.

Kazakhstan is known as the world's largest producer of uranium. In August, the country signed an agreement with the IAEA to establish the agency's LEU Bank. According to media reports, Kazakhstan will finalise construction of a storage facility in 2017, meeting all applicable IAEA safety standards for LEU storage and the corresponding documents for nuclear security recommendations.

Nazarbayev noted Kazakhstan also chose to relinquish thousands of nuclear weapons and tonnes of nuclear material remaining on its territory after the Cold War and closed the Soviet nuclear testing site at Semipalatinsk.

"The Kazakhs, who have experienced all the deadly force of nuclear weapons, understand the deeply-humanitarian consequences of its application. That is why we tirelessly continue to exert all efforts in the field of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, which are based on a simple, but solid imperative: the world should

and can become safer and more stable," he said.

In addition to Kazakhstan's record on non-proliferation, Nazarbayev briefed the audience on the 100 Concrete Steps Plan of the Nation and Nurdy Zhol, the Path to the Future programmes of economic, social, and judicial reforms.

"The plan provides a new vision of Kazakhstan in the 21st century with a more balanced political system, developed institutions of civil society and knowledgeable economy," he said.

He added he believes one of the main causes of the current world crisis is the deep flaws that persist in global economy and finance.

"Four years ago, we launched a G-Global initiative aimed at uniting the efforts of all countries in combating the [Global Financial] crisis. Global development issues should be solved not by eight or 20 states, but the entire international community. Developed in the framework of G-Global on the site of the Astana Economic Forum, the world anti-crisis plan has received widespread support," he said.

Nazarbayev indicated Kazakhstan has advanced its candidacy as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council for 2017-2018 and is counting on support from the international community. He also shared his vision of development prospects in the Eurasian region.

"The Eurasian region is a key geo-economic and geopolitical factor in world politics. It crosses the interests of all the global players such as China and Russia, the U.S. and the EU (European Union), India, Iran and Turkey. It is important

to guide regional processes in a constructive direction by reducing potential conflicts in the region through enhanced cooperation and integration. That is why I proposed establishment of the joint Eurasian economic space," he said.

Addressing the participants, the head of state thanked the endowment and its current head, Ambassador William J. Burns, for organising the dialogue platform, noting the institution has made a significant contribution in the development of international relations for more than a century.

Furthermore, Kazakhstan and the U.S. have confirmed a shared commitment implementing practical measures to strengthen the nuclear non-proliferation regime and enhance nuclear security.

According to a joint announcement released March 31 by the two presidents' press offices, the U.S. welcomes Kazakhstan's activities to strengthen nuclear security and implement decisions of the Washington, Seoul and Hague Nuclear Security Summits.

The parties also announced the successful elimination of all fresh highly enriched uranium (HEU) from Kazakhstan's WWR-K research reactor by down-blending the material at the nation's nuclear fuel factory. The action emphasises Kazakh commitments to return the HEU spent fuel to the Russian Federation as soon as possible, thereby eliminating all HEU from the Institute of Nuclear Physics (INP) facility.

The parties are pleased with the joint efforts to establish the Nuclear Security Training Centre (NSTC). The centre will offer training in

nuclear non-proliferation, material protection, control and accounting and countering the illicit trafficking of nuclear and other radioactive materials. Construction began in late 2015 and the centre will be operational by the end of the calendar year.

Kazakhstan and the U.S. further committed to working together on guard force training, inventory management systems, site and transportation security, cyber security and cooperation to enhance the global nuclear detection architecture.

Nearly fifty heads of state gathered in Washington for the inaugural summit in March 2010, the largest meeting of world leaders since the founding of the UN. By focusing high-level attention on the threat of nuclear terrorism, Nuclear Security Summits were designed to energise, enhance, empower and elevate the many existing multilateral and cooperative institutions and structures aimed at securing nuclear materials and preventing nuclear smuggling.

Kazakhstan welcomed President Barack Obama's initiative on the Nuclear Security Summits since 2009 as timely and relevant, according to a March 31 Akorda press release.

"The Republic of Kazakhstan and the United States of America attach importance to the Nuclear Security Summit process, underlining the importance of continued efforts aimed at strengthening nuclear security as well as ongoing collaboration between the parties on issues related to strengthening the nuclear non-proliferation regime," read the announcement.

ECONOMY

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 13, 2016

National Bank to Offer Options for Stock Market Development

By Kseniya Voronina

Chairman of the National Bank of Kazakhstan Daniyar Akishev, speaking at a recent forum on corporate governance and new perspectives for the investment attractiveness of the state, stressed that the bank plans to offer a series of options for stock market development. He also questioned the reason for the existence of the stock market and the sharing of capital as a source for financing the economy and the redistribution of capital in Kazakhstan.

"We want to liberalise the market by establishing an alternative one," explained Akishev.

According to his words, the benefits of an alternative market will include free access for all categories of investors and issuers, the absence of limits for operations as well as free pricing and the ability to obtain speculative income.

"The potential for retail investors is extremely large and has huge potential for its further expansion. It is important to use the experience of the first People's IPO (initial public offering) programme in the upcoming privatisation process of state share holdings and organisations. The synergy effect will be provided if we involve governmental anti-crisis programmes and major state public relations campaigns of companies, which meet all the basic principles of corporate governance," said the head of the bank.

He also stressed that relations between the state and business should be built in accordance with corporate principles.

"It requires the consolidation of the private sector, a reasonable motivation to switch companies to the corporate format and search for compromise approaches on liber-

alisation of the antimonopoly legislation. Further measures should also include the formation of additional economic benefits for investments due to the alignment of tax exemptions to both participation financing and bank deposits. In order to ensure the systematic nature of proposed measures, it is advisable to create new ways for high-risk investment or in other words, investment banking institutions. Compared to conventional banks, they will have more extensive investment strategy, but, at the same time, conduct a policy of adequate risk assessment of investments in shares or long-term debt in the real sector," said Akishev.

According to the speaker, implementing corporate governance principles, increasing the reliability of financial reports and attracting qualified management should bring financial benefits without great cost.

Sinoma Group to Purchase Kazakh Agricultural Products

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – China National Materials Group Corporation Sinoma recently announced it will buy annually a range of agricultural products from Kazakhstan, according to the press service of the Kazakh Ministry of Agriculture.

This year, China will purchase sunflower in the amount of 50,000 tonnes, 80,000 tonnes of flaxseed, 100,000 tonnes of oilseed rape as well as vegetable oils in the

amount of 90,000 tonnes, reported Kapital.kz.

"The corporation appreciates the quality of Kazakhstan's agricultural products and plans to sell it as goods of the premium class in China," stated the press release.

An agreement was reached during a recent meeting of Kazakh Deputy Minister of Agriculture Gulmira Issayeva and Chairman of Sinoma Khan Ryumin in which the sides also discussed additional Chinese investment in the Kazakh agriculture.

The two parties signed a joint plan with an intention of Sinoma

to purchase 180,000 tonnes of oilseeds and 90,000 tonnes of vegetable oil this year.

Negotiations on export of agricultural products Kazakhstan to China, including vegetable oil, corn oil, grain legumes, vine crops, vegetables, fruits and beef, lamb, honey will continue.

Sinoma intends to invest in the modernisation of existing and the creation of new enterprises for agricultural product processing in Kazakhstan, starting with investments in a plant with a capacity of processing 40,000 tonnes of oil.

More Kazakh Products to Be Exported to Tajikistan

Staff Report

Kazakh and Tajik businesses recently signed agreements to export from Kazakhstan to Tajikistan grains from the Akmola region, flour and pasta from Aktobe, Kyzylorda rice, Kostanai sweets and cement from Taraz, according to the Foreign Trade Chamber of Kazakhstan.

ported products has 12,000 commodity positions. In the next few years, the Tajik company plans to open five hypermarkets and 20 supermarkets, as well as establish a trade network in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. Due to the geographical location, both Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan manufacturers are well positioned for a successful promotion of their prod-

The main objective of the Foreign Trade Chamber of Kazakhstan is to strengthen trade relations with foreign partners and develop economic cooperation between small- and medium-sized businesses in the country.

The agreements were signed as a result of meetings of Kazakh businesspersons with Tajik colleagues.

"Tajik business has shown their interest in Kazakh companies. As a result of negotiations, a number of Kazakh companies like Novozhansky Flour Milling Plant, Agner, Yntymak and Nur Kas, LTD found direct buyers of their products. The concluded contracts worth \$4 million and first pitch starts in April," the Chairman of the Foreign Trade Chamber Meirbek Mazhitov explained.

Kazakh business people also recently met with representatives of a Tajik company that plans to open a new Auchan (French-owned brand) hypermarket in Dushanbe, which may become the Central Asia's largest.

"Kazakh domestic producers successfully presented their products to the chamber's managers and plan to conclude contracts in the near future. It's known that the range of the ex-

ucts in Central Asian markets and particularly in Tajikistan. I would encourage domestic producers to take the opportunity," Mazhitov said.

In order to deliver goods abroad directly from Kazakh companies, avoiding intermediaries, five contracts have been signed with transportation providers, including free delivery and freight.

In addition to bilateral meetings, a briefing was held with the participation of the Ambassador of Kazakhstan to Tajikistan Agibai Smagulov and representatives of Kazkommertsbank. The participants were consulted on products delivery, financial conditions and the state of support in Tajikistan.

The main objective of the Foreign Trade Chamber of Kazakhstan is to strengthen trade relations with foreign partners and develop economic cooperation between small- and medium-sized businesses in the country.

ECONOMY NEWS IN BRIEF

The loan portfolio in the manufacturing industry increased by 6 percent in one month, according to Kazakh TV. The overall market increased by 1.3 percent. Compared to December, the volume of loans in the field increased by 61.7 billion tenge (US\$179.4 million). As a result, the loan total reached a record of approximately 1.1 trillion tenge (US\$3.2 billion). The loan share in the manufacturing sector reached 8.6 percent of the total volume of STB loans, also a record figure in the field.

The Ministry of National Economy reported Kazakhstan has attracted anchor investors to implement 16 projects worth \$2.2 billion in the agricultural, pharmaceutical and chemical industries and construction material production. Four new productions, with the participation of investors and transnational corporations, were launched in 2015. Six companies also ensured they would reinvest in Kazakhstan in amounts totalling nearly \$250 million.

Kazakhstan's gross external debt decreased by 2.5 percent last year. The country's gross external debt totalled \$153.4 billion at the end of December 2015 compared to \$157.4 billion in 2014, reported Interfax Kazakhstan. The total external debt and share of public and state guaranteed debt at the end of 2015 increased to 8.4 percent, amounting to \$12.9 billion, according to the National Bank.

Kazakh citizens are becoming more actively interested in their credit histories. The First Credit Bureau issued approximately 120,000 credit reports in 2015, 2.5 times more than in the previous year. In February, Kazakh borrowers received more than 25,000 personal credit reports, according to the bureau's press service. The growth rate of loan repayment continues to exceed the growth rate of new loans, which is also reflected in the total portfolio of retail loans. The figure declined by 2.1 percent to 4.5 trillion tenge (US\$13.1 billion).

The total amount of deposits in Kazakhstan's second-tier banks has increased by 309 billion tenge (US\$898.3 million), reaching 7.19 trillion tenge (US\$20.9 billion) in January, reported Kazakh TV. The annual growth reached 65.8 percent with revaluation of foreign currency deposits at current exchange rates. The deposit base grew by only 9.3 percent in January compared to the same period a year earlier. Deposit conversion from one currency to another became the mainstream in the second half of 2015 and beginning of 2016. As of the end of January, approximately 80 percent of all household bank deposits were denominated in foreign currency. The volatility of exchange rates and need for tenge liquidity to pay expenses, however, ensure the constant demand for reverse conversion of savings.

Kazakh Minister of Investment and Development Asset Isskeshev said because of private investments, an additional 900 billion tenge (US\$2.6 billion) will be invested in the country's geologic exploration, reported Kazinform. Approximately 120 billion tenge (US\$348.9 million) will be allocated from the budget to implement the geology programme. The Minister said the code "On Subsoil Use" had been developed and will include all the amendments to the law on subsoil use. Additional measures specified in the 100 Concrete Steps Plan of the Nation and aimed at increasing transparency of subsoil use through the introduction of international standards are expected to further develop the field. All the actions will ensure comfortable conditions to attract investments for geology exploration, said Isskeshev.

Kazakh-Hungarian Fund Marks New Stage in Economic Relations

By Kseniya Voronina

The initial capitalisation of the Kazakh-Hungarian Direct Investment Fund totalled \$40 million, according to an official announcement during the fund's recent advisory board meeting in Astana. The corresponding communique was signed by KazAgro Chairman of the Board Nurlybek Malelov and Hungarian Eximbank Deputy General Director Andras Puskas.

"The initial capitalisation of the Kazakh-Hungarian fund totalled \$20 million from each side. The fund is planning to attract an additional \$100 million from local and foreign investors needed for future projects. We will invest in Kazakh agricultural companies and the food industry, supporting production, processing and logistics," said Malelov.

Kazakh Minister of Agriculture Asylzhan Mamytbekov noted the nation's agricultural sector is becoming more attractive and competitive.

"The creation of the fund was an important step towards further development of Kazakh-Hungarian relations. It will also create a platform not only for technology transfer, but for the exchange of agricultural management practices we need to implement in our country," he said.

He added investment volume in the agricultural sector amounted to 167 billion tenge (US\$487 million) in 2015. Investment volume in food industry fixed assets

increased 28 percent to 55.9 billion tenge (US\$163 million).

"The ministry continues engaging multinational companies as strategic investors in accordance with Kazakhstan's 100 Concrete Steps initiative. To date, such Chinese giants like Rifa Holding Group, Aytszyuy, CITIC Group and COFCO Group, as well as the Italian multinational company Inalca Eurasia, began their work processing meat, oil, grains and tomatoes. They will also promote Kazakh products for export," said Mamytbekov.

Hungarian Ambassador Andras Barani indicated his country's readiness to cooperate with Kazakhstan in various fields.

"I think the two countries have much more than just diplomatic relations. Firstly, we are related, friendly nations. Furthermore, we recently stepped into a new round of intergovernmental relations after the agreement on strategic partnership was signed.

One year ago Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban paid a visit to Kazakhstan, so now we can watch a very serious result of this visit, and this is the first agreement to turn previously-initiated proposals into reality. This fund is a very important tool to ensure that our trade and economic relations continue flourishing in the future. After all, Hungary and Kazakhstan have excellent political relations, so that for us, the diplomatic corps' representatives, the main task is to build mutually-beneficial business cooperation on the stable political basis," he said.

FROM THE HEART OF EURASIA

TEHRAN
NEW DESTINATION

We are delighted to announce about the launch of a new route Almaty - Tehran, as of June 2. Direct flights will be operated 3 times a week on Airbus A320.

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BUSINESS

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 13, 2016

BUSINESS NEWS IN BRIEF

Interest in Kazakh oilseeds is growing among foreign investors, reported Kazinform. Two Chinese companies want to build a plant in the northern region to process oilseeds, said Ministry of Agriculture department of crop production and processing director Azhar Kazhibekova. Two tonnes of oil have already been exported to China. Kazhibekova noted Kazakhstan hopes to increase the export up to 200,000 tonnes in the future.

Investors from Australia, China and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) will launch three big productions in Aktobe region, said Akim (governor) Berdybek Saparbayev at the press conference dedicated to practical implementation of the 100 Concrete Steps Plan of the Nation. International companies are attracted to the processing sector to manufacture export products and enter world markets, he added. A cement plant with production capacity reaching one million tonnes per year and worth \$150 million, a potassic fertilizer production plant with capacity reaching 800,000 tonnes a year and worth \$595.2 million and a nickel oxide concentrate and cobaltous oxide concentrate producing factory worth \$125 million are on the list of companies to be established in the near future. Implementing the projects is expected to create 1,600 jobs.

Revenues of large and medium enterprises totalled 9.53 trillion tenge (US\$27.2 billion) in 2015, a 10.5-percent increase over the previous year, reported Kazakh TV. The cost of manufactured goods and furnished services decreased by 1.2 percent to 5.96 trillion tenge (US\$17 billion), while gross profit increased by 37.8 percent to 3.57 billion tenge (US\$10.2 billion). The financial sector led with a record 76.6 percent profit growth, followed by the mining industry at 11.8 percent and construction industry at 10.9 percent. In general, only seven out of 16 major economic sectors were profitable.

Two international construction exhibitions took place in Astana on March 29-31, according to buildexpo.kz. Foreign companies participated in the events, which demonstrated the most up-to-date construction materials, facilities and equipment for the construction and mining sector. Iranian companies were involved in the exhibitions for the first time.

Interfax Kazakhstan reported that seven major Russian companies will be listed on the Kazakhstan Stock Exchange (KASE). Financial and commodity-sector companies, along with an air transport services firm, will offer securities on KASE. The KASE stock prices will be directly linked to those on the Moscow stock exchange and the prices will be converted into tenge at the current KASE rate. The CEO of Freedom Finance said Kazakh customers have historically been interested in the Russian market, but had problems with foreign trade in securities, including Russian tax legislation. He emphasised that in open trade KASE transactions, the tax incentives provided by Kazakh legislation will be fully applied and Kazakh investors will be able to count on a zero-tax rate when trading securities.

Astana Chamber of Entrepreneurs Director Gani Tasmaganbetov said the share of small and medium-sized business in the city's overall tax revenues has reached 65 percent, according to the government-owned Damu Entrepreneurship Development Fund. Astana's gross domestic product has amounted to 4.2 trillion tenge (US\$12.2 billion). The economy's small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) share of the Kazakh capital exceeds the state's average indicator by three times. Tasmaganbetov noted small and medium-sized business is very active in Astana, adding the city is a leader in the innovation sphere. One-fifth of all innovative products are made by city companies. The government plans to allocate more than 600 million tenge (US\$ 1.7 million) this year to support young businesses, he said.

Oil Production at Kashagan “to Resume in Fall”

By Zhazira Dyussebekova

ASTANA – Production at Kazakhstan's massive Kashagan oil field will resume in the fall after being halted in 2013 because of a gas leak, the Novosti-Kazakhstan news agency reported April 5, citing a release from the Caspian Pipeline Consortium (CPC).

Kashagan's reserves are estimated at 4.8 billion tonnes of oil. The field was discovered in the 2000s and is 80 kilometres from Atyrau in the northern part of the Caspian Sea. Development of the field is carried out with the help of arti-



cial islands. Total oil reserves are 38 billion barrels; about 10 billion barrels are recoverable. Oil from the field is characterised as “high-quality.” Kashagan's gas reserves are estimated at more than 1 trillion cubic metres. Total investment in the project to date is approximately \$50 billion. With the fall of oil prices, the project has been criticised and called non-profitable by international media. Some even said it has lost “investment attractiveness.”

The announcement of the resumption of production follows inspections that confirmed construction and installation had been

completed on two pumping stations, A-NPS-3A and A-NPS-4. A-NPS-4 will receive its first batch of oil in September and A-NPS-3A in October.

The project involves KazMunayGas, which is one of the major shareholders of the Caspian Pipeline Consortium. It also involves Eni, ExxonMobil, Royal Dutch Shell, Total, INPEX and CNPC.

CPC's oil pipeline system is the largest oil transportation route from the Caspian region to world markets. The main pipeline is 1,500 kilometres long and connects fields in Western Kazakhstan with the Russian Black Sea coast.

Kazakhstan Temir Zholy Expects to Increase International Shipments in 2016

By Kseniya Voronina

ASTANA – Kazakhstan Temir Zholy (KTZ), the country's national railroad and logistics company, is planning a decline in domestic freight traffic by 16 percent in 2016 compared to 2012. Timely selection of a strategy aimed at gaining positions in the transcontinental transit traffic market, however, has simultaneously enabled the company to increase container traffic volume over the last five years in the China-Europe-China direction, said KTZ President Askar Mamin at the company's expanded meeting outlining its organisational changes.

“In 2016, the volume of container transportation in the China-Europe-China direction will exceed the 2011 level by 100 times and we intend to bring the volume of container shipments up to 800,000 twenty-foot equivalent units (TEU) by 2020,” he said.



Photo credit: Manar Kurakov, Kazpravda.kz

The KTZ head noted achieving the target parameters is ensured through the use of alternative land and maritime routes.

“So, the freight value of the shipments during transportation from China to Europe dropped by seven times in 2016 compared to 2012 when converted to one TEU. In March of this year, almost 8 percent of the world's container fleet

with a capacity of 1.57 million TEUs stood idle at ports throughout the world waiting for cargo,” said Mamin.

According to expert data, 30 vessels with a capacity of 9,000 to 14,000 TEUs were withdrawn from service in the Asia-Northern Europe direction. The global fleet of container carriers is scheduled to increase by 4.3 percent in 2016,

while the expected increase in traffic volume will not exceed 1.8 percent.”

He also noted the infrastructure of the Trans-Siberian corridor is being modernised in Russia.

“As a result, competition for transit volumes will become tougher and gaining market positions will only be possible by implementing an efficient customer-centric operational business model,” said Mamin.

The KTZ President also explained the facts of reducing domestic freight, pointing out that the indicators of operational activity of Kazakhstan's railroad is a reflection of basic trends in the development of world and national economies.

“In the growth period of Kazakhstan's economy from 2000-2013, the volume of freight traffic by railway transport has increased. The number of company workers relating to implementation

of freight traffic increased up to 2008. Reducing the number of operating personnel during the period from 2009-2015 is related to implementing programmes and measures on improving efficiency. But due to a decrease of price conjuncture traditional for Kazakhstan Temir Zholy, the segment of the export transportations market of mass general cargo demonstrates negative dynamics,” said Mamin.

Moreover, in 2016 the turnover of ferrous metals goods is also projected to decline by 12 percent to the 2011-2012 level amidst a stable trend of falling annual average global prices.

“Traffic volumes of oil shipments will decrease by 92 percent in 2016 compared to 2009, from 14 to one million tonnes, and freight turnover by 96 percent... The main factor is a reorientation of Tengiz oil from rail transport into the system of the Caspian Pipeline Consortium,” said Mamin.

Skolkovo Startup Tour 2016 Winners Announced in Almaty

By Kamila Zhumabayeva

ASTANA – The Eurasian stage of Skolkovo Startup Tour 2016 has completed in Almaty, with Maxim Sanitskiy named the winner of the Almaty Tech Garden contest with his project of a full control system over location of objects in real time. He will now advance to the Almaty Tech Garden international acceleration in the United States.

Dmitry Skobelev with the Prometei (Prometheus) project; Gainur Toktarov, who presented the project on development and manufacturing pressure systems for a mini-hydroelectric plant; Andrei Makhotin with a project on manufacturing Bisphenol-5 phenolic antioxidant and Arman Kassymov with a project on the automation system of fuel storage and release will participate in the Almaty Tech Garden acceleration programme in Almaty, reported Kursiv.kz.

“Due to activities such as Skolkovo Startup Tour, Almaty has become a place of attraction for innovative projects and may become a regional startup hub in the nearest prospect,” said Almaty Tech Gar-



Photo credit: kursiv.kz

den autonomous cluster fund CEO Sanzhar Kettebekov, according to Kursiv.kz. “A high concentration of business entities, higher educational institutions, scientific research institutions and creative startups

make Almaty a more attractive city for creating this kind of hub.”

The Eurasian stage of Skolkovo Startup Tour 2016 is a project for finding promising innovative projects within the Commonwealth

of Independent States (CIS) and developing competences of beginning startup teams. Its goals involve searching for innovative solutions demanded in high-tech markets as well as helping young

developers in planning their own development strategies, according to Kapital.kz.

Almaty was chosen precisely as the place for establishing and functioning of the Almaty Tech Garden, where 26 projects of the autonomous cluster fund have already received funding from subsoil users, state grants and private investments, reported the news website. Based on the demand for innovations, an ecosystem for company interaction, startups, higher educational institutions, investors and subsoil users was formed on the basis of Almaty Tech Garden.

Programmes implemented by Park of Innovative Technologies (PIT) autonomous cluster fund aim to create technology centres together with leading transnational companies, according to Kursiv.kz. Created jointly with McKinsey & Co, the technology centre for mining and metallurgical complex will develop projects in automation, analytics, energy conservation and others fields.

The PIT autonomous cluster fund has been the governing body of PIT Innovation Cluster (Almaty Tech Garden) since April 24, 2015. It was established by the Kazakh government and is supervised by the Ministry of Investment and Development. The board of trustees is headed by the country's President; the fund's management committee by the Prime Minister.

Second-Tier Banks Support Astana Start-Ups

By Azamat Syzdykbayev

Startup projects in various sectors of the economy will be carried out through second-level banks. This was stated by Director of the Astana Chamber of Entrepreneurs Ghani Tasmaganbetov, reported the press-service of Astana akimat (administration).

“Astana is a leader among other cities in supporting the business sector. Prior to this, the city allocated funds for the Zhas-

StarT Youth Entrepreneurship Programme. We, the regional Chamber of Entrepreneurs, were given the opportunity to select projects and make recommendations. I think the number of potential participants will be great,” said Tasmaganbetov.

According to him, the announcement to launch the new programme to support start-up projects was made at the beginning of March during a conference of Astana business people with the participation of Astana Akim (Mayor) Adilbek Dzhak-

sybekov and Chairman of the Presidium of Atameken Timur Kulibayev.

“Young entrepreneurs usually face various barriers when it comes to financial issues. In fact, it is difficult to get a loan in banks to establish a new business, as most of them prefer supporting those who already have one and can leave a deposit. Thanks to this new initiative, young and passionate entrepreneurs can be supported by the akimat,” Tasmaganbetov stressed.

He recalled that the akimat of Astana has already allocated 1,000 land plots for retail and the demand for them is three times their number.

Two successful start-ups, dentist Serik Mukhashev and restaurant owner Gulmira Shazhanbaeva, told how the state funds helped them establish their new businesses.

“I have worked as a dentist since 1990. It was my old dream to have my own dentistry and thanks to the Damu fund and the city akimat this dream came

true. I could afford to buy expensive equipment and invite professionals. Our clinic opened two months ago,” Mukhashev said.

According to the restaurant owner, the idea to open a restaurant came to her a long time ago.

“The programme for regional financing of small and medium-sized businesses covered 25 percent of my total investment in the business. I think it was one of the pillars to establish my restaurant and open it on time,” said Shazhanbaeva.

EDITORIAL & OPINION

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 13, 2016

Manifest by Kazakh President Calls for Global Nuclear Disarmament, Steps to End Global Conflicts

You don't have to be a wide-eyed optimist to believe that, despite the many and serious challenges our world faces, time remains on the side of progress. In recent decades, remarkable strides have been made in tackling disease and reducing poverty. Scientific and technological advances offer the hope that solutions can be found to many of the long-standing problems that have held humanity back. Children today in every continent are likely to enjoy longer, healthier and more opportunity-packed lives than their parents.

But there is one large and ominous cloud that hangs over this improved future – one area where our world has moved backwards not forward in recent years. With the end of the Cold War, there was real and understandable hope that the threat of nuclear weapons and conflict was disappearing. That is no longer the case.

Instead of a new era of cooperation, we have seen increased suspicion be-

tween the major nuclear powers. These tensions have caused economic damage due to reciprocal sanctions, inflamed conflicts and increased risks that the localised disputes in which they are involved could spiral into something much more dangerous.

Even more frightening is the rise of a new breed of violent extremists whose aim is to cause as much death and destruction as they can. They are actively seeking nuclear weapons, which they will not hesitate to use. Whatever truth there was once behind the concept of nuclear deterrence, it simply does not work, as Henry Kissinger has pointed out, in a world of willing suicide bombers.

This is the reality and threat that Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev addressed head-on during his visit to Washington to attend the Nuclear Security Summit on March 31-April 1. He raised the possibility of the major powers sleep-walking towards global conflict. Our world, he warned, was "now

on the edge of a new Cold War which could have devastating consequences for all humankind."

He warned that "international terrorism has gained a more sinister character." It may, he said, be a question of when, not if, they get their hands on the knowledge, technology and components for a nuclear device.

He challenged world leaders to show the courage and vision needed to limit and eventually eradicate these threats. This must include, as U.S. President Barack Obama said at the summit, much tighter controls to prevent material and know-how falling into the hands of terrorist groups. But the only way truly to defuse this threat is to eliminate nuclear weapons altogether.

This was the ambition that President Nazarbayev set out in the Manifest "The World. The 21st Century" published during this visit and outlined in his speech at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. It is a document that mixes the vision of a world in

which the "virus of war" has been eradicated with practical steps to achieve that vision.

In what was a detailed blueprint for peace, he called, for example, for urgent action to prevent the spread of nuclear arms to space, the development of new and more dangerous weapons and the retreat into competing military blocs. "We should have learnt from past wars and conflicts that it is impossible to ensure our own security by undermining the security of others," the President warned.

The document stressed the importance of expanding and replicating existing nuclear-weapon-free zones and the need to modernise existing international disarmament treaties.

It also underlines how a world without conflict required the removal of the injustice that is its root cause. Barriers to fair trade and development have to be lifted while the principles of international law must be reaffirmed and respected by all countries. These steps should be completed, he urged, by the

time the United Nation celebrates its centenary. He promised that Kazakhstan would convene a high-level conference this year to take this forward.

It was a challenging agenda in which no punches were pulled and global sights were set high. But his warnings carried all the more weight coming from the leader of a country that has suffered so badly from the effect of nuclear weapons and has put itself for a generation, through actions and words, at the forefront of the drive for nuclear disarmament.

It may not make comfortable reading, but, as President Nazarbayev said, ending the threat from nuclear weapons and reducing the lives lost from conflict must be the cause of the 21st century. The consequences of failing to act could see the planet turned into "a graveyard of radioactive materials." As the President warned: "In the 21st century, humanity must take decisive steps towards demilitarisation. We won't get another chance."

Iran's Rapid Reintegration into World Community Will Yield Universal Benefits

Throughout history, Iran has played a pivotal role in our world. It governed an ancient empire stretching across the Middle East, North Africa and Central Asia into Europe and the Indian subcontinent. Its scientists and scholars were at the heart of the Islamic Golden Age during which our knowledge and understanding moved forward dramatically.

In more recent times, Iran was a founding member of the United Nations, of OPEC and the Organisation of Islamic Co-operation. With a population of just under 80 million, abundant natural resources, a developed economy and its unique geographical position, Iran remains a hugely important country regionally and in global terms. It is why Iran's recent isolation has been so dam-

aging not only for its own citizens but the wider world.

Without Iran's active engagement, it has proven impossible to tackle the region's gravest challenges. Indeed, increased tensions between major players has exacerbated many of these problems. By cutting off one of the region's largest economies through international sanctions, growth and prosperity has been stifled. The global economy faces enough problems without erecting new barriers to trade and expansion.

Kazakhstan, of course, has close ties through geography, history, culture and people with Iran. So it is no surprise that we have worked tirelessly, within the rules set by the international community, to create the conditions where its isolation could be ended.

Wherever possible, Kazakhstan has

worked to heal rifts and support the practical steps needed to rebuild confidence. Our position as a trusted partner of Iran and all the major powers saw us host two rounds of talks over the country's nuclear programme. By enabling this dialogue to continue when negotiations had run into difficulty, we kept open lines of communication to allow agreement eventually to be reached.

Kazakhstan has also taken concrete measures to put it into place. Under the auspices of the International Atomic Energy Agency, the country has supplied natural uranium to Iran in exchange for the country giving up its stocks of highly enriched uranium. The low-enriched uranium bank Kazakhstan is setting up, again in partnership with the IAEA, could potentially supply Iran's civilian energy programme,

along with those of other countries, in the future.

What is now crucial, as sanctions are progressively lifted, is to re-integrate Iran quickly into the global economy. This will provide a major boost to the whole region and to global trade.

The rail line between Iran, Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan, which opened in 2014, and the improved transport infrastructure of the new Silk Road can play a major part in this. Together with plans to cut red tape and transit costs, it will allow trade to flow to and from Central Asia, China and Russia to the ports on the Persian Gulf.

How this potential can be maximised is one of the topics which Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev is set to discuss in Tehran on April 11-12. His official trip, which follows Iranian President Hassan

Rouhani's own visit to Kazakhstan in 2014, is another sign of the deepening political and economic relationship between the two countries.

Our two nations have already signed bilateral agreements to improve cooperation on a wide range of economic areas, including investment. Iran is also keen to increase its ties with the Eurasian Economic Union. The quicker that barriers to trade and investment can be removed, the better for everyone.

There will also be plenty of foreign policy issues, including growing concern over Afghanistan and the crisis in the Middle East which will feature in the talks. But whether the challenges are economic or political, the world has a much better chance of making progress towards solutions with Iran's involvement rather than isolation.

New Parliament Has No Time to Rest

It is often the case when a new Parliament is elected that members are given a few weeks to find their feet before they fully get down to business. After all, an election campaign has been fought, the candidates are tired and finding your feet in a new role and new building can be hard work.

But if our new MPs thought they might be able to get their breath back, it was made quite clear by President Nazarbayev when he opened the lower house less than a week after the election that they did not have this luxury. He – and the country as a whole – expects them to get down to work straight away.

There were, of course, congratulations from him to the new MPs on their success in the elections, which were another step in Kazakhstan's political journey. But they were immediately followed by a sombre warning on the state of the world and the global economy and the major challenges the current situation poses for the country. Economic and social forces are adding to the uncertainties and risks for every nation and it means there was no time to waste, he said.

He had some good news for the MPs and for the country. Kazakhstan would be in a much more difficult position if it had waited for the crisis to deepen before taking action, he said. The acceleration of the country's modernisation programme meant Kazakhstan had the right institutional and legal foundations in place to protect what had been achieved and continue its development.

In a revealing aside, the President admitted that the pace of change had left some officials weary and wanting a period of stability. They were, however, to be disappointed. There could not, and would not, be any let-up in reforms to improve the accountability, transparency and responsiveness of the services offered by the government, police and legal system, he said.

Instead, he spelt out a detailed and comprehensive programme of reforms, including on the economy and

education, to improve performance, cut bureaucracy and expand opportunity. He demonstrated great faith that if the country's young people are provided with the right knowledge and skills, they will shape an even brighter future for Kazakhstan.

Time and time again in his speech, the President challenged Kazakhstan to match the standards of the world's leading countries. Here was a leader confident that despite the intensely worrying global environment, the country could continue to prosper and achieve its goal of becoming one of the world's 30 most developed nations.

The new Parliament finds itself at the heart of the actions needed to achieve this ambition. President Nazarbayev set out key areas where legislative reform is vital to continuing to drive the country forward.

He singled out the need to streamline the country's tax and customs regulations into one unified code and modernise the laws around both the mineral and electricity sectors. MPs were also asked to give priority to strengthening competition within the economy and continuing efforts to improve the effectiveness of both national and local government.

He finished with a plea for the new MPs to think long-term and to foster unity within the Parliament, the country and the international community. It was the need for the MPs to be able to give their undivided attention to the country's needs rather than a forthcoming election that was the reason to bring the poll forward. They now have the chance to work over the whole term of the Parliament to get their decisions right.

But President Nazarbayev also challenged them to work well together, whatever their party, for the good of the country, and to build good relations with parliamentarians around the world. They may not have time to rest but they were left in no doubt about the important role they have in the coming months and years.



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 24 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.



THE ASTANA TIMES

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Advertising: +7 727 252 08 82
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KazPost Subscription index: 64572

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The Astana Times is printed at "Media Holding "ERNUR" LLP, 30 Sileti Street, Astana.

The Astana Times is published since November 2010. The Astana Times is re-registered by the Ministry of Communications and Information of the Republic of Kazakhstan under the registration No. 14037-G of 20 December 2013.
The newspaper is typed and made into pages at the computer centre of "Kazakhstanskaya Pravda". Published biweekly, the size of 8 pages.

ORDER: 2451

PRINT RUN: 6,000

OPINIONS

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 13, 2016

Kazakhstan amidst Four Major Transformations in Eurasia

Continued from Page A1

Therefore, Russia's foreign policy has now shifted its focus towards Asia, particularly to China. Sino-Russian relations both in the economic area and foreign policy have become closer than ever before. The two nuclear powers share common views on all major international issues as reflected in United Nations (UN) Security Council voting. Thirty years ago amidst the Soviet-Chinese confrontation which nearly brought the two countries to a nuclear war, this kind of situation could not even be perceived.

The strategic partnership between Russia and China produces a new global reality; in addition to that, any major global issue such as Ukraine, Syria, international terrorism or nuclear non-proliferation, cannot be addressed without the direct involvement of Russia, which has strengthened its strategic position by having sent troops to Syria.

At the same time, even though the partnership between Russia and China is strategic in its nature, it is wrong to assume that a new bloc is emerging. Both states have their own strategic interests and also realise the importance of cooperation with the West and, certainly, with the United States. The question is how to seek a common ground with the U.S. in present, very complex circumstances to tackle the most acute issues of the global agenda to meet the interests of the world community. The recent visit of the U.S. Secretary of State to Moscow has proved this tendency.

In general, we in Kazakhstan are against the bloc mindset as far as international relations are concerned and are committed to a joint solution of urgent problems. For obvious reasons, strategic partnership and an allied relationship with Russia are extremely essential to Kazakhstan. Cooperation between the two neighbours has been strengthening in all areas. Meanwhile, the U.S. is a major investor in our economy, particularly in the energy sector. China is also a very important partner of my country; out of \$27 billion of Chinese investments to the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) countries, \$23 billion was sent to Kazakhstan.

Second. Talking about the changing landscape in Eurasia, it is worth mentioning the serious transformation taking place in China. The rise of the world's second largest economy is going on, even though at a slower pace. Trying to prevent over-



heating of its economy, Beijing is encouraging domestic consumption, boosting innovation and initiating huge cooperation projects such as One Belt, One Road, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, the Free Trade Area of the Asia Pacific and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Free Trade Zone. China has decided to give up outdated and environment-damaging industrial capacity to become a high-tech powerhouse. My assessment is that this strategic plan will be accomplished.

Beijing has emerged as an active global actor. China's role in Central Asia has been steadily increasing. Its presence is backed by plentiful financial resources that other countries cannot afford to provide nowadays. According to President Xi Jinping, China will promote One Belt, One Road as the main trade and investment project that will boost Asian economy.

The political and economic rise of China and the U.S. presence in Asia with its Trans-Pacific Partnership generate speculation about geopolitical ambitions and a new rivalry between the two powers, including the territorial issues on the sea. However, despite the enmity, both China and the U.S. possess huge capacity to boost regional development.

The role of Central Asia in global politics is growing. Blessed with enormous natural resources and at the same time being located close to conflict zones including Afghanistan, this region is becoming a pillar of the whole Eurasian continent. All big powers continue to show their interests in Central Asia. If 20 years ago the U.S. dominated in the region, over the past five years Russia and China have seriously increased their presence.

Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev put forward an idea about Great Eurasia that would embrace the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), the Silk Road Economic Belt and the European Union (EU) as a single integration project of the 21st century. We expect that this idea will be widely discussed at the Astana Economic Forum this May.

The third transformation is taking place in the European Union. A number of blatant terrorist

acts, an unprecedented migration crisis, financial problems and Britain's confusion about its EU membership suggest that Europe will never be the same again and the "Old World" is entering an era of grave upheaval. However, the potential of the EU cannot be overstated; it will be able to overcome predicaments since the EU is still attractive to its members and outsiders as an evolving institution.

The EU is the largest trade and investment partner of Kazakhstan. Three months ago, we signed the Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement with the EU. This framework document encompasses a wide range of relations and is forward-looking. Certainly, we are not planning to join the EU and will rather pursue a pragmatic

The ongoing transformation of Eurasia brings both challenges and great opportunities for the region of Central Asia and Kazakhstan in particular. In the environment of uncertainty, it is extremely important to enhance regional security institutions as well as to find ways of combining the trade and economic strategies of various powers.

policy. In late March, Kazakhstan's President visited Brussels and held meetings with top officials of the EU.

Fourth. Negative transformation is taking place in the Middle East. Syria, Libya and Yemen have been in chaos over the last five years. The largest terrorist group in history, the so-called "Islamic State," has appeared and strengthened its foothold.

Religious extremism is one of the main challenges not only in the Middle East, but also in other parts of the world. Unfortunately, this phenomenon has expanded worldwide. The fight against terrorism requires consolidated measures both on military and ideological fronts. International terrorism can undermine the world order. Therefore, this issue should be a priority for all countries concerned. A global network to counter terrorism needs to be established under UN auspices. This evil should not become a normality in our daily life.

Kazakhstan is the host of the Congress of the Leaders of World and Traditional Religions that offers its inclusive platform for political and religious leaders to engage in a dialogue to discuss the most pressing issues, such as combating extremist and

terrorist threats. It is essential to ensure efficient involvement of religious leaders in explaining the malignity of religious extremism. The Religions against Terrorism conference is to be held in Astana on May 31 and it will bring together members of many Parliaments and representatives of world religions.

We believe that the end to Iran's isolation is a positive factor in regional cooperation. Kazakhstan has been substantially contributing to the success of international negotiations on Iran's nuclear programme.

On April 1, Nazarbayev participated in the Nuclear Security Summit that was held in Washington, DC. Kazakhstan has been a consistent advocate of comprehensive nuclear disarmament. Twenty-five years

ago, even during the Soviet time, President Nazarbayev signed a decree to close down the Semipalatinsk nuclear test site and our country voluntarily renounced its nuclear arsenal inherited from the Soviet Union, the fourth largest in the world. It was a unique case in international disarmament history. Therefore, Kazakhstan has a firm standing on the disarmament issue, in particular on the North Korean nuclear programme.

project based on a pragmatic approach and shared interests. Kazakhstan has proposed declaring 2016 as the year of enhanced economic ties of the EAEU with other countries and regional organisations, including ASEAN. Last year, Vietnam signed a free trade agreement with the EAEU. Singapore is showing interest in signing such an agreement as well. With the launch of the EAEU, foreign companies establishing joint ventures in Kazakhstan will get access to five national markets embracing 180 million people and a GDP worth \$2.2 billion.

We believe that the SCO, comprising two permanent members of the UN Security Council – Russia and China, – as well as Kazakhstan and other Central Asian countries, is an important institution. The SCO pursues a universal agenda including the fight against terrorism, religious extremism, separatism, economic investment and humanitarian cooperation. This year, the SCO is going to welcome India and Pakistan as its new members, which will give it additional political and economic weight.

Kazakhstan is convinced that contradictions existing between Asian countries should not impede building a continental system of security and cooperation. With this in mind, we initiated the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA). Our country is active in the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE).

We believe that amidst global turbulence all states, regardless of their economic and military capacities, should enhance the central role of the UN in global affairs. The erosion of the UN and international law may have a devastating effect on the modern world, especially against the backdrop of growing terrorism. Kazakhstan has proposed convening a UN conference at the highest level to uphold principles of international law to restore trust.

Several points on the Silk Road Economic Belt project, which was launched by President Xi Jinping during his visit to Kazakhstan in September 2013. It is a powerful geo-economic strategy aimed at modernising transport infrastructure spanning from the Pacific Ocean to Europe.

Kazakhstan has expressed its willingness to join this project and developed its own infrastructure-development programmes. This year, the Kazakh part of the Western Europe-Western China high-

way that is almost 2,800-km long will be completed. We are also constructing a high-speed rail across Kazakhstan. Container shipping along the China-Kazakhstan-Europe route has grown from 6,000 units in 2013 to 48,000 in 2015 and is going to reach 95,000 this year.

In 2015, Kazakhstan launched the Nurly Zhol (The Bright Path) programme to develop transport, logistical, energy, industrial, tourist, housing and social infrastructure. By 2018, the country will build and upgrade 9,000 km of motor roads and highways and construct a new seaport infrastructure on the Caspian Sea that will connect Kazakhstan with the Persian Gulf and Black Sea. We are enhancing logistics hubs along the border with China. Last year, a new Kazakhstan-Chinese logistics terminal was launched at the Lianyungang port.

Kazakhstan's response to the global economic crisis goes beyond the package of the above-said measures and infrastructure-development projects. Last year, the President launched comprehensive institutional reforms, the Plan of the Nation, aimed at ensuring the rule of law, boosting industrial development and economic growth and strengthening national unity, as well as building a transparent and accountable government. Our Parliament adopted 59 laws, which among other things will further streamline foreign investment rules in the country.

A new high-tech village including EXPO 2017 pavilions is now under construction in Astana and as soon as the exhibition is over it will accommodate the new Astana International Financial Centre. This financial centre, located halfway from London to Singapore, will be based on English law, preferential tax treatment and an independent arbitration court.

All in all, the ongoing transformation of Eurasia brings both challenges and great opportunities for the region of Central Asia and Kazakhstan in particular. In the environment of uncertainty, it is extremely important to enhance regional security institutions as well as to find ways of combining the trade and economic strategies of various powers. The synergy of strategic projects, such as the EAEU and the Silk Road Economic Belt, will enable the region to offer to the world an efficient and balanced model of global economic development.

The author is Chairman of the Senate of the Parliament of Kazakhstan.

EXPO 2017 to Be at Centre of Movement toward a Greener Planet, Says EXPO Council Chairman

Staff Report

Rector of the Eurasian National University (ENU) Erlan Sydykov was elected in January head of the Public Council of EXPO 2017, comprised of well-known Kazakh and international public figures and scientists.

Recently, Sydykov answered the questions of the newspaper Liter as the chairman of the Public Council of EXPO 2017.

Mr. Sydykov, you were an active supporter of the exhibition prior to your election as chairman of the Public Council EXPO 2017. Why?

We need to realise that today alternative energy sources give birth to a new strategic industry that will shape the global agenda. The exhibition EXPO 2017 in Astana will give a clear advantage for our country in this regard and enable it to become one of the world leaders in the development of green economy.

I am convinced EXPO 2017 will become an important international

event, presenting a practical view towards building a more secure and balanced energy future. By bringing together in one place the best developments in this area, the exhibition, as an outstanding global event, will give impetus to the further development of green economy and use of alternative and renewable energy.

As for higher education institutions, including the ENU, EXPO 2017 will not only become a global dialogue platform for scientists and experts but also a revolutionary breakthrough in scientific and practical studies: new scientific trends, projects and careers will take shape. The department management and engineering in environmental protection of our university is conducting research in such areas as environmental assessment of performance and capacity of the landscape of Kazakhstan in view of climate change, environmental issues of green construction, use of energy-efficient heat pump heating systems and many others.

I, as a simple man, cannot help but ask you about the theme of the upcoming exhibition. Could you elaborate on such concepts as the "development of green economy" and "alternative energy sources?"

Today's realities push every single world economy towards green, energy-efficient technologies. This is due to climate change and a reduction in commodity dependence. As a journalist, you should be aware that the green development is the main priority of Kazakhstan's development strategy until 2050. The Presidential decree dated May 30, 2013 approved the concept for transition of the Republic of Kazakhstan to a green economy. This, first of all, includes working with renewable energies, such as solar, wind, Earth's internal heat, biofuels and new energy-sufficient technologies that can save electricity and significantly reduce its consumption.

As you know, in the 1950s, Japan moved towards other high-

tech industries as a response to the economic crisis and has become a leader in the electronics industry over more than 12 years. Do you think that EXPO 2017 can also become a necessary anti-crisis project for our country?

I am absolutely certain of it. EXPO 2017 is a very important event for Kazakhstan that can help us to choose and master the latest technologies for the development of future energy. I think that after the exhibition, even the most zealous critics will break the circle of their callous stereotypes and misconceptions. Despite the global crisis, which also affected our country, we are constructing new facilities, creating tens of thousands of jobs, hundreds of domestic enterprises are involved in construction, the tourism cluster, infrastructure of Astana and other regions of the country are booming, small- and medium-sized businesses of the capital are receiving a new strong development impetus.

By and large, I am not exagger-

ating when I say that EXPO 2017 is a real anti-crisis road map. However, the most important is not to focus only on our benefits. Next year, Astana will be at the centre of addressing pressing issues of humanity. It should be understood. EXPO 2017 is a necessary event for all countries. That is why the number of participant states of the exhibition is growing steadily and therefore there is always a fierce competition for the right to host the exhibition under the auspices of EXPO 2017.

After you gave such detailed answers, the question about Kazakhstan's need in EXPO 2017 proves unnecessary, let us talk about other benefits of the exhibition.

There are initiatives that have thought about our many steps ahead. It is necessary to elaborate on two initiatives of the head of state. President Nursultan Nazarbayev in his address to the UN General Assembly in New York at the end of last year, proposed to

open an international hub for the development of green technologies on the basis of EXPO 2017 infrastructure. This is a very significant event. Imagine that this centre will accumulate advanced technologies in priority areas, such as renewable energy and energy efficiency.

Foreign experts are already showing great interest in the idea of the hub. For our country, such a project is akin to Silicon Valley in the United States and Beijing Technology Centre in China. Needless to talk about the positive impact of these innovative institutions on their economies.

In addition, the Astana Financial Centre based on EXPO 2017 infrastructure will follow English Common Law with the mandatory study and use of the Dubai experience in the development of this issue. British Law is in great demand all over the world and its application corresponds to modern business trends. This in turn will serve as a powerful driver of foreign investment in the country's economy.

EURASIA&WORLD

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 13, 2016

Kazakh President Pays First Ever Visit to Cuba, Cooperation in Oil, Trade on Agenda

By Malika Orazgaliyeva

ASTANA – Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev and Cuban President Raul Castro had a productive meeting during the first ever visit by a Kazakh leader on the Freedom Island on April 2.

The two countries signed a memorandum of understanding on bilateral cooperation in the areas of labour, employment and social protection during the visit the two leaders discussed expanding bilateral cooperation in trade, education, culture, sports, agriculture and policy dialogue.

Nazarbayev and Castro separately focused on cooperation in the spheres of healthcare, pharmaceuticals and biotechnology. They noted the need to exchange experience between the Kazakh and Cuban experts in these areas.

The sides shared views on international issues and Nazarbayev thanked Cuba for supporting Kazakhstan's candidacy for non-



permanent member of the United Nations Security Council for 2017-2018.

The meeting was attended on the Kazakh side by Foreign Minister Erlan Idrissov and Minister of Energy Kanat Bozumbayev and on the Cuban side by ministers of Foreign Trade and Investment Rodrigo Malmierca Diaz, Energy and Mines Alfredo Lopez Valdes and Interim Foreign Minister Marcelino Medina.

Bozumbayev noted following the meeting that the sides agreed on oil supplies to Cuba.

"Today with Mr. Valdes we have signed a memorandum on joint actions in the spheres of the oil and gas industry, exploration of oil deposits in the coastal zone of Cuba, as well as possible supply of Kazakh oil to the Cuban refinery," Bozumbayev noted.

Idrissov and Medina met at the Cuban foreign ministry's headquarters.

Prior to meeting with Castro, Nazarbayev paid tribute to Cuban independence hero Jose Marti, visited the memorial museum and left a note in the book of honourable

guests. Nazarbayev told the media that Kazakhstan has great interest in Cuba and acknowledged that he had long wanted to visit the country as he belongs to a generation that always admired the Cuban Revolution and Fidel Castro.

The two countries share other priorities of mutual trade, including medicine and renewable energy sources.

"As well as other Latin American countries, Cuba is seriously engaged in scientific developments in order to compensate the energy deficit. In some Latin American countries, the share of renewable energy reaches 90 percent. Today, we discussed this topic during the meeting. Cuba conducts major scientific research to increase the use of renewable energy sources," head of the Astana EXPO 2017 national company Akhmetzhan Yessimov informed.

In 2014, the two countries signed a memorandum of understanding for cooperation in education, science and sports.

In order to strengthen tourism and bilateral economic relations, the two countries signed in December 2015 an agreement for exemption of short-stay visas.

Polish Ambassador Strongly Supports Silk Road Project

Continued from Page A1

I firmly believe the best guarantee of success in this regard is an approach based on identifying the mutual benefits which definitely exist," said the ambassador.

Institutional mechanisms designed to enhance cooperation turned out to be very effective, as illustrated by the activities of the Polish-Kazakh Intergovernmental Commission on Economic Cooperation. The next session will be held April 14 in Warsaw.

Lang said Poland is rather well known for its small and medium-sized businesses, which for obvious reasons face more practical problems in investing abroad than world-scale giants. Nevertheless, Polish companies have a share in sectors such as building materials or pharmaceuticals, as illustrated by the great market success of Shymkent-based Polpharma. New opportunities in other fields are also being actively explored.

Silk Road

Road and railway transportation between Europe and Asia have great potential for Kazakhstan and Poland. Lang is a strong supporter of the projects.

"Kazakhstan and Poland could



Maciej Lang

land has also joined the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, in which Kazakhstan also has its shares. We believe that this newly-established institution will facilitate operationalisation of many mutually-beneficial projects," said the ambassador.

EXPO 2017

Poland recently appointed Andrzej Stefanski, former Polish trade representative in Almaty, as national commissioner for EXPO 2017. He has extensive experience in the area of foreign trade and deep knowledge about the region.

"Although power production in Poland is based on traditional energy sources, we also have a fast-growing sector of clean

continuation of that tradition," he explained.

"Diplomatic relations between Poland and Kazakhstan were established 24 years ago, but, as surprising as it might sound, the first Polish diplomats operated in Kazakhstan long before that date during World War II, when diplomatic representations of the Polish Embassy in the USSR were set up in nine cities of the then-Kazakh SSR," said Lang.

Poland and Kazakhstan have gone through deep economic transformations since the collapse of the Communist system and break-up of the Soviet Union, but the conditions and circumstances in which these processes occurred in the countries differ remarkably.

"Our gas and oil deposits are not comparable to those in Kazakhstan; hence, from the very beginning the driving force of our economy was small and medium-sized enterprises. It is fair to say that Poland owes its 25 years of constant economic growth to the individual initiative, creativity and spirit shown by private entrepreneurs, whose efforts transformed a desolate, central-planned economy into a vibrant competitive business environment widely recognised in the world as a success story. The illustration of our fast pace of transformation is our joining the WTO (World Trade Organisation) in 1995 and OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development) in 1996," said Lang.

The ambassador noted that student exchange programmes were launched in the early 1990s immediately after establishing diplomatic relations, opening an important dimension of bilateral cooperation. More than 500 Kazakh students are currently studying at a number of Polish universities.

This year also marks the 80th anniversary of the first wave of mass deportations of ethnic Poles to Kazakhstan.

"It truly deserves the highest appreciation that the Kazakh people – themselves being the victims of Soviet repression who lived through famine and mass collectivisation – extended a helpful hand to those in need. This evidence of pure humanity will always be remembered in my country. The sincere gratitude has been recently expressed in a letter of the Speaker of the Polish Senate to his Kazakh counterpart, Kassym-Jomart Tokayev. It's hard to find positive legacies of such dramatic events. What comes to mind is rather the encouraging sense that the human spirit is immune to external hardships," said Lang.

History of Relations

Lang also reflected on the history of Kazakh-Polish relations.

"Since the time of Adolf Januszkiewicz and other Polish pioneers who lived in the 19th century, knowledge of the Kazakh people and its fascinating country was popularised in Europe. Poles have always sympathised with Kazakhs and were deeply interested in their culture. Today, we see our efforts to expand cooperation between the EU and Kazakhstan as a logical

LANG: "Kazakhstan and Poland could cooperate to create better conditions for expanding transport links on transcontinental routes."

cooperate to create better conditions for expanding transport links on transcontinental routes. Recently, Poland adopted the 'Plan for Responsible Development,' which assumes that transport infrastructure will become a bloodstream of our economy. It gives us more opportunities for cooperation with Kazakhstan, which links Europe and Asia. A great example of such a partnership is the train route linking Chengdu in southwest China and Lodz in Poland. It is operated by the fastest freight train in Eurasia and goes through the territory of Kazakhstan," he said.

Despite the land routes, one of the biggest potentials to becoming important hubs on the new Silk Road is the Polish ports on the Baltic Sea. Poland and Kazakhstan have a common interest to boost cooperation in the field.

"I would also like to mention Poland's engagement in the so-called '16+1' group, composed of Central-Eastern Europe countries and China. Moreover, Po-

Kazakh President's Visit to Iran Results in \$2 Billion in Agreements

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Nazarbayev and Khamenei expressed satisfaction with developing Kazakh-Iranian relations in the fields of trade and investment, as well as creating new joint projects.

The two delegations signed the following documents during expanded negotiations: an agreement on the transfer of sentenced persons between the countries; cooperation agreement on plant protection and quarantine; memorandum of understanding between the Kazakh Ministry for Investment and Development and Iranian Organisation for Science and Technology on cooperation in new technologies; cooperation programme between the Kazakh Ministry for Investment and Development and Iranian Ministry for Industry, Mine and Trade in the field of industrialisation; extended long-term programme for collaboration with Iran on the Silk Road project; MoU between the National Bank of Kazakhstan and Central Bank of Iran; memorandum of cooperation between Kazakhstan Temir Zholy (KTZ – the national railway company) and the Iranian railway company; agreement and roadmap between KTZ Express

and IRISL, the Iranian shipping company, and MoU between Baiterek, the Kazakh national managing holding company, and the National Development Fund of Iran.

The following day, Nazarbayev met with heads of major Iranian holdings and companies, including Ghadir Investments Group, Imidro, IRISL, Jahad-e-Sabz and Sunir Group, working in the fields of energy, agriculture, construction and the mining industry.

Nazarbayev noted there is mutual interest in strengthening cooperation in various areas and called on the Iranian companies to actively use the potential of the Kazakhstan-Turkmenistan-Iran railway.

The Kazakh-Iranian Business Council, organised by Baiterek, gathered more than 200 companies from the two countries, reported baiterek.gov.kz. According to business council co-chairman and Baiterek Chairman of the Board Kuandyk Bishimbayev, the nations' leaders have played a major role in the active development of bilateral relations between the countries.

Export contracts to supply agricultural and engineering products to Iran and the joint implementation of

projects in the chemical and petrochemical industry were among the agreements reached.

"We are pleased to note that the agreements signed today include the investment of Iranian companies in those sectors of Kazakhstan's economy where Iranian companies have made great progress. The business council discussed the issue of air traffic. We transferred all the voiced questions to the government of Kazakhstan. The national carrier Air Astana has opened new flights between Kazakhstan and Iran. This will allow us to strengthen trade and economic cooperation," Bishimbayev said.

"For us, Iran is a partner that allows us to get access to the Persian Gulf on the new international transport corridors. Iran is interested in Kazakhstan because our country provides access to Russia, China and Central Asia," Bishimbayev added.

A large package of agreements was signed regarding import and export of agricultural products, according to the Baiterek press service. In particular, a number of Kazakh companies agreed to export meat and grain products.

In Brussels, Nazarbayev Discusses EU-Kazakhstan Partner

Continued from Page A1

"During the last 23 years, we have had good relations with the EU. Today, Kazakhstan is the only post-Soviet country to have concluded an EPCA with the EU," Nazarbayev noted.

"On May 1, we can start to temporarily use the economic side of the EPCA. Today, I asked Juncker to speed up the ratification of the agreement among EU member states," he added.

The EPCA aims to ensure favourable conditions for political and economic cooperation and to promote stronger contacts between Kazakhstan and EU countries. With Kazakhstan the first Central Asian country to sign such an agreement with the EU, the importance of maintaining a regular dialogue at the highest level was noted.

Welcoming the accession of Kazakhstan to the World Trade Organisation (WTO), Nazarbayev and Juncker reaffirmed their interest in creating the necessary conditions for trade, transit and production; minimising barriers and risks; and improving coordination in this area.

The two sides agreed that intensifying scientific, technological and educational cooperation through the EPCA will contribute to the further diversification of Kazakhstan's economy and will strengthen its competitiveness. They also underlined the importance of transparent rules and

regulations for a favourable investment climate in Kazakhstan, which should become an incentive for more investment and guarantees for investors.

Juncker welcomed Kazakhstan's commitment to a sustainable future, its green economy concept and the upcoming EXPO 2017 in Astana on the theme of "Future Energy." They discussed the possibility of European participation in the exhibition using best EU practices in alternative and renewable energies. Nazarbayev also informed the European side on the concept of the Astana International Financial Centre, which is currently going through an initial institutionalisation process and would later inherit parts of EXPO 2017 premises.

Nazarbayev and Juncker agreed that promoting good governance and respect for the rule of law and the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms form a central element of the EU-Kazakhstan relationship.

Nazarbayev expressed his support for the implementation of regional cooperation within the framework of the renewed EU Strategy for Central Asia. According to the statement, the two sides will pay particular attention to environmental protection, rational use of water resources, fighting terrorism and violent extremism, preventing and fighting organised crime and countering illicit drug activity and illicit trafficking in firearms.

During the meeting with Tusk, the

sides exchanged views on cooperation between Kazakhstan and the EU in political, commercial, economic, cultural and humanitarian spheres.

Nazarbayev noted that the EU is one of the most important vectors of Kazakhstan's foreign policy and a crucial trade partner. He drew attention to the fact that half of the country's foreign trade is with the EU.

At the meeting, Nazarbayev noted that this month, Kazakhstan's Senate ratified the EPCA and expressed confidence that it will push bilateral cooperation to a new level.

Tusk congratulated Nazarbayev and Kazakhstan on the upcoming 25th anniversary of independence, expressing hope that the close Kazakhstan-EU partnership will solidify despite recessionary trends in the global economy.

Earlier, immediately after arrival to Brussels, Nazarbayev laid flowers at the Maalbeek metro station in memory of those killed in the terror attacks of March 22.

On the sidelines of the ceremony, Nazarbayev spoke with Minister of the Government of the Brussels-Capital Region Guy Vanhengel and expressed his condolences.

"Kazakhstan condemns terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and mourns together with the Belgian people. I wish a speedy recovery to the injured and hope that families and relatives of the killed will overcome this tragedy as soon as possible," Nazarbayev said.

Nation&Capital

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Central Asia's Largest Bridge Completed in Pavlodar Region



By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – The largest bridge in Central Asia, which is in the Pavlodar region and spans the Irtysh River, is expected to be a major link in the eastern part of the Western Europe – Western China route and save 65 kilometres for transportation companies. The bridge, completed in April, is essential for the transportation of goods as Kazakhstan aims to become a key transit country.

“The bridge over the Irtysh is unique because of the transport logistics and engineering solutions that were used for its construction. The total length of the bridge

across the floodplain of the river with a constantly varying channel will amount to 12.3 kilometres,” said the representative of general contractor and head of the BI Group project Bolat Mukhamedzhanov.

“Due to the significant annual floods, much attention was paid to the culvert capacity of all of the bridge. The bridge consists of four bridges. One of them – the main arch bridge over the river – was designed and constructed using the most up-to-date engineering solutions. These most advanced solutions helped reduce the amount of metal by 1.5 times, which is 3,000 tonnes,” said Chief Engineer of the

project Vyacheslav Friedman, describing the innovations.

Mukhamedzhanov said the length of the largest elevated part of the bridge reaches 476 metres and consists of three arches. The length of the central bay is 250 metres, which makes the bridge the largest in the Central Asian region. The bridge's width is 27 metres, which enables it to have four lanes for vehicles (two lanes in each direction) without weight restrictions.

The bridge was constructed using 90 percent construction materials produced in Kazakhstan and cost 54 billion tenge (US\$156.6 million).

“This project will sufficiently save delivery time in the Pavlodar region, because it reduces the route by 65 kilometres. Due to the bridge, vehicles will be able to move through Aksu and not enter Pavlodar. This bridge is constructed under the Nurdy Zhol state programme and managed by the KazAvtoZhol company,” Mukhamedzhanov said.

The representative of KazAvtoZhol in the Pavlodar region Yersin Sariyev highlighted that great attention was also paid to the exterior of the unique bridge, which will be painted the colours of the Kazakhstan flag.

Nazarbayev Presents Obama with Painting by Kazakh Nuclear Disarmament Activist



The 'Explosion' by Karipbek Kuyukov.

By Zhazira Dyussembekova

ASTANA – Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev presented to U.S. President Barack Obama during the recent Nuclear Security Summit in Washington, D.C., a painting by Kazakh art-

ist, anti-nuclear weapons activist and The ATOM Project Honorary Ambassador Karipbek Kuyukov, according to a comment from the President's Press Secretary Dauren Abayev posted April 6 by Akorda's Facebook account.

Continued on Page B2

Renting in Astana: What to Look For, Where to Go, Who to Ask

By Dmitry Lee

ASTANA – So you're foreign and new in town. The first thing you want to do is find a good, comfortable place to live, with all the amenities in walking range, and preferably right in the centre of the transport network. Here are a few tips from The Astana Times on how to pick an apartment in Astana.

“Overall, apartment prices were falling back in November 2015. This is when I told all my clients to sell their old apartments,” said Vadim Kim, Almaty real estate agent. “In March the prices started going up little by little again; we were observing a slight price hike. Forecasts are usually speculations unless you're an insider in the government, but still I suspect that apartment [prices] will be growing throughout the year,” Kim said.

Use an Established Agent
Real estate agents are monitoring

the Internet seemingly 24/7. There is practically no way to get to the owner of an apartment without going through these middlemen, but they can be useful – for a price, of course, and that's where the problem lies. Some real estate agencies charge up to 20 percent for their service: for an apartment going for 160,000 tenge (US\$466), you would pay a one-off fee of 32,000 tenge (US\$93) to the agency. There are agencies that charge only 10 percent, but very, very few.

Another issue is private Craigslist-type agents who are in for one-time deals and have no expertise or knowledge of the market. They post unbelievable deals and fake photos to attract people. There is no way to tell them apart from legitimate agents on the Internet, unfortunately. A better way to start your search is to look for reliable agencies rather than for quick and unbelievable deals. After

all, almost all agencies are using the same database.

There have also been cases of apartment rental fraud, in which the perpetrators rented an apartment for one day and pretended to be owners. The fake owners would then arrange a rental deal with another set of tenants, take their first month's payment in cash, and disappear with the money, leaving the new “tenants” to deal with the real owners of the apartment the next morning. That is why picking a reliable real estate agency is a better option. They can help identify such criminals and would be legally obligated in such an incident.

Pick Your Location Carefully

As is well known, Astana is split into two banks, the left and right. The left bank is considered to be the Manhattan of Astana, even metaphorically the centre of all

of Kazakhstan, and, as one would imagine, rents there are more expensive. On top of that, utilities are taxed higher than on the right bank and left bank shops tend to charge a little extra for pretty much everything, even little things like a pack of gum or a bottle of Gatorade. So be prepared to spend a bit extra for the comfort and prestige of the area. Standard, well-maintained, one-bedroom apartments here start from about 120,000 tenge (US\$350) per month, plus utilities.

The right bank also offers a great many luxurious options, no doubt. However, as opposed to the left bank, the right is sort of scattered around, with some options extending into the suburbs. Surprisingly, the price for an apartment doesn't depend on its distance from the centre. Expensive apartments on the outskirts of town aren't unusual, as prices are based more on the neighbourhood and the quality of the apartment.

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American Enthusiast Launches Guidebook to Almaty's Unique Locations

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – American teacher Dennis Keen launched Walking Almaty, featuring the urban landscape's architecture and recognisable attractions, after moving to the city in 2013. The work has inspired residents of Kazakhstan's largest city to provide additional information about its historic places.

The project website, www.walkingalmaty.com, is a modern online museum highlighting the images in National Geographic-style photos and powerful descriptions of routes and locations. The most distinct characteristic, however, is the 13 historic maps of Almaty and

the former Verna (former Russian name of Alma-Ata).

“I explore a city on foot, documenting the visual landscape with photography. Using careful observation, I try to identify the phenomena in Almaty's architecture, infrastructure and street scene that give the city its 'feel.' I have designed all my routes myself, but I have enlisted the help of Almaty residents for my Neighbourhoods of Almaty map. I held several workshops where folks helped me draw the borders of the 'unofficial' neighbourhoods they knew and I have made the map on Google Maps,” said Keen in an interview for this story.

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THINGS TO WATCH & PLACES TO GO

ASTANA OPERA

- April 15 at 7 p.m. Madame Butterfly, opera
- April 24 at 6 p.m. Swan Lake, ballet
- April 27 at 7 p.m. Traviata, opera

JEM STEAK MUSIC BAR

- April 16 at 8 p.m. Unplugged, MTV style live show

PEACE AND HARMONY PALACE

- April 17 at 6 p.m. Astana designers' award

KAZNUI ORGAN HALL

- April 19 at 7 p.m. Massimo Quarta, concert

CONGRESS HALL

- April 19 at 7:30 p.m. Zhan Meiyiri, concert

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 13, 2016

Uyghurs Put Soul in Helping Kazakhstan Develop, Says Community Leader

By Dmitry Lee

ASTANA – Uyghurs are one of the many peoples that called the Kazakh steppe home for centuries before the current borders were drawn.

“Uyghurs have been living in Kazakhstan since ancient times; they have been always in these territories,” said Chairman of the Uyghur ethno-cultural association in Kazakhstan Rustam Abdusalomov.

“This is why we accentuated our identity through the name of our centre, which is called the National Ethno-Cultural Centre of Uyghurs of Kazakhstan.”

Today, most Uyghurs still live in the Xinjiang province of China. There are about half a million Uyghurs in Kazakhstan, mostly in the Almaty region and in the southern parts of the country. Unlike the nomadic Kazakhs, Uyghurs were sedentary and were engaged in agriculture, animal husbandry, architecture, arts and trade, the chairman said.

Uyghurs have always played an important role in the region, Abdusalomov said, and have contributed to regional culture and



scholarship in a host of ways. “For instance, UNESCO recognised epos of the 12 Muqams [a set of melodic tunes used to guide improvisation and composition] ... Among the most recent [contributions] we can mention writer Ismailbek Iminov, who wrote a book about the life of legendary Kazakh scholar Shokan Valikh-

anov. Iminov initiated an expedition along the same itinerary that Valikhanov made, in order to trace his achievements. The book was published in Kazakh, Russian and English. Another well-known representative of the ethnic Uyghur community is painter Akhmet Akhat, who has held many exhibitions in Kazakhstan and abroad.”

According to Abdusalomov, today there are many entrepreneurs and politicians in Kazakhstan of Uyghur ethnic background. Scattered throughout regions, their names can be found among the ranks of the most successful businessmen and women of Kazakhstan. No matter their status or circumstances, the chairman of the

centre says they’re very close to their community.

“The 500-member Uyghur ethno-cultural association in Astana is engaged in many charitable events and has various directions like religious, cultural and educational activities. The centre has a youth wing, a women’s council and a council of elders to give respect to the elders and who in return offer their wisdom to mediate disputes.”

In total, there are about 2,000 Uyghurs in Astana, and by calling just a few key people, Abdusalomov noted, all 2,000 can be made aware of the current state of affairs within the tight community.

“We also have a Sunday school where we demonstrate Uyghur culture, dances, food and language. We participate in various events held by the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan (APK). We organised a banquet for 300 people on March 21 for instance – on the day of the general assembly meeting. State bodies sometimes want to explore Uyghur culture and send inquiries to organise events.”

The chairman says he follows the adage, “if you want to change something, change yourself first.”

“We want to promote the concept

of peace, harmony and understanding in our society, no matter the ethnic background. For instance, in our Uyghur culture, women are given special respect. As evidence of that, men communicate with girls and women, no matter the age, in a formal way, in the way you would talk to a stranger out of respect.”

Abdusalomov called on nations to examine the APK and study the approaches it uses to mitigating and satisfying the needs of peoples of different cultures and ethnic backgrounds under a common umbrella in Kazakhstan.

“Our cultural centre calls on people of different races, religions and cultural backgrounds to open cooperation. The doors of our centre are always open. We call on people to create and coexist. I also would like other nations to study the APK and try to adopt a similar model of coexistence of different nations. We are proud to have our blue Kazakh passport. Each person in Kazakhstan, no matter the nationality – Uyghur or Korean or Russian – stands tall for Kazakhstan. This is the most important achievement of any leader or head of state – the love of people for the country and for their land.”

Mayors for Peace Call for Abolishing Nuclear Weapons

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – Thore Vestby, co-founder of Bike for Peace and mayor of Frogn, Norway, gave Kazakhstan high marks for its activities aimed at nuclear disarmament during his recent visit to the capital. He also highlighted the importance of the decision Britons have to make in the near future.



Thore Vestby

“Kazakhstan inherited nuclear-tipped missiles when the Soviet Union collapsed. The state dismantled and destroyed the weapons and facilities left on its territory and signed major international non-proliferation treaties. Kazakhstan is one of the key nations, having a nuclear fuel bank

in Ust-Kamenogorsk and exporting a lot of uranium. It has a great responsibility in this aspect. When the world said that it needs a nuclear fuel bank and made a decision to establish it in Kazakhstan, it accepted that the state is a great example for other states,” he said in a March 19 interview.

Vestby, who is also Vice President of Mayors for Peace and a member of Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament (PNND), noted his team is currently working on a sustainable Silk Road ride. The event is based on the fact the Silk Road is a name known to all and is being heavily promoted by China. Most of the road goes through Kazakhstan.

“If we combine the message of sustainability and the best points of biking and meeting people, the message of peace and reconciliation between people, we would like to do that,” he said.

Vestby explained the difference between Mayors for Peace and Bike for Peace.

“Mayors for Peace is an organisation with headquarters in Hiroshima. We are now very close to 7,000 mayors who consider that nuclear bombs are not security, but a threat for our citizens. The mayors protect their citizens and oppose the big arsenal of nuclear weapon some states have. Also,

we, Mayors for Peace, are sure that all the funds spent for nuclear weapons should be spent for the 17 sustainable development goals approved by the UN. So Mayors for Peace numbers at around 7,000 mayors around the world. Together, we represent one billion people connecting more than 100 capitals. Bike for Peace is an organisation aiming at biking around the world and speaking about peace for decades. The message is abolishment of nuclear weapons,” he said.

He also outlined the question facing Great Britain.

“After the end of World War II there was some kind of nuclear romanticism. Today, Great Britain can invest 10 billion pounds (US\$14.2 billion) in nuclear weapons. Norway produces underwater drones, which can very easily find any submarine. This fact makes the seas transparent and the weapons much less effective,” he said.

“Today, we see a crucially-important moment when one of the nations with nuclear weapons can abolish or update it. It can change the history of mankind. I hope that the British people will realise that they should abandon this project. Different organisations in Europe work very hard on this issue. Also, we need to understand that all resources used for nuclear weapon development can go for other sectors,” said Vestby.

Nazarbayev Presents Obama with Painting by Kazakh Nuclear Disarmament Activist

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Kuyukov was born without arms as a result of his parents’ exposure to Soviet nuclear weapons testing near the village of Egingdybulak in Karaganda Oblast, Central-Eastern Kazakhstan. He has overcome that challenge to become a renowned artist who paints with his teeth and feet and a globally recognised non-proliferation activist. He is also the Hon. Ambassador of The ATOM Project, an international initiative that has gathered to date more than 250,000 signatures to bring the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty into force and to eliminate nuclear arsenals.

The painting, “Explosion,” was created in November 2015. It features primarily red colours and shows a man with his hands up looking at a giant mushroom cloud.

“In that painting I wanted to show a man facing fear during the explosion. My parents were witnesses of those awful tests. My father used to be a driver and used to drive through the test site. He

saw everything with his own eyes. This drawing shows from one side a scared man hiding from the radiation and from the other side he is praying for the explosions to stop,” said Kuyukov.

“I am very honoured that my painting was chosen by the President to be presented to Barack Obama. I think it is an honour not only for me. Each of us, Kazakhstan’s citizens, thinks about the nuclear test ban. The (Kazakh) President’s decree on closing down the Semipalatinsk test site 25 years ago is our common victory, our merit. We are an example for many countries,” said Kuyukov.

“I am very hopeful that this painting will find its worthy place in the White House collection. I hope it will serve as a powerful reminder to the current and future U.S. Presidents of the United States’ great responsibility to lead the way in ensuring the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). Given the events in North Korea and the growing threat of nucle-

ar terrorism, we have no time to lose.”

The fourth Nuclear Security Summit was held in Washington, D.C. from March 31-April 1 and attracted many of the world’s nuclear weapons state leaders, activists and others interested in nuclear security. At the summit, President Nazarbayev met with approximately 15 other heads of state and governments and was involved in discussions concerning the ways to enhance security of nuclear materials worldwide, as well as the enforcement of non-proliferation regime regulations. The latter includes the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty that is yet to entry into force pending signing and ratification by eight key states, including U.S., China, India, Pakistan, Israel, Egypt, Iran, and North Korea.

Nazarbayev had given Obama a Kazakh tumar (a traditional Kazakh leather amulet) during the 2012 Nuclear Security Summit in Seoul, according to Kazakh Presidential Press Secretary Dauren Abayev.

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CULTURE

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 13, 2016

Radio that Never Goes out of Style

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – If the traditional genres and melodies of the great steppe are your type of music, Classic FM is your channel. Celebrating its fifth anniversary this year, the station has increased the record database, recorded young performers, created its own original programmes and exchanged experience with the world's best radio stations, including BBC 3 London, BR-Klassik Munich, Classical KUSC Los Angeles and Radio Classique Paris.

Classic FM has been a winner at the London competition of the Association for International Broadcasting. It took the prize in "never goes out of style" in the Inspiring Awards and Fashion TV category.

"All the developed countries have classical radio stations. This is a definite indicator of the level of the country's development. Being the first and only classical music station in Kazakhstan, Classic FM is dedicated to preserving classical music as an art. Our mission is to promote human values and cultural development, to increase the level of music education and to present programmes featuring the arts and culture of Kazakh people," said Classic FM Director Raushan Jumaniyazova in an interview for this story.

The idea for a national FM network devoted to academic music originated with the Kurmangazy National Conservatory management and People's Artist of Kazakhstan and acclaimed pianist Zhaniya Aubakirova, who became the project's ideological inspiration. It began broadcasting on 102.7 FM in Almaty on June 6, 2011 and now also airs on 102.8 FM in the capital.

"We have started two major projects dedicated to the 25th anniversary of Kazakhstan's independence. The first programme is interviews with 25-year-old young



professionals in different areas on how they achieved success in their career and life. The second project is about prominent Kazakh soloists such as Gaukhar Murzabekova, Aiman Mussakhodzhayeva, Alan Buribayev and many others," said Jumaniyazova.

The Classic FM team intends to start a project with the purpose of maintaining a national musical heritage, as there are no live recordings of many national symphonies, ballets and operas.

"Currently, this is one of the most pressing problems. 'Abai,' 'Birzhan and Sarah' and 'Zhalbir' operas are the property of the Kazakh culture which should be available. School children are still being taught with stereo sounding recordings of the 50's and 60's with terrible quality. And it is necessary to collaborate with the country's opera houses and record the Kazakh compositions," she said.

Jumaniyazova noted the station is composed of experts in specific fields and applauded the job of its editors and authors.

"For example, Zira Naurzabayeva produces a programme about the unpublished historical facts and legends in Kazakh music history. The guests of the Cultural Mo-

saic programme are well-known personalities such as Yerlan Stambekov, Murat Auezov, Mikhail Voskresensky, Yessetzhan Kosubayev, Askar Yesserkegenov, Serik Turdaliyev and many others. Acclaimed musicians including Bibigul Tulegenova, Marat Bisenagaliev, Alibek Dnishev, Alexander Zatselin and Denis Matsuev were the guests at our studio," she said.

Classic FM launched a new programme in February about Daryndylar (Talented) young musicians. The future performers share their thoughts on music and creativity and the lively stories and fascinating ideas make the show extremely interesting.

"We have nine original programmes. Each project is unique and has its audience. And we get a lot of feedback on the shows about Kazakh music, Tylysym Perne (magic sound of dombra) and Cultural Mosaic. Unfortunately, we have been forced to close some projects since April for budget optimisation, but we hope to find a way out of this situation," said Jumaniyazova.

To stay in touch with all age groups, the Classic FM team monitors the audience's expectations through social media and recently

joined Periscope. More often, they receive email and sometimes even get handwritten letters, which today are very rare and valuable.

"Once we received a letter from a prison proving that our programmes help people to find the strength to think about beauty. Then, our listener from Aktau said that her children listen exclusively to our radio, especially fairy tales from the Musical Odyssey. This is very encouraging," she said.

Jumaniyazova feels all the melodies aired on Classic FM are aimed at young people and children. The most creative public listens to jazz, she says.

"Sooner or later, everyone comes to an understanding of symphonic music as it is the basis of everything. This moment often happens unexpectedly. At some point, people just realise that such kind of music makes them feel good and relaxed. I am pleased that more youngsters are keen on classical music and visit concerts, ballets and operas. A classic is something always relevant. It is comprehensive and global and so it will never lose its value. It is important to listen to classic radio for personal development, for inspiration, for peace in the world," she said.

Astana Opera to Premiere Production of 'Madam Butterfly'

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – The capital's main theatre will produce the premiere of Giacomo Puccini's opera "Madam Butterfly" staged by Italian director Lorenzo Amato on April 15-16.

The production team consists of eminent artists, including set designer Ezio Frigerio, costume designer Franca Squarciapino and lightning designer Vincenzo Raponi. The music director is the theatre's principal conductor and Honoured Worker of Kazakhstan Alan Buribayev and Chief Choirmaster and Honoured Worker of Kazakhstan Yerzhan Dautov.

Thirty silk kimonos adorned with delicate hand embroidery and stage props will be delivered from Italy. Eight women and two men's kimonos and two obi belts were presented from the private collection of Junko Kamohara, wife of the Ambassador of Japan.

Fabio Armiliato will perform the part of Pinkerton. The Italian tenor gained recognition for his unique vocal style, impressive upper register, brilliant acting talent and charisma among opera critics and millions of fans around the world, reported a release.

The soloist wowed the audience as Pinkerton at such venues as Teatro La Scala, Liceo Barcelona Opera House, New National Tokyo Theatre and other stages. The guest of the most prestigious international opera festivals

performs the leading parts at the Metropolitan Opera, Arena di Verona, La Fenice and Teatro Real.

Armiliato's participation is organised under the auspices of the Italian Embassy in Kazakhstan. An opera will be held in the framework of the Year of Italian Culture in Kazakhstan.

Kazakh opera singer Zhannat Baktai, who performs the part of Cio-Cio-San, feels that this opera is a kind of marathon of endurance.

"I sing this part for the third time in my career. I anticipate this premiere with a lot of thrill and excitement. It is a great honour and responsibility to take part in the production created by famous Italian team and maestro Buribayev. The performance is difficult for the singer, both physically and psychologically. In order to secure her child's future, selfless Japanese woman Madam Butterfly, a daughter of samurai, will have to die. Her son will remain with his father, and, perhaps, one day he will become a military officer as well. There will be no intermission between the second and third acts. The entire time, the singer of the title role must remain onstage under the spotlight under a thick layer of makeup in a heavy costume. It requires strength and physical training," she said.

The leading soloists of the opera house Zhupar Gabdulina, Aigul Niyazova and Bibigul Zhanuzak will also play this challenging role.

Kazakh Director Sanzhar Bekzhanov's Film to Debut at Cannes Short Film Festival

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – A short film directed by Sanzhar Bekzhanov will be shown at the 69th International Cannes Film Festival on May 11-22. "A Step Forward" will be shown in the Short Film Corner competition.

Apart from directing, a graduate of the New York Film Academy, Bekzhanov also wrote the script for the film and collaborated with producers Dauren Kam-

shibayev and Mukhtar Bekzhanov, according to Forbes.kz.

The main character lives his entire life in a room with no doors or windows. One day he decides to change his life and suddenly gets a glimpse into a different reality.

"To me, this is a story about a man who, like all of us, has a choice between fears of anything new, unidentified and human curiosity. Every viewer will find their own story and see their own path," said Bekzhanov.

The film includes music by Camille Saint-Saëns performed by winners of international competitions Yermek Kurmanayev and Arman Tleubergenov.

As part of the festival, the director plans to present his new feature film and attract sponsors for future projects. The annual French Festival is an opportunity for young filmmakers to show their debut film, receive feedback and establish contacts with their counterparts around the world.



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COUNTRY

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 13, 2016

Entrepreneur Family Launches Kazakhstan's First Production of Eco-Fabric Bags



By Zhazira Dyussebekova

ASTANA – Dmitry and Laura Sevostyanov are young entrepreneurs who have created a whole new production line of environmentally friendly shopping bags. They officially launched their business last August; now, production is actively developing and they're open to all offers and cooperation.

"We produce bags made of nonwoven material – spun bond. Spun bond is a new generation of fabric and the bags made from it are becoming increasingly popular in many countries. The decomposition process of spun bond bags takes about two to three years, while the usual polyethylene bags decompose only over more than 100 years. Out of all the types of eco-friendly packaging, spun bond bags are the most environmentally friendly. Lifebag bags are reusable and 100 percent recyclable," said the Sevostyanovs via email to The Astana Times.

The couple care about saving the environment as well as making a profit.

"Unfortunately, in our country, not all are aware of the acute problems of environmental pollution with plastic bags. This is why they are still available free of charge in any store. Many countries ban and restrict the distribution of polyethylene bags, and the list of these countries is constantly growing. We are confident that Kazakhstan will sooner or later also come to that decision," they said.

They came up with the idea for Lifebag around two years ago. The implementation of the project took around a year. During that period, they won some money in the "Build Your Business" start-up contest.

"The problem of environmen-

tal pollution is often not so noticeable – although a garbage island drifts in the Pacific Ocean, composed 80 percent of plastic! We cannot completely solve the problems of environmental pollution with our packages, but we will at least start moving in this direction. Paints for our packages are water-based and environmentally friendly," said Laura Sevostyanova in an interview on the contest's website.

Like all entrepreneurs, they faced difficulties on their way.

"Any business requires a lot of expense and effort, but if the strategy is considered wisely and the budget is planned, then everything is possible. When we talk about the manufacturing business in Kazakhstan, one of the main problems is the lack of qualified raw materials on the market, as well as the lack of qualified specialists," they stated.

They also had to overcome the usual problems in sourcing equipment, finding premises, getting the right experts in and actually running their production line – not to mention looking for buyers, they said. However, now, Lifebag Company is able to produce up to 2 million bags per month. Their production line of Kazakhstan's first spun bond bags is running and they have signed a contract to supply eco bags to one of the largest retail chains.

"We are still at the development stage. We do not have investors yet, but we are open to suggestions and will be glad to cooperate," they said.

As for the future, the team has lots of plans and ideas. They plan to expand production and to carry out social campaigns to attract the attention of Kazakhstan's people to the problem of environmental pollution.

"We hope that our product will be appreciated by the people," they concluded.

New Kostanai Sci-Fi Park Shares Wonders of Physics with Children

By Kseniya Voronina

Eureka, a new interactive sci-fi park for children with more than 60 exhibits showcasing the laws of physics, has opened in Kostanai, Kazpravda.kz reported.

All items are available to touch and use for experiments and tests. According to Director of the sci-fi park Vyacheslav Timakov, the interactive area was created with the help of professors and lecturers from Kostanai-based universities.

"I have two sons and I always wanted them to spend their free time by learning useful things and not just playing computer games.

This idea has led me to the creation of the sci-fi park. All visitors are greeted by a guide, who then tells them about the museum's installations, shows the principles behind them and explains the laws of physics these items are based on. A tour lasts one hour, after which every child can conduct tests on their own. The items you



can see here are based mostly on aerodynamics and mechanics," said Timakov.

He also noted that such museums have become popular around the world, and particularly in Russia, over past three years.

"Despite the fact that we are just in the beginning, we hope to enlarge our network in the future

and introduce young physicist and young chemist classes soon," said Timakov.

According to Park Administrator Serik Manasbayev, learning about science from books is useful, but boring, especially for children.

"Children usually want to do something with their own hands. Furthermore, this is one of the

main principles in modern pedagogy, which is aimed at improving the interest to learn new things and better remember them," concluded Manasbayev.

A single ticket for a child costs 700 tenge (US\$2) and for an adult – 1000 tenge (US\$2.9). The excursion for a group is also possible and costs 600 tenge (US\$1.7).

Kazakh Children Rejoice as Country's Schools Set to Move to Five-Day Week

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – Beginning in September, Kazakhstan will change from a six to a five-day school week. The school year for first graders will last from Sept. 1 to June 1.

The change was originally planned for 2017. Students in second, fifth, seventh and ninth grades will move to a five-day week beginning September of that year, while other students will convert to the new schedule starting in September 2018, reported Tengrinews.kz.

The transition is related to the curriculum update, with the new programmes to be based on those of the Nazarbayev Intellectual Schools. Educational programmes will be created on the basis of functional literacy development in accordance with the world's best practices.

The Ministry of Education and Science has been considering the possibility of accelerating a nationwide transition to a five-day school week.

"However, it is necessary to thoroughly carry out calculations to update the content of programmes and consider schools with three-shift training in order to solve this issue. We understand that the beginning of summer holidays will shift to a later date for two weeks. The quality and amount of the entire educational process remain essential," according to a Ministry of Education and Science press release.

Deputy Prime Minister Dariga Nazarbayeva noted the importance of implementing a five-day school week.

"I am pleased for the parents and our children, as the school assignment has quite a strong effect on children's health and they do not have time to recover in one day.

It is expected that children will be able to develop fully on weekends. For example, they will be able to attend language courses or sport classes. Besides, children receive the necessary knowledge at home, too. Children should have time to communicate with their families and be introduced to family traditions. Saturday also will be an important day for the training of teachers," said Nazarbayeva.

Kazakhstan's education has started to move from knowledge-oriented learning to a skill-development system. President Nursultan Nazarbayev proposed shortening the school week during the March 25 joint session of the Senate and Mazhilis of the sixth convocation. The head of state noted current students are very busy.

"In all developed countries, schools have a five-day school week... In some countries there is even a four-day school week. And, today, this transition is a global

trend in developed countries. We also need to implement this practice... There are too many courses, more than necessary. Some courses can be combined or removed from the curricula. This issue needs a deep analysis," he said.

Minister of Education and Science Yerlan Sagdiyev expressed a willingness to reduce the school week, but stressed it will take three to four years.

The announcement has caused an enormous amount of media coverage and widespread discussion on social media. The majority of moms and dads have supported reducing the school week, but are opposed to the school year lasting until early June.

"All the parents try to take vacation in summer in order to spend time with their children. Now, it turns out that there are only two months left. When I went to school, it was really hard to sit in the classroom in May as the weather is warm and apples start to blossom. I cannot imagine how the children will study in June. They will not be able to receive the information properly," said one Facebook post.

City resident Zhanara Sarsembayeva is among those who back the changes.

"I generally support the education reform because a six-day week is a burden. Taking into account the tasks at home, a child is unable to attend the additional classes. There are a lot of problems concerning the programme and schedule, but I think eventually everything will be regulated," she wrote.



Photo credit: iStockphoto.com

American Enthusiast Launches Guidebook...

Continued from Page B1

From telephone poles to mosaics, building materials to mailboxes, every item on the city's streets has been catalogued and explained with informative essays available on the website.

"Almaty is a world-class destination for tourists, but the biggest barrier is information for visitors who do not speak Russian or Kazakh. That's part of the reason why I created my site; but also when visitors come, they should be able to find street names in English, read menus in English, read signs at museums in English. I'm a big fan of maps, so I think that more useful maps of the city and its surroundings can be made," added a photographer.

As a 17-year-old student from California, Keen first came to Almaty in 2005 on a summer ex-

change programme. He lived with a Kazakh family and took beginner classes in Russian and Kazakh.

"In 2009, I went to Mongolia to teach the English language for the first time and I did a research project with Kazakh falconers in Bayan-Olgii. When I graduated from college, I received a Fulbright Scholarship to continue my research in

Kyrgyzstan for a year. During that time, I visited Almaty a lot and realised I wanted to come back," he said.

After obtaining his degree from Stanford University, Keen returned in 2013 for a final summer programme in Kazakh at KIMEP University. He and his fiancée, Adisa Zhanabai, currently teach at the English school he founded.

A supporter of a healthy lifestyle, Keen became a voracious walker. The tours around the city

resulted in his decision to create a map.

"I had studied Russian and Kazakh, but urban Almaty seemed to be written in a language I could not understand. Every day I walked back and forth to school and every day I found a new route, a different way to zig and zag across the town. As I tried to make my new home familiar, there were patterns in the public space that baffled me. What was this ragged stone full of fossils that was used on the faces of all the buildings? What was the story with all the little canals lining the streets and why were some full of water and some full of trash? Why were the trees all painted white?"

"Most of all I like quiet neighbourhoods with old homes and nice views, like Alatau or Gorny Gigant. I love the Golden Quarter with its Stalinist buildings and

squares and alleikas. I love finding new hiking paths in the foothills of the Alatau, especially ones with apple orchards and city views," he said.

The author introduced the Russian word "alleika" (a small alley) into the English language.

"Walking around Almaty, visitors are almost always surprised by the greenery, the constant canopies of trees and the alleyway. These pedestrian paths, lined with benches, lawns and trees, are hard to name. The Russians, those great gardeners, have a precise name for them, though, which is 'alleiya,' or in its more affectionate forms, 'alleika.' The fate of 'alleikas' is important, because park space in Almaty is something that locals really value," he said.

To Keen, every walk is a like a fascinating lesson. A wide range of posts are dedicated to Kazakh

ornaments, graffiti, wooden gates and street musicians. His interest in eagles inspired him to discover sights for falcon lovers.

"It is one of Kazakhstan's big cultural calling cards – the noble hunter with the eagle on his arm. Many people have seen it on the BBC or read about it somewhere when they were kids. When they get to Almaty, they are a bit bummed that falconers are not found on every street corner. Due to this, I worked a guide to falconry-related sites in the city's so-called cultural artifacts. The Alma-Arasan Gorge on the mountains hosts the Sunkar Falcon Centre, the only place to see the professional bird handling in the city," he said.

Keen's project has attracted attention to urban-specific problems such as irrigation ditches, noting the inconspicuous little gutters

have the power to make or break the city.

"Almost every street in the centre of our southern capital is lined with a remarkably-powerful landscaping device – the aryk," he said. "It is effortlessly-charming, gurgling clear mountain spring water that cools the summer air when it is full and when it is empty, it fills with litter and leaves. As lovely as they can be, aryks pose a problem that the city planners must not have anticipated: if you get out of a parked car along the side of the road, how do you traverse the abyss to the sidewalk? Aryk-hopping has become, for many residents, a necessary skill. In response, some entrepreneurs have taken the initiative to build little walkways for their customers, making Almaty perhaps the world capital of teeny-tiny bridges."

SOCIETY

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 13, 2016

New EU Project Aims to Enhance Criminal Justice

By Dmitry Lee

ASTANA – Should every offender really be jailed, or are there alternatives that could better help people change and become productive citizens? Local heads of the EU project “Enhancing Criminal Justice in Kazakhstan” discussed these and other questions in an exclusive interview ahead of the official launch of the project on April 8 at Astana’s Rixos Hotel.

Kazakh authorities have reduced the number of prisoners in the country by 21 percent since 2013 and seven more prisons will shut down by the end of this year, Marat Beketayev, deputy head of the President’s Administration, said during a briefing at the Central Communications Service March 30.

But this is not all: the government is seeking alternatives to both cut expenses and perhaps experiment and restructure its whole criminal justice scheme.



Ben Zengerink

“Probation is cheaper and more effective than incarceration,” said Deputy Team Leader Ben Zengerink, a former probation counsel with 37 years of experience in the Netherlands and Eastern European countries. Zengerink, originally from the Netherlands, is now based in Astana as part of the project.

“In 2015 in the Netherlands, courts ordered 34,119 community sanctions. It would have cost some



William Irvine

273 million euros to have [the offenders] imprisoned, and the total from the community service sentences ended up being only 31 million euros,” he said.

Kazakhstan, a nation of 17 million, is facing perhaps one of the toughest economic challenges in its 25-year history, but is mustering its efforts to continue to develop economically and socially, despite the heavy blows. Reforming the prison system could help

save taxpayers’ money and state budget funds.

“The three-year project has three major components: law enforcement, probation and training,” said Team Leader William Irvine, former head of a prison with 31 years of professional experience in the public prison service in Northern Ireland, including seven years as director and chairman of the Association of Prison Leaders in Northern Ireland and 13 years of international experience in the field of prison reform. Irvine was also director and senior adviser for criminal justice reform projects in Kosovo, Iraq and Georgia.

“The project is hoped to achieve the following key results: facilitate the criminal justice reform analysis, improve multi-agency dialogue on justice reform, further develop criminal justice statistics, support penitentiary policy development, promote an established modern probation system, improve policy and practice on alternatives to cus-

tody and imprisonment, advance prisoners’ rights, enhance the training capacity of law enforcement agencies, strengthen the training capacity of the Academy of Justice, develop prison and probation training capacities, support institutional development of the Centre for Forensic Expertise and promote quality academic research on criminal justice.”

The 5.5-million-euro project is being implemented by Northern Ireland Cooperation Overseas Ltd. (NI-CO), the U.K. Ministry of Justice, Reclasseur Nederland and the National School of Judiciary and Public Prosecution from Poland.

“We are here to assist and counsel. It is also important for the project to have the public’s confidence in the criminal justice system; that’s also equally at the forefront of anything we do and the assistance we give in the next three years, so public awareness of criminal justice is also very important in Kazakhstan.

They’ve come a long way; for instance, last year in January, they changed the criminal and penal code procedures.”

According to Zengerink, the probation system depends on trust, and not everything needs intense control.

“A lot of countries choose not to trust [their citizens] and [have systems that] are based on control rather than trust. The Dutch, for instance, are a trusting society; first we let it happen and then if trust is broken we intensify control. But then we will take measures.”

“Not everybody has to go to prison,” continued Irvine. “If [offenders] are dealt with alternative sanctions, they can still support their family and contribute to society, like pay taxes and become better citizens.”

The project is to attract foreign experts to train probation officers in the near future, although, Zengerink pointed out, there are some 1,300 officers in Kazakhstan already.

Suicide Rates Concerning But Help Is Available

By Kamila Zhumabayeva

ASTANA – Data indicates Kazakhstan reported among the highest number of suicide cases in the world last year. In an interview with The Astana Times, psychiatrist Yekaterina Mironova, the only suicide doctor in the country, shared suicide statistics, causes and prevention measures.

“Our country is developing and it is natural that people go through a certain psychological crisis and of course this is sad and upsetting both for a specialist and a person,” she said.

Among the general population, the prevalence index of suicidal thinking is 9.2 percent and suicide plans, 3.1 percent.

“The rate of completed suicide is higher in men, while the number of suicide attempts is greater among women. Up to 20 suicide attempts account for one completed suicide,” said Mironova.

Daily suicide-related calls represent 10-15 percent of all who contact a helpline. About six-seventeen persons per day visit adult emergency psychological care rooms. As the psychiatrist noted, the patients include those who either had the intention or already attempted some type of suicidal action, only to discover it did not solve their problems.

Capital residents make 30-35 suicide attempts per month. Demonstrative blackmailing, manipulative behaviour and psychoactive substance effects are present

when they attempt to kill themselves, according to Mironova.

“There are people who use suicidal behaviour to manipulate. They do not have a goal to actually kill themselves, but to change the circumstances they are in by influencing people important to them,” she said.

As the doctor explained, suicide can also have biological causes (the presence of some mental disorder) and socio-psychological factors, to which personal human characteristics and psychologically-traumatic situations (possibly thousands of them) apply and can be ‘a starting mechanism.’

Unemployed residents or people with low social status, alcohol abusers, young people who are facing various crisis situations, interpersonal problems, problems within a family, undesired pregnancy, obligation syndrome, social inequality and loneliness are those within the city who are most exposed to suicide risk, said Mironova.

“It is due to the beginning of personality forming accompanied by hormonal changes. Impulsiveness is usually expressed more in adolescents than in adults; basically, therefore, those are not thought out [and have] ‘short circuit’ types of reactions,” she added.

The country has the second highest mortality rate among youth aged 15-24 throughout the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) countries and Central and Eastern Europe.

“Adolescence itself is a crisis

age – changes in hormonal levels and heightened impulsiveness in behaviour which an adult perceives as a small insignificant thing that can be lived through,” noted Mironova. “Teenagers don’t have semitones, meaning they see things either in black or white. That is why everything perceived amidst the body’s hormonal changes are rather different in adults.”

The age is considered critical, however, because it is the first adaptation period for young people, who have never before faced difficulty or expansion of psychological boundaries.

“In one book it was written that all teenagers are a little insane, which is in fact true,” said Mironova.

Suicides in Kazakhstan happen

The emergency psychological care room for children and teenagers on average receives 5-10 visitors per day.

mostly due to family and interpersonal problems, she added.

“If everything is well inside a family, a teenager is provided with psychological help and moral, physical and material support. However, when parents impose their model of ‘successful behaviour’ on children, then order has to be restored within the family,” said the psychiatrist.

Unhappy love, disagreements with parents and fear of the future are among the main causes of child suicide in the world. Some agree

the psychological pressure on children as they prepare for Unified National Testing (UNT) and its results are the cause of a number of suicide cases in the country in late spring and early summer.

“As a psychologist, I declare that arranging a search for cheat sheets is an expression of high levels of mistrust and humiliation. Children are being forced to undress, take off their outer clothing and shoes. However, no one has the right to touch children except family. The tension associated with UNT contributes to suicidal feelings among youth...” said Kazakh Institute of Equal Rights and Possibilities President Margarita Uskembayeva, according to Kapital.kz.

The emergency psychological

care room for children and teenagers on average receives 5-10 visitors per day.

“Some of them are referred there for emotional disorders after the test, which is held in educational institutions, as a psycho-preventive measure and a risk group is referred to adolescent psychologists for consult,” said Mironova.

Constantly talking or thinking about death, deep sadness, loss of interest, trouble sleeping and eating that gets worse, having a “death wish,” taking risks that

could lead to death such as driving fast or running red lights, losing interest in things a person used to care about and talking about being hopeless, helpless or worthless are warning signs that a person may be thinking about or planning to commit suicide, according to WebMD.

Other signs may include putting affairs in order, saying “it would be better if I wasn’t here” or “I want out,” a sudden and unexpected switch from being very sad to being very calm or appearing to be happy and visiting or calling people to say goodbye, reported the website.

“Every religion condemns suicide. A completed suicide psychologically affects at least five to six people within a close circle,” said Mironova.

Those who remain live with psychological trauma until the end of their lives; as a defensive reaction, suicide acts are criticised or often hidden.

“Depression is a person’s trouble, not a fault,” she said.

Implementing suicide prevention programmes, reviewing facts and myths concerning the topic, proper and correct media coverage and creating online communities and support groups could combat any existing social judgement, ignorance and lack of awareness of the problem in Kazakh society, according to an expert.

“People in Kazakhstan are delicate, sincere and are always ready to provide help and support to those who are suffering the thoughts or went through an

attempt to kill themselves. However, many people become afraid because death scares, which is normal and means that the mind is healthy,” added Mironova.

The topic of death often even frightens specialists who provide psychological aid, which is why it is important to fight a suicidal intent by reporting it.

“This in fact is cry for help, a call to pay attention that someone feels bad, tried all methods and could not cope with a situation,” she said.

Often talking openly with individuals can reduce their psychological and emotional tension, removing it from their worries.

“Because they look at everything in a negative way, it’s important to show there are other exits from such a crisis situation and educate a person,” noted Mironova.

The doctor stressed the importance of remembering that any crisis situation is temporary and can be handled with professional help.

“Even if you are feeling bad and there is no one around who could help or support you, there are recourse organisations which you can refer to. For example a helpline is available round-the-clock, free and anonymously.

“Suicide can be prevented and this alone inspires hope. However, it is unfortunately impossible to prevent all cases. Suicide is a profoundly-intimate, individual act, but also a statistically-stable phenomenon typical of society in general,” she said.

Betel KZ Gives Second Chance to Addicts



By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – For alcoholics, addicts and disadvantaged persons, Betel KZ offers a chance to return to a normal life. The organisation provides opportunities through a kind, home-like environment and cooperates with state and private companies. Services are free and treatment is based on workshop activity and interaction with those who were once in the same situation.

“What happened to me does not happen instantly. Everybody wants an instant miracle. You are looking for help, you expect that someone or something will help you and

you will be free of the disease and pain,” said Aidos, a 41-year-old former addict.

Betel KZ strives to be financially independent. Patients manage a household and work in small construction teams, learning how to erect and repair industrial buildings, houses and apartments. The skills help them reintegrate into normal life and get a job in the future.

Like most kids his age, Aidos had a typical childhood.

“My life was very similar to the lives of the other boys, whose parents paid great attention to their education, trying to give the best to their children: honesty, integrity,

respect for elders and good manners,” he recounted in an interview for this story. “My father, an honest Communist, wanted me to become an architect after his business trip to France. He dreamed that I would build the Kazakh version of the Eiffel Tower or the Notre Dame Cathedral.”

“But everything went into oblivion. In 1990’s when racketeering and theft were very popular, I was good at making well-prepared documents and all kinds of scams. In 1992 I went to prison. My family was shocked. After the prison term, I became addicted,” he said.

Many patients, who were successfully treated three to ten years ago, have decided to devote their lives to the organisation and help others return to their normal lives. The main idea is to provide moral standards and healthy habits for the clients. The Betel KZ administration believes patients must solve the problem of brutality through complete soul searching.

“My height is 1.9 metres and I weighed only 59 kilogrammes. It is terrible to think about my health! In 2001 I had an overdose and my mom asked me only one question, ‘Where are your friends?’ The truth is that all my friends were already dead,” said Aidos.

After reaching his lowest point, however, his life has turned around.

“As a result, my wife and I divorced in 2009 and I started a new life in Astana. One day I was told

that there is an organisation in the city which really helps addicted people. Betel KZ helped me, but I have lost so many years. My past years are gone and I can’t get them

back, but I have a future and I have hope. I returned to my human dignity, sensible view of life and relationship with my family. My heart finally found peace!” said Aidos.



TOURISM&EXPO 2017

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 13, 2016

National Geographic Kazakhstan to Help Promote Language, Culture

By Kamila Zhumabayeva

ASTANA – The country's very own National Geographic presented its first two issues March 30 at a roundtable session in the capital's Nazarbayev University. National Geographic Society Vice President of Explorer Programmes Alexander Moen and journalist and traveller Paul Salopek travelled from Washington, DC, to participate in the event.

"National Geographic is a unique magazine that doesn't talk about politics, but about everything related to humanity, the world and surrounding environment. There is no lucrative goal or attracting attention," said advertising department head Aliya Yeskendirova in an interview with The Astana Times.

The magazine's editorial staff began its planning in October, including preparatory work for the inaugural release, hiring staff and working with translators. The magazine's first issue came out in February. National Geographic Kazakhstan will be released once a month, with 11 issues expected in 2016.

"Every person and citizen of our country will have an opportunity to

know and understand what is going on in the world, how it is explored, what happens and changes every day in our environment and what efforts are being made. These are our main goals... mankind plays a huge role in almost everything," said Yeskendirova.

The magazine has also set objectives to cover ecological issues and render informational support for research among Kazakh scientists.

"Our main mission is helping the surrounding environment; helping people to live, making them understand what we do and that we must preserve the land by ourselves. We must help everyone who surrounds us, starting from insects, to animals and people themselves," she added.

The high-quality photos in the magazine and on its website are the works of outstanding people who develop pictures without using Photoshop or similar programmes, noted Yeskendirova.

"Just to find one shot, photographers can live at one location for months or years and the magazine is an enormous work itself," she added. "When people prepare photographs, stories and other materials, they are not simply taken from the Internet; people live and ail with this work.

They present what they see and explore every day," she added.

National Geographic Kazakhstan collaborates with 80 countries and KazMedia organises and covers all the magazine's costs. Delivery is available almost everywhere in the nation through various distributors.

"You can subscribe via Kazpochta or buy it from supermarkets or gas stations. We have set an inexpensive price for a magazine – 600 tenge (US\$1.74), so that people in the regions could buy it," said Yeskendirova.

National Geographic is released in 40 languages throughout the world, with Kazakh becoming the 38th language in which the magazine is published. The magazine is in Kazakh only and the advertising chief says many people write letters asking why it is not available in Russian.

"We considered it important to release the magazine in the Kazakh language because the basic content repeats itself in all countries," she said. "The magazine is published in 80 countries, so it already 'speaks' in all languages. It is amazing that National Geographic is in our native Kazakh language now; this way we promote Kazakhstan's content." She also referred to the importance

of promoting the Kazakh language as a reason for possible projects in other languages.

"I think we must promote our language in our country and nowadays... Of course, people in our country speak different languages. Mainly they are Kazakh and Russian, however, the Kazakh language is the state language in our country," said Yeskendirova. "We will have many projects with the Russian publication as it is well spread over here... There might be projects on our website that are in different languages."

The magazine has certain work planned for upcoming years and is open for various projects. The team intends to arrange a number of scientific expeditions and photo exhibitions and has signed memorandums and agreements with various organisations within Kazakhstan and beyond its borders.

"We have many events planned for the year. These are expeditions, motor rallies, photo exhibitions, contests and the issue of the magazine," said Yeskendirova. "We are ready to collaborate with all organisations that would want to collaborate with us. We also arrange events not only in Kazakhstan, but in the entire world."

Air Astana Boeing 767 Passengers Will Soon be Able to Surf the Web

Staff Report

ASTANA – Air Astana will install the Inmarsat Global Xpress (GX) high-speed broadband Internet system in Boeing 767 planes, starting September 2016. The airline will become one of the first around the world to implement the GX system for its passengers, according to a recently signed contract with air transport IT provider Rockwell Collins.

"As a customer-oriented airline, Air Astana always strives to improve passenger service on the ground and in the air. We are glad about the new Internet access capabilities that the GX system provides to our customers," says Andrei Gulev, manager of Air Astana's commercial engineering department, Forbes Kazakhstan reported. "Following a careful review of competing offers, Air Astana's decision came down to [the fact that] Rockwell Collins offered cost efficient solutions adapted to meet our needs."

Installing the Internet on the first of three Boeing 767 planes will begin in September and on the other two planes in March and September of 2017, news sources report.

Internet will be subject to charge, according to Informburo.kz. Its cost is still undecided.

"The contract cost is commercial information. Internet is subject to charge and its cost is in the development process. The company is considering all options; the new service will not affect ticket costs, this is a service improvement," Air Astana said in reply to Informburo.kz.

Business and economy class passengers will be able to access the Internet, use a variety of applications for sending instant messages and check mail using their personal computers, tablets and smartphones, the airline's press service reports.

"The GX Aviation service opens new possibilities for Air Astana and its customers," says Jeff Standerski, vice president of Rockwell Collins' Information Management Services division, according to Forbes.kz. "The airline's passengers will soon experience what only a handful of people around the world can – the fastest and most reliable in-flight Internet. This service allows Air Astana to improve service, offering new opportunities that were previously unavailable."

Boeing was first to introduce in-flight Internet access technologies in the 1990s by starting the construction of the Connexion Management network, Kursiv.kz reported. However, its development was stopped due to low demand for mobile Internet in those years and the air transportation crisis after September 11 terrorist attacks. Connexion was terminated in 2006.

Rockwell Collins is a pioneer in developing and deploying innovative aviation and high-integrity solutions for commercial and government sectors. Its expertise in flight deck avionics, cabin electronics, mission communications, simulation, training and information management is delivered by a global workforce. The company's service and support network is provided in over 150 countries.

GGG Named EXPO 2017 Ambassador

By Aiman Turebekova

ASTANA – Boxing superstar and unified middleweight world champion Gennady Golovkin, better known in boxing world as GGG, has become an official Ambassador for Astana EXPO 2017.

On March 31, in Washington D.C., Astana EXPO 2017 National Company Chairman Akhmetzhan Yessimov handed over to Golovkin the honour of Ambassador of EXPO 2017.

"The Institute of Ambassadors of EXPO 2017 allows promoting the idea and the values of the exhibition as well as the theme of 'Future Energy.' I am sure that our champion, Kazakhstan's pride, Gennady Golovkin, will adequately represent EXPO 2017 in the global arena.

Gennady's achievements in the field of sport and social life will increase an interest in the exhibition," shared Yessimov, according to a press release from

the Astana EXPO 2017 National Company.

In turn, Golovkin expressed his gratitude for the privilege and promised to represent properly the main ideas of the upcoming event. The Kazakh boxer also urged the youth to take an active part in the promotion and advancement of the project.

Moreover, the formal ceremony was attended by President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev, who congratulated the athlete on

the ambassador status and wished him new achievements and victories. In turn, Golovkin thanked the President for his great contribution and personal attention to development of boxing and sports in general.

Earlier, the honour of becoming ambassadors of EXPO 2017 was awarded to Kazakh cosmonaut Aiddyn Aimbetov and Astana Pro Cycling Team captains and members Vincenzo Nibali and Fabio Aru.

Zhambyl Farmer Offers Unique Kumys Tours, Promotes Regional Tourism



By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – Sauranbai Donenbayev, a resident of the Zhambyl region, has introduced kumys (mare milk) tours as a new tourist attraction. The new wellness tour includes a special treatment programme, swimming, horse riding and other outdoor activities at a resort located near his farm.

"Kumys is in great demand due to its healing properties."

Donenbayev decided to unite his farm with a wellness centre to provide mare's milk for health improvement. The resort is expected to receive up to 40 visitors. The number of tourists can be increased up to 150 peo-

ple in the future, according to Today.kz.

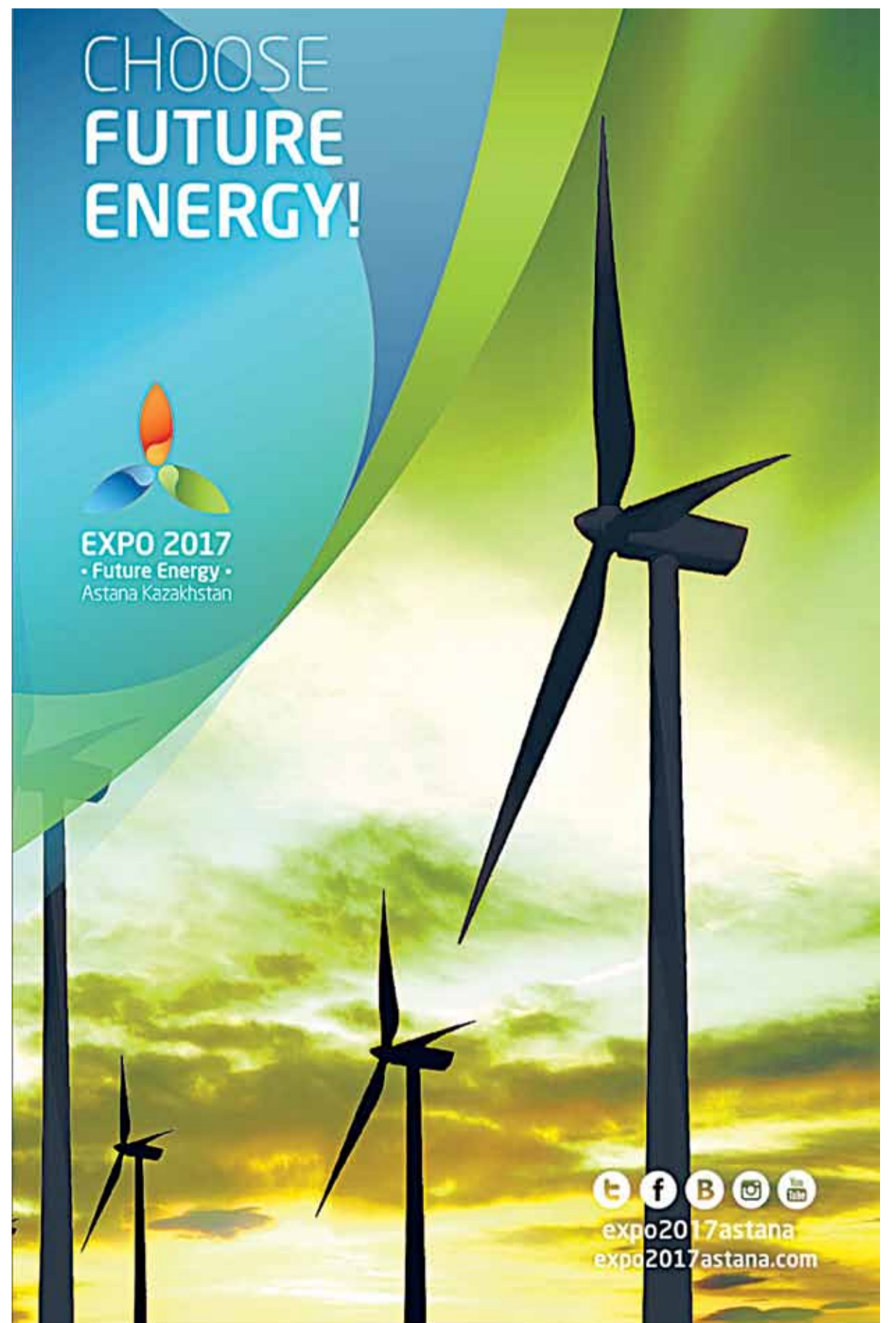
"We launched a project for the construction of a recreation centre on five acres of land. There will be a swimming pool, outdoor facilities and horse riding in the summer. We are pleased to do something helpful for people, at the same time tourism will increase our income. About three

hundred mares provide milk to produce almost half a ton of kumys per day in the summer. The national drink is made in a special manufactory. An experienced technologist prepare kumys using several recipes de-

pending on requests. Most of the products are sent to Astana and Almaty," a farmer said.

The farm produces five kinds of kumys. The entrepreneur is confident that his drink will impress even the most discerning person.

"Kumys is in great demand due to its healing properties. Asau kumys is made in winter and zhasau kumys is popular in summer. We have a 20-tonne container for storage and use special thermometers. Today, the construction of the new project is 80 percent complete. Recently, seven kilometres of power lines were stretched to the farm as part of the Road Map of Business 2020 programme. Now the main task is to develop a tourist route and attract holidaymakers here," said technologist Bazarkul Amangeldykyz.



SPORTS

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 13, 2016

Record 64 Countries Register for Almaty 2017 Winter Universiade

By Anuar Abdrakhmanov

ASTANA – Student athletes from a record 64 countries have signed on to participate in the Almaty 2017 Winter Universiade, the Universiade's organising committee announced April 5.

National athletic federations from Europe, Asia, America, Africa and Oceania have registered for the games.

The participation surpasses the previous record of 52 countries, which participated in the 2011 Universiade in Erzurum. Other high participation games have included 50 countries in Trentino in 2013, 48 in Turin in 2007, 44 in Harbin in 2009 and 42 countries at the 2015 games in Granada and Strbske pleso.

"Winter Universiade in Almaty is in the active phase of the



preparations. All the operational activities follow the requirements of the International University Sports Federation. All functions will be pre-tested in test events before the event. Our goal is to

hold the Winter Universiade in Almaty in an innovative and efficient way. We are confident that the games will leave an important mark on the popularisation of university sports in Kazakhstan,

as well as in the development of sport among youth of all over the world," noted the head of the Organising Committee for the Winter Universiade in Almaty 2017 Asset Abdulyev.

Almaty will host the games from Jan. 29 until Feb. 8, 2017. More than 200 athletes are expected to take part. The competitions will be held in 12 winter sport disciplines in eight venues: biathlon, alpine skiing, curling, speed skating, Nordic combined, cross-country skiing, ski jumping, snowboarding, figure skating, freestyle skiing, ice hockey and short track.

Around 30,000 guests and tourists are expected to visit Almaty for the games. The event will be broadcast in 80 countries.

Registration to participate in the Almaty 2017 Universiade began Jan. 29

European Delegates Praise Universiade 2017 Facilities

By Aiman Turebekova

German USF Sports Director Thorsten Hutsch and head of a delegation from the Netherlands Jules Vereecken recently praised the Universiade 2017 Athletes' Village and the Medeu winter sports complex, reported the press office of the Organising Committee for the Winter Universiade 2017.

"We are looking forward to a great event in the wonderful city of Almaty. The world famous ice rink Medeu, where many world records were set, gives a special touch to the event, as well as the Athletes' Village," stressed Vereecken.

According to the most recent data, about 20 athletes from the Netherlands will take part in the World University Games in 2017.

"I hope the athletes will have a great sport experience on a high quality level, besides a week of many intercultural contacts, a good cultural programme and an exchange be-

tween students on an academic level", said Vereecken.

According to the sports director of the German USF, athletes from Germany tried to gain experience performing in the winter season 2015/2016 to prepare for Winter Universiade 2017.

"Almaty has got a long traditional history in winter sports. All athletes and officials from Germany are looking forward to coming to Almaty. We are so happy about the fact that Almaty has high international level venues in all snow and ice sports," noted Hutsch.

The German representative also noted that the Athletes' Village and most of the venues are conveniently very close to each other.

According to information from the Organising Committee for the Winter Universiade 2017, 54 have countries expressed their intention to take part in the Universiade. Evidently, it will be a new record for the International University Sports Federation in the history of Winter Universiades.

Team Kazakhstan Earns Draw in Spring Friendly Match in Georgia

By Anuar Abdrakhmanov

Kazakhstan's national football team drew Georgia 1:1 in a friendly match March 29 at the Boris Paichadze Dynamo Arena in Tbilisi.

A bit of intrigue ahead of the match was added by the fact that Georgia's team is now managed by Slovak coach Vladimir Weiss, who for the three last years led one of Kazakh Premier League's two top clubs, FC Kairat Almaty and is, therefore, quite familiar with the potential of many Kazakh players.

The first half of the match turned out eventful. The hosts managed to create a number of early threats in

front of Kazakhstan's goal, which were defended by David Loria. The 34-year old veteran goalkeeper, who now plays for FC Irtysh Pavlodar, wore the national team jersey following a five-year break. Georgian players Ananidze and Okriashvili twice seriously threatened Loria's goal in the first half, but in both episodes the goaltender proved his quality.

However, it was the visitors who scored first. Serikzhan Muzhikov's quick run into the penalty area from the right flank resulted in a thoughtful cross to Azat Nurgaliyev, who was left open in the middle and made full use of his chance, making the score 1:0.

It took only a couple of minutes for the Georgians to equalise through Okriashvili's quality strike from just outside the penalty box. This time, Loria did not react in time.

During the half-time break, Loria was substituted by Vladimir Plotnikov for whom it was his debut in the national team. The game proved difficult for him, as the hosts intensified their pressure further. However, the Kairat goalkeeper, 29, played well to confirm his quality. There was a moment when one of the Georgian strikers fell to the ground following a tough challenge from team Kazakhstan's central defenders. The Maltese referee's whistle kept si-

lent. At the end of the match the pressure from the hosts culminated in a number of threats but the Kazakh defence did not allow errors. As a result, the match ended in a draw, 1:1.

"When compared to the previous match [with Azerbaijan], the Georgian team's players are stronger. Almost all players play abroad, many in the Russian Premier League, and many more in Europe. Therefore, the match was interesting for us. I think we showed good football today. We controlled the ball [for long periods] and we had some dangerous strikes too. In general, we came to Tbilisi in search of a positive result and gladly we have achieved," said the visitors' captain Samat Smakov following the referee's final whistle.

For the veteran defender, the match in Tbilisi became the 73th for the national team, which was a new record for the number of matches played for team Kazakhstan.

"First of all, I want to thank my team for a good game. Our goal was to earn a positive outcome. I am grateful to the guys who have secured positive results in the matches with Azerbaijan and Georgia," Kazakhstan's interim head coach Talgat Baysufinov said at the post-match press conference.

Team Kazakhstan continues its preparations for a qualifying tournament for the FIFA World Cup, which will be held in 2018 in Russia. Kazakhstan got into Group E where it will play Poland, Armenia, Romania, Denmark and Montenegro.

Kazakh Boxing Team Wins Full Set of Olympic Bids for First Time

By Anuar Abdrakhmanov

At the end of a qualifying Olympic tournament in Asia and Oceania, which was recently held in Qian'an, China, the men's national boxing team of Kazakhstan won a complete set of bids to the Summer Olympics in Rio. In total, the Kazakh team has now won all the 11 boxing licenses up for grabs. For the first time, Kazakhstan's men's team will be represented at the Olympic Games in all weight categories.

For fresh newcomer from the junior category, Abylaikhan Zhusupov, who not only won a ticket to Rio but also the entire tournament in China, it was the first competition on the adult team's roster.

Despite a minor injury – a dissected eyebrow – and being tired after the flight, Abylaikhan felt heartened.

"I had five fights here, all with very serious rivals. I was a little nervous in my first bout as it is a new level for me. Then I got used to that. I am glad that all our boxers won licenses for the Olympic Games. Ahead, we have a plenty of time to get ready for Rio. I hope that with

the help of our coaches we will be able to go to Brazil in good shape," the young athlete said.

Bronze medallist from the London 2012 Olympics, Ivan Dychko, who also won the tournament in China, noted that Kazakhstan's boxers are aiming high to perform well at the upcoming Summer Olympics in Brazil.

"Once again, boxers from Kazakhstan have proven their leadership in Asia. A full set of licenses, this is a good result. Now it is important to keep this achievement, to come to the Olympics in good shape. We understand and are aware of the responsibility and the importance of the Olympic Games for Kazakhstan. We will prepare for the Olympics with the utmost seriousness," he assured.

"Our athletes fully fulfilled their tasks, demonstrated good boxing and won the licenses for the Olympic Games. The guys gave their all in every match. Now we will concentrate all their attention on the proper readiness for Rio 2016," said Myrzagalai Aitzhanov, the head coach of team Kazakhstan.



Astana Arlans Defeat Uzbek Tigers to Secure Playoffs Spot

By Anuar Abdrakhmanov

The Astana Arlans boxing club inflicted a major 4:1 defeat upon strong rivals Uzbek Tigers April 2 and reached the quarterfinals of the World Series Boxing (WSB), 4:1.

The visitors took the lead before the start of the game, which took place in Ust-Kamenogorsk. Arlans boxer Zakir Safullin had to leave the city shortly before the match due to an undisclosed, "valid" reason. Therefore, a technical victory in the first bout was awarded to his opponent Elnur Abduraimov.

The first into the ring were the boxers out of the 52 kilogramme weight category - Azat Makhmetov from the Astana Arlans and Abrozhon Kadyrov from the Uzbek Tigers. The Kazakh club's boxer won through a technical knockout and re-

stored an equal score in the match. Later, Aslanbek Shymbergenov defeated Mahmoud Gaipov and put the Arlans forward. Another TKO came from the team's debutant Arman Rysbek who, in the 81 kilogramme weight category defeated, Uzbek Shukhrat Abdullaev.

Kamshybek Kunkabayev concluded the Kazakh club's clear victory with a victory against Mirzohidzhon Abdullayev in the 91 kilogramme weight category. The final result was 4-1 in favour of the Kazakh team.

Thus, the Astana Arlans avenged themselves for the first round's defeat in Tashkent when the Tigers crushed the visiting Kazakhs 4:1.

"Of course, we can say that the team has fully completed the task. I am glad that our guys showed a will to win and character. I want to thank all of our boxers and coaches of the club for good work. The Uzbek

team is a serious contender, but this evening the Kazakh boxers were stronger," said the head coach of the Astana Arlans professional boxing club Nurlan Akurpekov.

"On behalf of the Astana Arlans and Professional Presidential Club Astana, I want to congratulate all the fans of Kazakh Boxing with a convincing victory of our team. I think the Arlans fulfilled their promise and presented us with a real festival of boxing. In each of the bouts, we saw a good boxing from our guys and their evident desire to win," said Director General of the Astana Arlans boxing team, Olympic champion Serik Sapiev commenting on the outcome.

The Kazakh club will now face Caciques Venezuela in the WSB quarterfinal.

The Arlans are part of the Presidential Professional Sports Club "Astana."



CAPITAL

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 13, 2016

Bustling Bazaars or Modern Supermarkets? Take Your Pick

By Zhazira Dyussebekova

ASTANA – Every capital citizen has no doubt faced the situation of choosing where to purchase groceries, especially when the to-buy-list is long. The city has a wide range of places to shop, but are they really worth wasting time and money?

It is no secret that during the weekend the heaviest jams are in specific places – near the bazaars. The city's food bazaars are mainly located in three places – near the crossroads of Bogenbai Batyr Avenue and Ualikhanov Street, the Eurasia Market and Alash Highway.

Today's bazaars have evolved from the old-fashioned outside markets which lacked pleasant conditions for shoppers. Of course, there are echoes of earlier days in some markets, especially those on Alash Highway. Most of today's bazaars, however, are spacious buildings with different pavilions for various kinds of food.

There is something really special about bazaars. It is a way to meet the country's culture and see real people with different incomes choosing and negotiating.

Bazaars are well-known and usually chosen for their assortments of fresh dairy, meat, fruits and vegetables and their prices. Those who prefer fresh products straight from the farm should definitely go to bazaars, even though shopping will take longer than expected.

Unlike bazaars, supermarkets are located on almost every street.



Everything shoppers need is in one place and there is no need to see different people to buy different items. Supermarkets are super time-saving, but many people are sure the meat, dairy and vegetables on the shelves are not as fresh.

Several city citizens shared their views on the issue with the Astana Times.

Bolat Zhunusov, a 31-year-old IT specialist from Ust-Kamenogorsk, has been living in the capital for several years.

“Me and my family, we usually go to the outside market on the weekends, which is located near Eurasia Shopping Centre. There we buy sour cream, cottage cheese and greens. Well, everything from the farms that is fresh. Such products cannot be bought in the supermarkets. I understand that there is a risk to get bad-quality products, but I have been shopping there for 3.5 years,” he said.

He also shared his hint. During the fall, he buys dozens of kilo-

grammes of fresh cottage cheese from the farms and freezes it for his family to enjoy throughout the winter.

“Also, two times a month we go to Magnum Supermarket (23/1 Alash Highway) to buy groceries, household chemicals and other necessary stuff. And, of course, we go to small shops to make small everyday purchases,” he added.

Aleksander Skripachenko, 35, is a construction firm worker.

“I think there are different

products in the supermarkets and bazaars. You have to know where to buy what. I buy dairy in Eurasia Market, meat too. But I know there are places where they are cheaper, for example in Artyom. I think meat in Eurasia is good as well. When it comes to fruits and vegetables, it is better to go to the Artyom bazaar,” he said.

He is certain supermarket prices are higher.

“But some things are better to

buy there,” he said. “For example, batteries and stuff like that.”

Karlygash Dosymbetova, a 25-year-old state employee, says she, too, balances her shopping between bazaars and supermarkets.

“Well, bazaars are attractive because there you can taste everything and you can negotiate on the prices. But I work until late at night and for me it is more convenient to go to supermarkets rather than bazaars, because they are closer and they work until late night or even 24 hours. And most of the supermarkets in Astana have special deals. You can buy bags of rice and bottles of sunflower oil for special prices. Household chemicals, toilet paper and things like that can be bought with the discount as well. As I know, there are no such offers at the bazaars,” she said.

Sholpan Sarlybayeva is a 53-year-old accountant with a local company.

“We live on the left bank, so we don't go far to such places as Artyom. Usually we shop at Keruen Shopping Mall and Khan Shatyr Entertainment Centre to buy everyday products. And near our house we have a little shop where we buy vegetables and fruits. We prefer to buy there. We don't have time to go to bazaars – too far,” she said.

Whether close or far, cheap or expensive, high-quality or low-quality, the most important thing is health and time. To make the right choice, shoppers should definitely try everything first.

The city has bazaars for items other than food. There are outside markets for construction materials and car parts as well.

City Offers Array of Cinema Choices

By Zhazira Dyussebekova

ASTANA – Capital movie-goers can choose among six cinemas that show a combination of foreign and locally-produced films.

Kinopark, the country's biggest chain, has theatres in three malls. The chain is the largest in Central Asia, according to its website.

Kinopark 6 is on the third floor of Mega Mall. The number in its name indicates the number of screens, one of which is the VIP room with extra-comfortable armchairs and fewer seats. The complex occupies more than 2,000 square metres and can accommodate 630 people at the same time.

The price depends on the time of day and varies from 1,000 tenge (US\$2.91) in the morning to 1,900 tenge (US\$5.53) in the evening. After midnight, admission is usually 1,200 tenge (US\$3.50). The range for children is 800-1,000 tenge (US\$2.33-\$2.91).

Kinopark 7 in Keruen Mall has the only IMAX screen in the city in addition to five regular screens and a 3-D hall. Opened in 2009, it

measures 4,300 square metres and has seating for 1,518. All theatres in the Kinopark chain charge the same admission, although IMAX tickets are a little pricier. Those who wish to see one of the spring's most anticipated films, “Batman vs. Superman: Dawn of Justice,” on the bigger screen will have to pay minimum of 1,400 tenge (US\$4) before noon and maximum of 3,500 tenge (US\$10) in the evening.

Situated on the highest floor of Sary-Arka Shopping Centre, Kinopark 8 offers the most screens in the city. Its eight halls can accommodate 120-350 people and admission to the VIP room ranges from 1,500-2,500 tenge (US\$4.36-\$7.28). Kinopark 8 was the only theatre showing films in their original version without Russian dubbing, but the service is no longer available.

All the theatres in the chain have special offers such as Super Tuesday (except for public holidays), when all adult tickets are 800 tenge (US\$2.33); children, 400 tenge (US\$1.17). As expected, it is a busy time. Those who wish to

watch several films in one day opt for Boundless Monday when one ticket for all movies can be purchased for 1,500 tenge (US\$4.37).

Khan Shatyr Mall is home to Star Cinema, with six screens, including a special 3-D hall for children and VIP room, in its second-floor location. Prices for adults are 900-3,000 tenge (US\$2.62-\$8.74) and 600-1,200 tenge (US\$1.75-\$3.56) for children. VIP seats are always 4,000 tenge (US\$11.65).

Arman Movie Theatre in Asia Park Mall has five 3-D halls with 497 seats. It is part of the Arman chain, which also has three theatres in Almaty and one in Kostanai. Ticket prices vary from 800-1,400 tenge (US\$2.33-\$4.07) for adults and 600-900 tenge (US\$1.75-2.62) for children.

Arsenal Cinema is the only theatre on the city's right bank, not far from the railway station. Prices for adults are 600-1,400 tenge (US\$1.75-4.07); children can enter for 400-600 tenge (US\$1.16-2.04). The cinema is also known for a popular bowling centre in the same location.

Astana Offers Study Centres for Urdu, Farsi, Korean, Japanese and Putonghua

By Zhazira Dyussebekova

ASTANA – Knowing European languages today is not unusual. With available English language centres and Western culture spreading throughout the world, almost everyone under 40 knows at least a few words in English. The ability to communicate in less-prevalent languages, however, can be quite an asset and the offer to understand new cultures and increase one's self-esteem is a plus.

Languages of the world word cloud illustration. Word collage concept.

The city has several centres which provide opportunities to learn new languages, a rarity for Kazakhstan. None of the courses listed in the article has age restrictions and most are free, so readers shouldn't miss the chance to learn another language at virtually no cost. Knowing Russian would be great for beginners, as most of the instructors speak Russian in addition to the language they teach.

Eurasian National University offers a wide range of language-learning options through its international relations faculty. Urdu, the official language in six states of India and lingua franca of Pakistan, is among the offerings. Urdu was mainly developed under the influence of the Persian and Arabic languages. The teacher is Aigul Khazhmuratova, a PhD in international relations. The free courses, open to all and available both for beginners and continuing levels, start every September. The contact number is +77013566320.

The cultural centre at the Iranian Embassy offers free courses in Persian (Farsi). The language is primarily spoken in Afghanistan, Iran, Tajikistan and some regions which historically were under Persian influence. According to web sources, around 110 million people speak Farsi. The centre provides students with the chance to learn the language with native speakers. Similar to Urdu, people study in groups at different levels. The centre is located at 16 Oitogan Street, but the courses



are given at the Eurasian National University. The courses are free with a registration payment is 5,000 tenge (US\$14.66). The contact number is +77016211612.

The Korean Cultural Centre also offers language courses with native speakers. The centre advises those who are interested to follow posts on its social network sites and website, kaz.korean-culture.org, for enrolment dates.

“We have Korean language courses at the beginner and intermediate levels. We have spring (March-June), fall (September-December) and summer (June-August) semesters. They are free of charge, but we have a registration fee, which is 5,000 tenge (US\$14.66) at the moment. Plus a student has to pay 5,000 tenge (US\$14.66) for the textbook. But we have a condition; if a person attends all the lessons and completes the course successfully, we return the registration fee to him,” said centre representative Gulnar Aubekerova.

The Korean Cultural Centre is located at 13 Imanov Street, Nursaulat-2 Business Centre. The contact numbers are +77022030195 and +7 (7172) 901113.

Chinese language may not be considered wide-spread and those interested in studying it will definitely not see learning centres on every corner of the city. There are several options for those who

would like to study it, however, including Confucius Institute under Eurasian National University, which offers courses free of charge. Students can learn Putonghua, or Standard Chinese, also known as Modern Standard Mandarin or simply Mandarin, from native speakers.

“We have two semesters per year. The first one is from September-December. The registration period starts in August and usually goes for two weeks. We don't have any age restrictions,” said institute representative Almira Tlegenova.

The centre is located at 19a Momishuly Street, 4th floor. The contact number is +7(7172) 490978.

The Kazakhstan-Japan Centre for Human Development offers a great opportunity to study the Japanese language through courses that start twice a year – September and February. The centre has both native speakers and local teachers. Unlike the previous options, the courses are not free; one semester costs 47,000 tenge (US\$137.80), including a fee for textbooks. The centre is located in KazGUU University, office 217. The contact number is +7 (7172) 467374.

There are, of course, numerous smaller and bigger training centres which offer a variety of more traditional language studies, from English to French and others.

Renting in Astana: What to Look For, Where to Go

Continued from Page B8

The challenge here, especially for newcomers, is that in Astana people in general and taxi drivers especially, for some miraculous reason, remember the names of almost all apartment complexes in the city. That is, every building has an official name and people try to memorise them all, rather than navigating by intersections and street names. For instance, Astana's Grand Alatau complex scrapes the sky in the central park area; the Northern Lights resemble the Grand Alatau but pierce the morning fog on the left bank right alongside Keruen Mall. If your building isn't as well known – like the Meruert complex, the second building behind Keruen Mall – you can navigate by the closest

big landmark. With Astana raising new buildings each year – recently, the Millennium Park building right behind the Independence Palace – residents and drivers will always have an opportunity to exercise their memories.

Know Your Shopping, Entertainment and Transportation Options

After you determine where you want to live, you need a little knowledge of the area. If you are looking for a place close to a shopping mall, then it has to be on the left bank – where Astana's architects put all the city's shopping malls. Keruen, Khan Shatyr, Sary Arka, Asia Park and Mega are all on the left bank, right in the mix of state-run compa-

nies, government buildings, ministries and luxurious residential condominiums and hotels. As for the right bank, there are smaller groceries in almost every residential building. There is absolutely no trouble finding small household items, late-night chechil or snacks.

Astana boasts some new buses with Wi-fi and television sets packed with infomercials. They're quite frequent, with schedules and routes that cover the entire city. The fare as of today is 90 tenge (US\$0.26). However, for a more convenient ride, there are taxi companies that on average charge about 500-700 tenge (US\$1.5-2) to move throughout city. Taxis are cheap and you can always raise your hand to hail a cab along the road for the same 500-700 tenge to get a ride home when in a hurry.