



Kazakh population reaches 18 million



By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev announced at the recent Fifth World Kurultai of Kazakhs that Kazakhstan's population had reached 18 million.

"In 1991, when Kazakh independence was declared, the share of ethnic Kazakhs was only 40 percent of the state's population. When I participated in elections, I was afraid to think what percent of the votes we would get. Now, the share of ethnic Kazakhs is more than 70 percent. Praise the Almighty that over the years we have kept the size of Kazakhstan's population. Every year

more than 400,000 children are born. I declare that as of July 1, the (population of Kazakhstan) will be 18 million people," said Nazarbayev.

This number could also increase as a result of a recent presidential order to reduce the red-tape required for Kazakhs to return to their homeland. This news was well received by the more than 800 ethnic Kazakhs from 39 countries who participated in the Kurultai.

The President also announced another order at the event creating the Otdastar Fund to support foreign compatriots.

The new organisation, together with World Association of Ka-

zakhs, will soon determine the measures for resettlement of Kazakhs and their relationship with their compatriots.

"We helped the Bulgarians, Chechens, who were resettled from the North Caucasus at the proper time. Why can't we help our native Kazakhs? Kazakh business people are encouraged to participate in the creation of a fund of compatriots. The leadership of the Kurultai, the presidential administration and the government are ordered to create the above-mentioned fund," President Nazarbayev said.

"The figures are positive. We have not published figures by regions for a long time. In general, the census, you know, is held once

every ten years, but information on the operative data is collected regularly," First Vice-Minister of National Economy Ruslan Dale-nov said.

"We get data on how many people were born, minus how many came, left and so on. We will post such information using an online counter, which will help to monitor the population," he added.

Chairperson of Committee on Statistics of Ministry of National Economy Nurbolat Aidapkelov gave more specific data, saying, "according to the latest figures, the population was 17,994,000 people as of May 1. In general, we believe the population will have increased by 241,000 people this year."

Astana celebrates 19th birthday

By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – A variety of cultural events took place July 6 in Astana as the capital celebrated its 19th birthday. Kazakhstan President Nursultan Nazarbayev kicked off July 4 the celebrations in the capital during a flag raising ceremony.

Astana plays a key role in the history of independent Kazakhstan, noted the President. "Astana is a symbol of our opportunities, greatness and unity of the people. We are the only nation that created a city from scratch at the turn of the century, the pearl of the Central Asian region. We love Astana and

admire of it. I congratulate you on the Astana Day! I wish prosperity, health and all the best that you want for yourself!" he said in his opening remarks.

He recalled the nation's ancestors who made it possible to live in peace and unity and urged people to remember what they did.

"We are a happy generation who, unlike our ancestors, did not witness the first and second world wars, repressions and famine. We may think sometimes that it has always been that way, but it was not. Our happy generation lives under clear sky due to the victory of our fathers, who gave this to us," Nazarbayev noted.

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EXPO 2017 welcomes one millionth visitor

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – EXPO 2017 received its one millionth visitor July 11.

Approximately 1.8 million tickets have been sold and 921,293 people visited the exhibition in the first month, said Astana EXPO 2017 National Company Executive Director Beibut Karymsakov at a July 10 press conference.

Nur Alem, the Kazakh national pavilion, as well as the South Korean, Russian and German pavilions are among the most visited pavilions.

"The total number of visits to international pavilions is 5.96 million and 834,579 visits have been registered to the main exhibition facilities, including 303,007 people who visited the Nur Alem national pavilion," said Karymsakov.

In addition, 160,000 people including schoolchildren, students, pensioners, those with physical disabilities and members of vulnerable social groups have visited the expo at a reduced rate and 407,700 people, including 17,700 children from regions.

According to the statistics, the number of foreign visitors has reached 130,000.

"The proportion of foreign visitors is 14 percent of the total. Around 35,500 tourists came from Russia, 19,000 people from Germany and 11,500 people from China. There's an open sky mode and 21 airlines operate flights to 28 international destinations," he added.

The occupancy rate at hotels is 60 percent "which is three times higher than last year."

Additional ticket options from July 1-10 and tickets for evening visits from 6.30 p.m. until the close of the exhibition were introduced, said Astana EXPO 2017 National Company Commercialisation Office Director Daulet Yerkinbayev.

According to the results, 25,000 people purchased tickets for evening visits and 14,500 people used a 3+1 option and a youth tariff. Children up to 17 were permitted free and more than 50,000 people visited the expo on weekends.

"To date, 1.8 million tickets have sold out. About 40,000 souvenirs worth over 80 million tenge (US\$244,880) items were sold. This indicates a high interest among the visitors to the souvenir products," said Yerkinbayev.

No attempts to enter the area with fake tickets were registered.

"Around 670 different incidents, including 12 offences have been registered at the security centre. Ninety percent of incidents were missing children incidents. This situation is understandable as there are a lot of fascinating exhibits and children are distracted easily," said Astana EXPO 2017 National Company Security Department Director Rustem Chakenov.

Also, 1,031 cultural, entertainment and business events and 84 protocol events attended by heads of state, ministers and international pavilion commissioners have been held as part of the exhibition so far.

Senate elections fair and transparent, say international observers

By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – Sixteen senators representing 14 regions as well as Astana and Almaty were elected June 28 to the upper chamber of the Kazakh Parliament in elections which international observers deemed fair and transparent. The Central Election Commission

(CEC) announced the results the following day.

"Based on the protocols compiled by the election commissions in the regions, Almaty and Astana regarding the voting results, the Central Election Commission of Kazakhstan recognises the elections held in 14 regions of Kazakhstan and Almaty and Astana," said CEC Secretary Bakhyt Meldeshev.

Thirty eight candidates, comprised of incumbent and former senators, deputy mayors and governors, political party representatives, regional administrations (maslikhats) and individuals from the private sector, competed for the 16 open seats.

Nearly 518 observers, including 172 international observers and 244 representatives of foreign and

Kazakh media, monitored the proceedings. They included mission representatives from the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), Parliamentary Assembly of Turkic Speaking Countries (TURKPA) and Cooperation Council of Turkic Speaking States (Turkic Council).

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Little progress in Syria talks but negotiators agree to continue Astana meetings



Participants of the Astana Process peace talks on Syria sit at the negotiation table for the concluding late evening session.

By Dana Omirgazy

ASTANA – Participants of the fifth round of the Syrian talks wrapped up an inconclusive second day at the negotiating table in Astana July 5, after attempting to finalise the boundaries of the de-escalation zones in Syria and break the deadlock over who will police them.

The latest round of peace talks on Syria took place in the Kazakh capital July 4-5 to seek the end for violence in the Syrian conflict, where negotiators from Russia, Turkey, Iran, the Syrian Arab Republic, the Syrian armed opposition, the United Nations as well as the observing states of the U.S. and Jordan held a string of closed-

door meetings to discuss seven documents on de-escalation zones in the war-torn Arab country.

No documents were signed during the talks but the sides adopted a provision on a joint working group, which was tasked to hammer out details of a plan for de-escalation zones.

"We did not succeed in establish-

ing the de-escalation zones directly," Russian President Vladimir Putin's Special Representative on a Syrian settlement Alexander Lavrentiev acknowledged, adding, however, that safe areas already de-facto existed on the ground.

Commenting on the modest outcome of the talks, Kazakh Foreign Minister Kairat Abdrakhmanov admitted there was "room for further improvement in certain areas." But he also argued that each round of talks in Kazakhstan "yields concrete results, which have positive impact on the lives of hundreds of thousands of Syrians."

As a host of the international negotiations, Abdrakhmanov praised "the tireless work of the Astana Process participants", which has paved the way for "a gradual, but significant progress".

He also urged the parties to the Syrian conflict to refrain from activities that would undermine existing successes toward peace, noting "there is no military solution, ... and, therefore, dialogue is the only path to peace."

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Nazarbayev meets diplomatic corps

By Malika Orazgaliyeva

ASTANA – President Nursultan Nazarbayev met July 3 with the heads diplomatic missions and representations of international organisations accredited in the country. The meeting, which also included top officials of the country's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, was timed to coincide with the 25th anniversary of Kazakhstan's diplomatic service.

"In the first years of independence, we had no experience interacting with the other countries. Kazakhstan did not have its diplomatic service. There was an acute shortage of diplomatic personnel," he said.

Nazarbayev recalled that those problems were accompanied by a complex socio-economic situation in the country.

"In a short period of time, we have created our diplomatic corps and began to send our diplomats to foreign states. After a quarter of a century,

I can say that the domestic foreign policy has been formed," he underlined.

The President noted that during the first years of independence, Kazakhstan managed to preserve its territorial integrity and national independence, as well as create strong guarantees of security.

"Today, Astana plays a leading role in the international anti-nuclear movement and significantly contributes to ensuring strategic stability and justice in the world," he stressed.

In addition, Nazarbayev noted that Kazakhstan is the initiator of projects within the framework of regional economic integration and cooperation.

"In general, Kazakhstan's multi-vector foreign policy, as well as our international initiatives have found wide support and fame throughout the world," he noted.

Nazarbayev also spoke of Kazakhstan's friendly relations with the outside world.

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NATION

WEDNESDAY, JULY 12, 2017

Government approves tourism development concept

By Dana Omirgazy

ASTANA – Kazakhstan’s government approved June 27 a Concept of Tourism Development until 2023, which incorporates international best practices in state support of tourism and reconfigures some established tourist clusters.

Presenting the document, Minister of Culture and Sports Arystanbek Mukhamediyul noted that the concept analysed the international experience of some countries that have defined tourism as one of the priority directions of economic development. The analysis showed a number of the most effective measures of state support for tourist activity.

“All these examples can be called successful, both in terms of giving a powerful impetus to the development of the tourism industry in the country, and



taking into account the return of public investment. Given the priorities of the Concept of the Cultural Policy, approved by the President’s decree, as well as the implementation of the 86th step of the Plan of the Nation, tourist clusters have been revised, their

names have been changed and a sixth cluster has been added,” the minister explained.

The Astana tourist cluster has been divided into urban and rural sections. The Astana – Heart of Eurasia cluster includes the city of Astana. The Unity of Nature and

Nomadic Culture goes beyond to include the Ulytau State Nature Reserve and the Northern Trans-Balkhash area.

The Akbulak International Tourist Centre, Zhongar-Alatau National Park, Kulsai Kolderi National Park, the Kara Dala Hydrotherapy Resort Zone and Khan Tengri Peak have been added to the cluster named Almaty – Free Cultural Zone of Kazakhstan.

Aksu-Jabagly State Nature Reserve and the Kaskasu Mountain Resort joined the Revival of the Great Silk Road cluster.

In the Caspian Gates cluster (the Mangistau region and part of the West Kazakhstan and Atyrau regions), beach tourism and cultural tourism, including tours, will be developed.

The Pearl of Altai cluster (the northern and eastern parts of the East Kazakhstan region) will be positioned as the World of Natural

Wonders and a centre of ecological tourism.

“This concept is planned to be implemented in two phases: 2017-2019 and 2020-2023. The plan of measures to implement the concept until 2023 will serve as a tool for solving specific problems,” the minister said.

Prime Minister Bakytzhan Sagintayev noted that the concept has been sufficiently developed.

“The presence of the secretary general of the World Tourism Organisation at the meeting speaks to the importance of developing the tourist industry,” Sagintayev said, referring to the conference titled “Tourism and Future Energy: Unlocking low-carbon growth opportunities” and held with the participation of Secretary-General Taleb Rifai on June 26-27.

“This is an ambitious task, a challenge for the government. We must work together. We should not rely only on the Ministry of Culture and Sports.”

NATIONAL NEWS IN BRIEF

Commercial Real Estate (CRE) Central Asia 2017, with the participation of approximately 15 Central Asian city mayors, will be held Oct. 19-20 in Astana, said forum organisers at a July 4 meeting.

“A meeting of mayors of cities to discuss urban development issues is scheduled. The complex development of cities, which affects the investment attractiveness of the region, and the exchange of experience in infrastructure development are also on the agenda,” said forum manager Aliya Serikpayeva.

The event will gather real estate experts to provide an overview of current and planned projects, share the most up-to-date market statistics and present case studies across Europe and Central Asia.

Six alternative energy stations, including three solar stations, two wind power plants and a biogas plant, will be constructed by 2020 in the Karaganda region, reported Vlast.kz. “Solar stations with a capacity of 40-100 megawatts will be located in the Saran, Aktogai and Shet districts. Wind power plants with a capacity of 10-60 megawatts will be situated in the Karkaralinsk district and Osakarovka village. A biogas plant will be constructed in the Abai district,” said Karaganda Region Deputy Akim (Governor) Anatoly Shkarupa. A strategy created to develop renewable and alternative energy in the region indicates the usable share of alternative energy sources should exceed 3 percent of total energy consumption by 2020.

A rehabilitation centre accommodating 200 individuals with physical challenges is expected to open as part of the public-private partnership in Shymkent, according to the akimat (city administration) press release. “More than 31,000 citizens registered have musculoskeletal system diseases, 8,000 people have problems with eye health, 5,000 people are diagnosed with hearing loss and more than 15,000 people have mental disabilities,” said employment and social programmes coordination department head Mukhit Otarshiyev. One hundred and four special road signs, 29 special signposts, 107 pedestrian signs and 87 traffic lights were installed to create an accessible environment at the transport infrastructure facilities. Seventeen wheelchair accessible and 33 social taxis also offer services in the region.

Fifty-two educational facilities including 32 schools and 17 nursery schools were commissioned as part of the Nurlı Zhol programme, said National Economy Ministry Economic Development Department Director Yerzhan Kazanbayev at a June 29 briefing. Ten schools were constructed in the Almaty and South Kazakhstan regions, five in the Zhambyl and Aktobe regions and three in the Karaganda, Kyzylorda and North Kazakhstan regions each. There are plans to eliminate three-shift training and reduce the number of buildings in a state of emergency by 2018. This year, 77 billion tenge (US\$238.6 million) will be allocated for the construction of 91 schools and 19 nursery schools.

Twenty-two species of fish were recovered in the Aral Sea as part of the From Kattegat to the Aral Sea project implemented by Danish fishermen led by Kurt Christensen and local authorities, said Kyzylorda Region Akim (Governor) Krymbek Kusherbayev at a July 4 International Conference on Fisheries in Kyzylorda. “Large-scale measures were taken to preserve the northern part of the Aral Sea; as a result, the fishery in the Aral Sea has risen to a new level and is developing dynamically due to the initiative of the head of state,” he added. The fish catch in the Aral Sea, which reached 8,000 tonnes per year, is exported to Azerbaijan, Denmark, Georgia, Poland and Russia. Three of the eight local fish processing plants have a Eurocode certificate to export fish products to Europe. The volume of production has increased by 65 percent in the past four years and product export increased three-fold in the region.

Prosecutor General’s Office introduces crime activity map



Prosecutor General’s Office Legal Statistics and Special Records Committee Chairperson Bagdat Mussin.

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – An interactive crime map on the basis of Krisha.kz, an online home search service, was launched June 20 with the participation of Legal Statistics and Special Records Committee of the Prosecutor General’s Office.

A detailed map of the cities of Kazakhstan is provided by 2GIS, an international cartographic company, according to the office’s press service.

“We have interactive maps on our website where the statistics of criminal and administrative violations throughout the country is available. However, we decided to implement a separate joint project because Krisha.kz is the largest and most popular real estate

website in Kazakhstan. We offer our people the innovative services, which have no analogues. We plan to implement such a service on the Kolesa.kz website,” said Prosecutor General’s Office Legal Statistics and Special Records Committee Chairperson Bagdat Mussin.

Housing search service users will be able to learn about the crime situation in any district of the city.

The committee faced unpopularity with the Infopublic.pravstat.kz portal and the priority task was to increase the value of information and its use for the benefit of society.

A reported offence appears on the map of the statistics committee online as soon as it is registered in the Unified Register of Pre-trial In-

vestigations. The interactive map is updated once a day.

A more detailed zoning, which will provide a general idea of the criminal situation in neighbourhoods and yards will be provided on the map in the future.

“We constantly strive to provide the most useful information for our users to make the right decision when buying or renting real estate. We are glad to support the initiative of the General Prosecutor’s Office and implement a unique project. Our users can assess the situation in the locations or in the district as a whole while choosing housing and what security measures should be taken care of in advance,” said Krysha.Kolesa.Market Chief Executive Officer Nikolai Babeshkin.

The developers of the project do not expect any significant changes in the cost of housing related to crime statistics. They believe that an opportunity to monitor the dynamics of crimes in cities will encourage residents to take control of the work of the apartment owners’ cooperatives and district police officers.

“The service works in test mode since the beginning of the month. We didn’t promote it and it is too early to share the results of its implementation,” he added.

The committee is ready to provide open APIs to other companies and developers interested in using public data that does not contain personal data of residents.

Kazakhstan creating criminal DNA database

By Zhazira Dyusseimbekova

ASTANA – Kazakhstan has begun creating a DNA database of individuals who have committed serious crimes, said Astana Institute of Forensic Expertise biological and chemical examination laboratory head Inkar Tazhigulova.

“At the end of last year, the Law on Dactyloscopic and Genomic Registration was adopted. Under this law, all persons convicted of grave and especially serious crimes will be genotyped. This law will come into force in 2021. To date, the preparatory work is underway. That is, on behalf of law enforcement agencies, all the genetic material found at the crime scene and belonging to unknown persons will now be entered into the database, so that in the future, if there are any suspects or convicts for serious crimes, they will be compared automatically with this whole base,” she said, as reported by inform.kz.

The information will save time and help solve the crimes.

“For the first time, such a database was created in the United Kingdom in 1995 and I was lucky to enter a scientific internship there within the Bolashak Programme last year. The theme of my project

was to study the experience of this country in this matter; that is, to study all the laws and regulations that regulate this process. After I returned home, I joined the working group to create this law. Now, many of our experts are part of the group for the development of subsequent regulatory documents that will regulate this law,” she said.

The Institute of Forensic Expertise currently conducts molecular-gynaecological studies for civil and criminal legal proceedings. In civil cases, the data relates to paternity issues; in criminal cases, crimes against a person, including murder, rape, identification of unidentified remains and similar incidents. Such expertise was previously required only for grave and especially grave crimes. Now, the range of use of this type of investigation is expanding, said Tazhigulova, as it is requested for illegal drug trafficking, theft and other crimes.

She believes everyone should know what DNA is, explaining it is the individual genetic material for every human being and identical in identical twins. A genetic passport is needed for individuals whose professions are associated with a risk to life, such as those involved in law enforcement, the military, pilots and even journalists, said Tazhigulova.

Senate elections fair and transparent, say international observers

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CIS Executive Committee First Deputy Chairperson and mission head Viktor Guminsky marked the high level of organisation. The majority of international observers – 106 of 172 – were from the CIS, which reaffirmed the great interest in the elections, he noted.

“We were working and monitoring the election campaign and course of preparations for the elections since June 14. We acknowledge that the election campaign and procedures were carried out in compliance with the legislation of Kazakhstan. We have not noticed any violations. The elections were free and well organised,” he said at a June 29 press conference.

The Turkic Council mission also gave the elections a positive assessment. Secretary General and mission head Ramil Gasanov noted good organisation and an absence of violations.

“We were actively monitoring voting procedures in Astana and Kokshetau. The procedure complied with the law of Kazakhstan and international standards. Foreign observers had full access at voting stations,” he said.



Photo credit: turkion.org

“As for freedom to vote, we can certainly say there were no obstacles to the work of the electors. Counting was carried out in compliance with the rules stipulated by the legislation of Kazakhstan,” he added.

Calling Kazakhstan “one of the leaders in the Central Asian

region,” TURKPA mission head Mustafa Isen commended the high level of organisation and commitment to democratic principles.

“We believe Kazakhstan will continue serving as an example of democratic development. We visited EXPO 2017 and we are sincerely happy for our Kazakh

brothers who organised an international event at such a high level. In general, we positively assess the organisation and the results of the Senate elections,” he said, as quoted by Kazinform.

The SCO observers agreed with their colleagues.

“The elections were held quietly

and orderly and with a presence of observers from political parties, citizens, civil communities and candidates as well as foreign observers and the media. We have not received any complaints. The election of senators complied with the legislation of Kazakhstan and international obligations, which allows acknowledging them as transparent, credible and democratic,” said SCO Deputy Secretary-General and mission head Wang Kaiwen, as reported by Kazinform.

“Our mission consisted of 12 people. These are representatives of member states of our organisation – representatives of China, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan as well as the SCO Secretariat,” he added.

As part of its visit, the SCO mission also met with CEC members, electors, candidates, representatives of political parties, active citizen groups, the media and delegates from other missions, he noted.

Based on Kazakh election laws, among 47 deputies in the Senate, 32 are elected through an indirect suffrage by electors – deputies of regional administrations, whereas the remaining senators are appointed by the President to ensure the society’s diverse national and cultural structure. This year, 3,242 electors, a 98.3-percent turnout, took part in the elections, noted the CEC.

EURASIA&WORLD

WEDNESDAY, JULY 12, 2017

EXTERNAL NEWS IN BRIEF

A conference dedicated to Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev's article "The Course towards the future: modernisation of Kazakhstan's identity" was held in Ankara July 6 within the framework of the International Organisation of Turkic Culture (TURKSOY), reported Kazinform. The article was published in early April. TURKSOY Secretary General Dyusen Kasseinov, Kazakh Ambassador to Turkey Abzal Saparbekuly, Atatürk Supreme Council for Culture, Language and History President Derya Örs, Turkish Language Association Chairperson Mustafa Kachalin, Turkish Historical Society President Refik Turan and university heads and professors took part in the seminar.

Kazakh Ambassador to Switzerland Zhanar Aitzhanova met in Bern July 3 with Swiss President Doris Leuthard. The sides discussed the current state and prospects of Kazakh-Swiss ties as well as Leuthard's upcoming visit to Kazakhstan scheduled for August when she will take part in the National Day of Switzerland at EXPO 2017. The sides noted the importance of 2017 as one of the most active and fruitful years in the history of the countries' relations. The meeting also covered issues related to energy and science cooperation, including building partnerships between universities in Kazakhstan and Switzerland. Aitzhanova also briefed Leuthard on Kazakhstan's initiatives, economic modernisation and plans to establish the Future Energy international centre on green technologies and investment projects on expo premises once it completes.

Kazakhstan's exhibition "Following the Footsteps of Ancestors" arrived in Poland, where visitors discovered new historic facts about the life of nomadic tribes in Desht-i-Kipchak who travelled to the Old World, reported Kazakh TV. Guests also learned about the important role the tribes played in the Teutonic Battle, in particular a technique that pertained to nomads in which some distracted the enemy's attention, while others brought them to a dead end. As part of their expedition, scientists also studied Karaites, another tribe that once inhabited Desht-i-Kipchak, and took samples for genetic tests to identify kinship ties. The expedition route will travel to Germany, France and Italy.

A series dedicated to EXPO 2017 was held June 27 at the World Bank headquarters in Washington, reported Kazakh TV. Organised by Kazakh native Gulnara Febres, who has worked at the World Bank for 22 years, the events were held to familiarise people with Kazakhstan and speak about its culture and traditions, as well as the three-month international exhibition. She gathered a team of Kazakh enthusiasts and students to prepare the line-up. After several months of hard work, they presented a rich programme of concerts, seminars, workshops and Eurasian and national cuisine.

Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev signed a decree July 5 ratifying the agreement inked between Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan Dec. 26 aimed at developing economic cooperation within the framework of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU). Under the terms of the agreement, Kazakhstan will provide Kyrgyzstan with \$100 million in economic assistance. The funds will be allocated to implement the measures envisioned by the roadmap on Kyrgyzstan's accession to the EAEU, which include enhancing the customs regime and bringing Kyrgyz sanitary and veterinary norms to the standards required by the organisation.

Nazarbayev meets diplomatic corps on 25th anniversary of diplomatic service

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"Over the years of independence, Kazakhstan has built friendly and constructive relations with all our closest neighbours and all those who are interested in developing cooperation with us," Nazarbayev said.

"We established diplomatic relations with 182 states. Kazakhstan has 57 embassies and 31 diplomatic institutions abroad. In the country, there are 95 foreign embassies and representative offices of international organisations," he added.

Nazarbayev also noted Kazakhstan's priority countries for cooperation.

According to the head of state, Kazakhstan and Russia carry out its relations in the framework of the Treaty on Good-Neighbourliness and Alliance in the 21st Century, as well as the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU).

Strategic cooperation with China is developing constructively, he told. The two countries are implementing large-scale economic projects, ensuring the development of



President Nazarbayev greets members of the diplomatic corps in Akorda.

transit connections by linking Kazakhstan's Nuryly Zhol state programme and Chinese initiative of the Silk Road Economic Belt.

Today Central Asia is experiencing a new stage of development, Nazarbayev said, adding that close attention is paid to joint work with

the Central Asian countries with a focus on common historical, cultural, linguistic roots.

Together with this, the course to strengthen the strategic partnership with the U.S. and the new administration of the White House will be continued. Multilateral re-

lations with the European Union, Kazakhstan's largest trade, economic and investment partner, will be developed further.

Kazakhstan will also continue to cooperate with post-Soviet countries and Turkey. Kazakhstan supports the implementation

of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action on Iran's nuclear programme and the settlement of the situation in Afghanistan. Friendly relations with the countries of the Middle East are also of great importance.

In Nazarbayev's words, Kazakhstan intends to strengthen the Asian vector of foreign policy with a focus on trade, economic, investment and technological cooperation.

Kazakhstan's relations with Latin American and Caribbean partners will continue to be developed.

In addition, Nazarbayev stressed the significance of Kazakhstan's cooperation with global and regional international organisations.

In conclusion, Nazarbayev emphasised that this year Kazakhstan celebrates the 25th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations with the majority of foreign states. In this regard, he congratulated the diplomatic corps and wished them success.

"Today, we meet on the eve of a very bright and beloved by Kazakh people and myself holiday, the Day of Astana. You can see how quickly Astana became a pride of all the people in Kazakhstan. Participation of numerous delegations, guests and tourists in EXPO 2017 makes our capital more recognisable in the world," he said.

Nazarbayev announces opening date for LEU bank in Kazakhstan

Staff Report

ASTANA – Kazakhstan President Nursultan Nazarbayev announced July 3 the opening date for low enriched uranium (LEU) bank in Kazakhstan will be Aug. 29.

"August 29 marks the International Day against Nuclear Tests designated by the United Nations and we planned to hold the 60th anniversary session of the Pugwash movement of scientists aimed at nuclear disarmament [on that day]. The opening ceremony of the first

LEU bank under the auspices of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in Kazakhstan is scheduled the same day," Nazarbayev said as he addressed July 3 the heads of diplomatic missions accredited in the country.

The ceremony will also feature the award for nuclear disarmament established by Kazakhstan, noted the President.

Nazarbayev said instability and tension internationally affirm the urgency of Kazakhstan's efforts in building a nuclear weapon-free world as the main goal of the humankind in the 21st century.

The LEU bank will operate as a mechanism of last resort; in case of unforeseen disruption in a commercial market of uranium, countries that are unable to procure uranium for their nuclear power plants can request LEU from the bank under certain conditions. Thus, it will ensure a global nuclear fuel supply and facilitate nuclear non-proliferation efforts.

The bank will be based at the Ulba Metallurgy Plant in Ust-Kamenogorsk in eastern Kazakhstan. The plant has dealt with and stored nuclear materials for more than 60 years without any incidents.

The idea to establish the LEU bank was initially put forward in 2006 by Sam Nunn, co-founder of the Nuclear Threat Initiative (NTI), a non-profit organisation aimed at strengthening global security by minimising the proliferation of biological, chemical and nuclear weapons.

The IAEA authorised the initiative in 2010 and Kazakhstan volunteered the following year to host the bank. Kazakhstan voluntarily renounced the world's fourth largest nuclear arsenal, which it inherited after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991.

The sides negotiated the terms of a host state agreement since 2011, until the official signing ceremony took place in August 2015 in Astana with the participation of then Kazakhstan Minister of Foreign Affairs Erlan Idrissov and IAEA Director General Yukiya Amano.

The funding is based on voluntary contributions from the NTI, the U.S., the European Union, the United Arab Emirates, Norway, Kuwait and Kazakhstan, which in total equals to \$150 million, believed to be enough to procure 90 tonnes of low enriched uranium.

Book on Kazakh President's peacemaking initiatives presented in Astana

By Aigerim Seisembayeva

ASTANA – Prominent Kazakh diplomat Nurlan Onzhanov presented his book "Peacemaker: The Syrian Knot" during a June 29 international conference commemorating the 25th anniversary of Kazakhstan's diplomatic service. Foreign diplomats, political scientists, experts and journalists attended.

Kazakh Foreign Minister Kairat Abdrakhmanov told the gathering the book is devoted to Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev's efforts to reach a peaceful settle-

ment in Syria and his central role in easing tensions between Russia and Turkey last year.

The book includes excerpts from Nazarbayev's talks with world leaders and heads of international organisations in addressing issues, such as the Syrian crisis and the conflict between Moscow and Ankara.

Analysing the mediation activities of the Kazakh leader on the Syrian and Russian-Turkish issues in conjunction with Kazakhstan's other international initiatives, the author concludes Nazarbayev is driven by a desire for peace and trust in the international community.

The book also presents the President's ideas regarding the Islamic world's development and focuses on the main threats to the Muslim ummah: the lack of unity, internal strife and conflicts. The growing tension between Islamic countries increases the importance of the Kazakh and Turkish leaders' joint initiative on Islamic Reconciliation presented during the summit of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in Istanbul in 2016.

The event participants agreed that Nazarbayev's proposals to more strongly equate the concepts

of "Islam" and "progress" are timely and important for future generations.

The book covers events related to the Syrian crisis from its origins in 2011 to June 2017. It provides answers to many questions: What or who contributed to the conduct of inter-Syrian talks in Astana? How did the long process of restoring relations between Moscow and Ankara take place? What is President Nazarbayev's role in all these processes?

The initiative of Russian, Turkish and Iranian leaders to launch the inter-Syrian talks in Astana

opened the way for a ceasefire in Syria, the book asserts. These countries continue to make efforts to implement the agreements reached in Astana. Moreover, the Astana platform is a complement to the Geneva Process as Kazakhstan supports the holding of negotiations at both venues.

The need for parties inside and outside of Syria to unite their efforts for the resolution of the conflict is a main theme of the book, which is geared toward historians, political scientists, students and others interested in politics.

Little progress in Syria talks but negotiators agree to continue Astana meetings

Continued from Page A1

"On behalf of the Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres and of everyone present here, I want to reiterate how much we appreciate the generous and effective hospitality of the Kazakh government and of His Excellency, the President – and by the way I take advantage since tomorrow is his birthday and the Astana Day to make our own best wishes," UN Secretary General's Special Envoy for Syria Staffan de Mistura said at the end of the talks on July 5.

"We from the UN do appreciate the persistence, the determination the constant hard work of the Astana Guarantors and all the countries who are being involved in this ef-

fort of de-escalation of violence and the strengthening of the ceasefire in Syria. We have tried already three times you know with the ceasefire in Syria in the last period of the last three years, so we really want to give a chance to what is being done here and we believe that efforts have been producing progress," he said.

"We have some experience about this," de Mistura said. "In Geneva, we have seen more than once we are familiar with the fact that the complexity of a conflict like this require a lot of patience, strategic patience, determination and insisting in wanting to constantly make even small steps in the right direction. Astana is particularly meant for producing a ceasefire, what they call a de-escala-

tion, and that is why we believe that Astana does deserve patience and support, and there is more energy and time required – and we are with them in trying to make sure this will happen."

The next round of talks on Syria will be held the last week of August in Astana, according to the joint communique of guarantor countries on the results of the fifth round of talks.

The talks' participants noted the importance of the Astana meetings in facilitating the Geneva Process. The next Geneva process talks were to take place July 10.

The guarantor countries also decided to hold the next meeting of the joint working group Aug. 1-2 in

Iran and communicated the importance of quick, safe and unhindered front access to zones affected by the conflict.

Over the two days of talks, the sides focused on the identification of four de-escalation zones, the memorandum on the establishment of which became the main result of May 3-4 round of the Astana process. This time, nine representatives of the armed Syrian opposition arrived in Astana. However, Mohammad Alloush, who headed the opposition delegation at previous talks in Astana, did not attend the meeting. Bashar al-Jaafari was chief negotiator for the Syrian government.

Lavrentiev, Turkish Deputy Foreign Minister Sedat Onal and Ira-

nian Deputy Foreign Minister for Arab and African Affairs Hossein Jaber Ansari were present at the Astana Process as guarantors of the Syrian truce. Delegations from the U.S. and Jordan, as well as UN Special Representative for Syria Staffan de Mistura attended the talks.

Previous four rounds of meetings took place in Astana on Jan. 23-24, Feb. 15-16, March 14-15 and May 3-4. During the fourth round of the talks, Tehran, Moscow and Ankara signed an agreement to establish four de-escalation zones in Syria.

According to Lavrentiev, the sixth round may be held earlier than scheduled if conditions for making decisions on the establishment of the de-escalation zones arise.

ECONOMY

WEDNESDAY, JULY 12, 2017

Samruk Kazyna ranks among world’s most transparent sovereign wealth funds

By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – Samruk Kazyna Sovereign Wealth Fund is one of the world’s 20 most transparent sovereign wealth funds, according to the U.S.-based Sovereign Wealth Fund Institute, a global organisation that studies sovereign wealth funds, central banks and other long-term public investors.

With \$67.4 billion in assets under management, state-owned Samruk Kazyna received the maximum ten points based on the institute’s Linaburg-Maduell Transparency Index, which serves as a global standard to assess fund transparency. The methodology is based on ten indicators including managing a website, providing information about the fund’s portfolio and returns, corporate and governance structure and independent annual audited reports.



Photo credit: sk.kz

“We have introduced a high level of transparency and this is clear from the position of Samruk Kazyna in the Linaburg-Maduell Transparency Index. We are also focused on value creation in our portfolio companies and capturing these values through the strategy implementation of our companies. Most importantly, we are party to the Santiago Principles of Corporate Governance, which underscores the importance of governance and a code of conduct at the fund,” said Samruk Kazyna Managing Director for Strategy

and Portfolio Investments Baljeet Kaur Grewal.

She added the fund was close to its global counterparts in another indicator – returns on equity (ROE) – that increased from 3.3 percent in 2015 to 5.5 percent in 2016.

The Santiago Principles, to which Samruk Kazyna committed itself when joining the International Forum of Sovereign Wealth Funds (IFSWF) in 2014, are a set of global standards and guidelines that its 32 members endorse to maintain global fi-

nanacial stability, free flow of capital and a stable investment climate.

“What about the Santiago Principles? Twenty-four principles are categorised in small sections. First, these are legislative issues that establish the legal framework, objectives and jurisdiction of the sovereign fund. The second set of issues deals with institutional framework, corporate governance, risk management, transparency, accountability and financial reporting. The third section is about the structure of

National companies of Kazakhstan boost net profit 2.7 times

Staff Report

ASTANA – Kazakh national companies’ net profits increased 2.7 times in first quarter 2017 over first quarter 2016, reaching 131.6 billion tenge (US\$407.8 million).

A combination of increased income and the first reduction in expenses in five years accounted for the growth.

Over first three months, the aggregate amount of expenses incurred by national companies decreased 18.1 percent or 71.1 billion tenge (US\$220.3 million). This is the first reduction in spending over the past five years.

Total revenue between January and March was 11.7 billion tenge (US\$36.2 million) more than in the same period last year.

However, revenues from sales for the corresponding period were 242.5 billion tenge (US\$751.5 million) or 16.2 percent less than a year ago.

Revenues from financing (including remuneration for bank deposits) also decreased. This year, the national companies received 38.4 percent or 43.3 billion tenge

(US\$134.1 million) less than a year ago.

A sharp inflow of funds was recorded, however, for other income, which implies, among other things, the assistance of shareholders. Over a year, the amount of such income rose 3.6 times or 101.9 billion tenge (US\$315.7 million). The increase in the volume of other revenues, in combination with the reduced expenses, produced the first quarter growth.

In September 2014, the Samruk

Kazyna Sovereign Wealth Fund approved the transformation programme. In addition, similar programmes were introduced at the Kazakhstan Temir Zholy, Kazpost, KazMunayGas National Company, KEGOC, Samruk-Energy, Kazatom-prom and Samruk Kazyna Contract.

The main indicator of the transformation process is the economic value added (EVA,) the positive value of which indicates the effective use of capital and the increase in the value of a company.



Wind generator production plant to be built in Aktobe

Staff Report

The Aktobe region Akimat and United Energy Aktobe have agreed to build a wind generator production plant in the region’s industrial zone.

Aktobe Akim (Governor) Berdybek Saparbayev and enterprise director Mikhail Pauls inked the corresponding memorandum. The project, with a cost of 84 million euros (US\$95.3 million), is expected to create 500 jobs.

The plant will use Spanish technology with an investment from a German company, said Paul.

“According to our plan, construction will last about three years; the maximum production capacity of the plant is 250 megawatts a year. One wind generator can produce power from 1.67 to 2.5 megawatts. This will be the first plant not only in Kazakhstan, but in post-Soviet space. The plant is located on 17 hectares, but everything will depend on the sales market. We are interested in the domestic market as well as in export, mainly to the Caspian region. As

long as there are needs for alternative energy, I think wind generators will be demanded,” he added.

The signing took place in Astana within the Aktobe investment project exhibition, which presented 13 perspective projects worth \$2.1 billion.

“We are interested in attracting foreign investment to the economy of our region. In general, you are well aware of the investment policy of the region. The most important is to create all conditions for investors to work calmly and confidently. Our exhibition will work for three months until the end of EXPO 2017. We are happy to invite everyone who wants to get acquainted with our potential,” said Saparbayev.

Kazakh Foreign Minister Kairat Abdrakhmanov, representatives of ministries and foreign organisations and the heads of diplomatic missions from Armenia, Russia, South Korea, the United States and several other countries took part in the event.

Saparbayev showed the ambassadors the investment and tourist potential of the region and encouraged them to jointly implement projects.

Farmers unite to sell their products online

By Zhazira Dyussembekova

ASTANA – Fernalmskaya produkciya (Farm products) agricultural cooperative, composed of 20 farmers from Tselinograd district and Yereymentau and Bulandy districts in Akmola region, is a way for them to combine their efforts and discover a new and innovative way to sell their products to capital residents. The farmers have established the Ecoferma (Ecofarm) brand and created the website ecoferma.kz to deliver goods right to their customers.

“I am a farmer, as are my colleagues. The problem was that we could not sell our products in the city. Markets are full, shops are full. Large supermarkets do not work with small batches. They need a lot; packing and certificates, branding, there are a lot of requirements. So, we decided to unite farmers like me into a cooperative. We are a sort of a union of farmers,” said farmers’ co-op chairperson Adilzhan Nugmanov in an interview with The Astana Times.

The cooperative sells meat, poultry, milk products, bread, eggs, vegetables, fruits and berries. Different sets of products are also available.

“We will not write loud words about the environmental friendliness, harmlessness and huge benefits of our products, but it is hard to find something more natural than our products,” notes the co-op’s website.

Ecofarm does not use chemicals, basically growing everything the old-fashioned way. Every farmer works for his name and is responsible for the quality of his product.

“Each of our products goes through laboratory testing once a month. Every customer can witness certificates and corresponding papers. They can make sure we do not use antibiotics in products, no growth accelerators or additives,” said Nugmanov.

“Genetically modified, grown in an industrial way with etched seeds and chemically-processed products displayed in the supermarket and in the city bazaars, are certainly more beautiful than ours, but ours are tastier and healthier,” notes the website.

The co-op claims its kumys (fermented horse milk) is not mixed with water, nor has any sugar been added to its honey. “Our team monitors the quality of products constantly,” said Nugmanov.

As for the prices, some items are cheaper, while others are more expensive. The cost of sour cream,

investment and risk management of the sovereign fund,” said Samruk Kazyna Managing Director for Legal, Governance, Risk and Compliance Gani Bitenov.

“We will keep striving to further improve our financial performance,” added Grewal.

The capital is scheduled to host the IFSWF annual meeting Sept. 5-7 with the main theme “Exploring New Frontiers.”

Bringing members of the forum together promotes dialogue and cooperation to address the most acute issues that the funds face and search for common solutions, said IFSWF Director for Strategy and Communications Victoria Barbary.

“It includes closed meetings of the organisation’s members and open panel sessions with the participation of guests and media. It is a unique chance for Kazakh journalists to address heads of the world’s sovereign wealth funds,” she added.

Kazakhstan devotes record funding to attract foreign investment

Staff Report

ASTANA – The government has allocated a record 12.2 billion tenge (US\$37.8 million) to attract foreign investment in 2017, reports Finprom.kz.

The financing will develop industrial zones and parks as well as the infrastructure of special economic zones (SEZ) in the Almaty, Astana, Mangistau and Pavlodar regions. It will also be used for support services.

This year, funding to develop the infrastructure of industrial zones increased two-fold to 5.4 billion tenge (US\$16.7 million). Last year, 2.5 billion tenge (US\$7.7 million) was allocated.

The growth of the volume of investments in the fixed capital of enterprises in SEZ territories, except the National Industrial Petrochemical Technopark, the Khimpark Taraz, the Khorgos – Eastern Gate, is expected to reach 130 percent this year compared to 2014.

Funds allocated for the first four months of 2017, was 3.5 billion tenge (US\$10.8 million), which is almost four times higher than last year.

It is also reported that 2.6 billion tenge (US\$8 million) was allocated to construct engineering and transport infrastructure of the industrial zone in the Alatau district in Almaty. For the first five months of this year, 1.4 billion tenge (US\$4.3 million) has already been disbursed which is 62 percent more than for the same period last year.

In addition to the targeted transfer, the city budget allocates an additional 3.2 billion tenge (US\$9.9 million) for the development of investment project infrastructure.

Also, 1.7 billion tenge (US\$5.2 million) was allocated for the construction of the new industrial zone of Astana and 0.9 billion tenge (US\$2.7 million) of these has been disbursed.

The government has also allocated 818.2 million tenge (US\$2.5 million) for the construction of engineering infrastructure facilities at the Aktau Seaport SEZ in the Mangistau region and 194.3 million tenge (US\$602,135) of these has been disbursed.

Three hundred million tenge allotted for the Pavlodar SEZ in the Pavlodar region and 120 million tenge (US\$371,880) of these has also already been disbursed.

ECONOMY NEWS IN BRIEF

Experts predict changes in the commercial real estate market at the conclusion of EXPO 2017, reported khabar.kz. The exhibition had a positive impact on Astana’s commercial real estate market, triggering demand which can develop into long-term interest on the part of tenants, according to Kazakhstan Association of Service and Management Companies CEO Shukhrat Adilov. There may be a slight drop in rental prices, however, at the end of the event, he added. “We estimate all the areas that are in Astana at 2 million square metres. If 200,000 more square metres will be issued, the prices should fall 10 percent. It is very difficult to say how it will be,” said Adilov.

More than 220 facilities have been privatised in Kazakhstan since the beginning of last year and another 189 companies are preparing for sale, reported khabar.kz. As a result, nearly 47 percent of the comprehensive privatisation plan designed until 2020 has been implemented. Parliament recently discussed transitioning approximately 500 state organisations to private ownership. More thorough preparation should be carried out for the 17 largest companies of the Samruk-Kazyna Sovereign Wealth Fund, as their sale is planned for 2019-2020. “At present, 156 facilities have already been put up for sale. Out of them, 45 objects worth 5.9 billion tenge (US\$18.18 million) were sold. Ninety-eight objects are at the stage of reorganisation and liquidation. Another 85 facilities will be made available before the end of July. Thus, 95 percent of the 488 objects will be put up for sale before October,” said Finance Minister Bakhyt Sultanov.

Atyrau region has manufactured at least two trillion tenge (US\$6.1 billion) in products in the first five months of the year, reported 24.kz. During the past few years, the region has achieved success under the Industrialisation Map, as investments in fixed assets were approximately 835 billion tenge (US\$2.5 billion). “The most important task for us is to get acquainted with the real situation in the regions. Not just on paper, but real production. We are impressed by modern workshops and modern equipment. This is a very significant achievement for the processing sector. Here, on only one site, we see several productions at once. We want to assure that such projects will always find our support at the state level; local entrepreneurs can be sure of this,” said Mazhilis member Marat Bopazov.

Fifty-six billion tenge (US\$172.6 million) will be allocated from the state budget this year for university student scholarships, a 13-percent increase compared to the 2016 figure of 49.6 billion tenge (US\$152.8 million). From January-May, 22.2 billion tenge (US\$68.4 million) has already been allotted. Due to educational grants and state orders, 140,300 individuals, or 29.4 percent of all students, study in the country; the remaining 337,000 students (70.6 percent) receive training on a fee basis. On average, one grantee annually accounts for 399,200 tenge (US\$1,230) of budget funds. Last year, the number was 346,600 tenge (US\$1,068).

Tokyo Rope, Japan’s largest industrial company, has opened a second enterprise in the Almaty Special Industrial Zone, reported khabar.kz. Funds invested in the project exceed 3.5 billion tenge (US\$10.7 million). The plant’s production capacity will be 17,000 tonnes of steel products per year, according to expert calculations. “We consider the Almaty factory the main base, whose plans include the delivery of products to the domestic Kazakhstan market, as well as to the markets of neighbouring countries. In this regard, there was a decision to increase the plant’s productivity and build a new enterprise in the territory of the special economic zone,” said company chairperson of the board Shigeto Tanaka.

BUSINESS

WEDNESDAY, JULY 12, 2017

BUSINESS NEWS IN BRIEF

Kazakhstan's first plant producing monolithic refractory materials has been launched in Karaganda, reported Kazinform. The facility, in the Sar'yarka Special Economic Zone, was built with 1.9 billion tenge (US\$5.8 million) in investments, according to the regional administration press service. "This plant is the first enterprise in the country that will produce such high-quality materials. Large companies such as Kazakhmys, ArcelorMittal Temirtau and Kazzinc need them. Previously, they were buying refractory materials abroad; now, they will receive them from the Karaganda producer. I thank the foreign partners; this plant was built with the participation of foreign capital," said Karaganda region Akim (Governor) Yerlan Koshanov. Plant construction began in 2015 and production volume is expected to be 45,000 tonnes per year.

Delta Bank announced it is closing branches in seven Kazakh cities, according to the Kazakhstan Stock Exchange, which has removed the branches in Aktobe, Atyrau, Karaganda, Pavlodar, Petropavlovsk, Taraz and Uralsk from the registration. Earlier, it was reported the National Bank of Kazakhstan suspended Delta's licenses for accepting deposits and opening accounts for individuals and legal entities. Delta Bank was founded in 1993 in Aktau through the initiative of large oil and gas companies in Western Kazakhstan.

Kazakh enterprises started the year with positive results. In the first quarter, large, medium and small enterprises had a net profit (before taxation) of 2.6 trillion tenge (US\$7.1 billion), according to finprom.kz, a record amount of profit earned in the first three months of the year for the entire post-crisis period. The figure increased 84 percent compared to the net result for January-March 2016. Kazakh business entities achieved the sharp increase not through massively optimising expenditures, but through an increase in the inflow on the revenue side of their budgets, according to the statement. The income of all Kazakh enterprises for the first quarter of 2017 was 14.9 trillion tenge (US\$46 billion), 22 percent more than they received a year ago.

Halyk Savings Bank of Kazakhstan announced completing the acquisition of 96.81 percent of common shares of Kazkommertsbank in early July, according to the bank's press service. In accordance with the purchase and sale agreements, Halyk Bank also announced finalising transactions to acquire common shares of Kenes Rakishev (86.09 percent) and the Samruk Kazyna Sovereign Wealth Fund (10.72 percent). As previously reported, in consultation with the National Bank, Halyk Bank plans to make a Kazkommertsbank capital top-up of 185 billion tenge (US\$571 million), which will bring the equity ratio of Kazkommertsbank to the level of comparable Kazakh banks.

Nineteen electric passenger cars were sold in Kazakhstan in the first half of 2017, according to the Kazakh Automobile Industry Union of Enterprises (KazAvtoProm). The results of the reporting period indicate 19 new electric traction cars were registered in the country, while nine were sold a year earlier. Eleven are Tesla Motors X and S models. Outside the premium segment, the most popular electric models are from Renault-Nissan; Kazakh customers purchased four Nissan Leaf and one of each of Renault Twizy and LADA Vesta EV. Since the beginning of the year, one KIA Soul EV and one JAC iEV6S electric crossover have been registered in the country, noted the statement.

Shymkent refinery completes first stage modernisation



Director of SKB JSC National Center for Expertise and Certification Nurlan Boranbayev gives Eurasian Economic Union conformity certificate to PKOP President Jiang Shi and PKOP First Vice-President Askar Turisbekov.

By Arsen Omarkulov

On June 30, the Shymkent Refinery commissioned a large process facility, which is the isomerisation unit for light gasoline fractions with a pre-hydrotreating block and produced the first certified batch of motor gasolines as per K4 and K5 emission standards. This ended the first stage of the Shymkent Refinery Modernisation and Reconstruction Project.

Akim (Governor) of the South

Kazakhstan region Zhanseit Tuimbayev, Senior Vice President for Oil and Gas Processing of Kazmunaygas Daniyar Tiyyessov, General Director of CNPC in Kazakhstan Bian Dezhi, PKOP top management represented by President Jiang Shi and First Vice President Askar Turisbekov, as well as representatives of a number of subcontracting companies participated in the launch ceremony.

Adding this unit with a capacity of 600,000 tonnes a year to the refin-



Isomerisation Unit

ery process scheme will increase the production of high-octane gasolines meeting up-to-date emission standards by 460,000 tonnes a year.

Pre-commissioning works began March 31 and implementation of the modernisation project began in

January 2014. That was preceded by a feasibility study, estimates and state reviews.

The project created 2,500 construction-phase jobs and over 100 permanent jobs for the operation of the first stage facilities, including 45

for the isomerisation unit. Professional training of employees was arranged at the Atyrau Refinery and the Guangxi Refinery in China.

In April 2017, Kazakhstan's Minister of Energy Kanat Bozumbayev inspected the facilities of the first stage of the modernisation and instructed to ensure production of high-octane gasolines of K4 and K5 emission standards by July 2017. The refinery has met the deadline.

On June 23, the first on-spot oil product loading unit with the capacity of 2.5 million tonnes/year, ensuring closed-dome loading of oil products into rail tank cars, was put into operation in Kazakhstan. Also, within the framework of the first modernisation stage a Diesel Hydrotreater with the capacity of 1.5 million tonnes/year, a sulphur plant with the capacity of 4,000 tonnes per year and off-sites have been already put into operation.

Currently, the refinery is continuing the construction of facilities under the second modernisation stage, the purpose of which is to increase the refinery throughput to six million tonnes a year and the conversion rate with the project completion in September 2018.



EBRD supports inclusive economic development in Kazakhstan's remote regions

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) announced plans to promote its economic inclusion strategy by signing a new investment project in the capital June 22 providing a \$140 million loan to Bakyrchik Mining Venture.

"We are deeply committed to the economic development of Kazakhstan's remote regions. The Kyzyl project will bring innovation, new technologies and new jobs to eastern Kazakhstan. We look forward to working with Polymetal on improving opportunities for young people and women in the industry," said EBRD President Sir Suma Chakrabarti at the June 22 Foreign Investors Council 30th plenary session in Astana.

The project aims to develop the Kyzyl gold deposit in the East Kazakhstan region, support technical education and employ local youth and women. The new operations will engage approximately 1,000 workers and bring the highest international standards to the sector.

"We welcome the EBRD's involvement in the Kyzyl project as a significant and long-term lender at attractive commercial terms. This transaction also reinforces Polymetal's commitment to sustainability by adopting the EBRD's best practices on environmental and social issues for the development and subsequent operation of Kyzyl," said Polymetal Group CEO Vitaly Nesis.

Additional investment projects were also signed, including mod-

ernising the street lighting systems in Ust-Kamenogorsk and Semey and financing small and medium-sized enterprises with a focus on women-led companies through new credit lines to Kassa Nova Bank and KazMicroFinance.

Supporting women's entrepreneurship and participating in business by facilitating access to finance as well as business development services are of special importance.

The EBRD statement said funding will support local companies' access to finance, which is vital for their growth. Special focus will be placed on distributing funds outside the main cities of the capital and Almaty. The loans will be fully guaranteed by the Damu Entrepreneurship Development Fund.

A letter of intent about technical cooperation to develop the legal and regulatory framework necessary to establish the Astana International Exchange was inked the following day between Chakrabarti and Astana International Financial Centre Governor Kairat Kelimbetov.

The institution also invested \$350 million to expand ShalkiyaZinc, a mining company, and construct a new processing plant on the site in early June. The loan supports inclusive economic development in the Kyzylorda region and creates more education and career opportunities for women and young people.

The EBRD has invested more than 7.3 billion euros (US\$8.1 billion) in various sectors of the economy with a focus on non-oil and gas sectors and approximately 1.65 billion euros (US\$1.84 billion) in sustainable energy and resource projects.

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EDITORIAL&OPINION

WEDNESDAY, JULY 12, 2017

Kazakhstan finds its future without losing its past

As a country, Kazakhstan has set its sights firmly on the future. The continued modernisation of the economy and society is rightly seen as essential to provide our citizens with the opportunities and living standards they deserve in the decades ahead. The goal of joining the ranks of the top 30 most-developed countries by 2050 encapsulates this ambition.

But as well as having a clear idea of the intended destination, it is also important not to forget from where you have come. Successful societies are those which don't forget their history, traditions and culture but build on them. Without this understanding and appreciation, the risk is that connections are lost and societies become rootless and unstable.

It is a danger that President Nursultan Nazarbayev recognised earlier this year when, in calling for a modernisation of society and attitudes to complement the modernisation of our economy, he stressed at the same time the critical importance of tradition and culture to what Kazakhstan is and wants to become.

So along with the bold decisions, for example, to ensure our young people are fluent in English to enable them to compete globally and to switch gradually to the Latin alphabet, he called for determined efforts to support local communities through the Tugan Zher (Small Homeland) programme. Importantly, this was to be coupled at a national level with a new initiative to map and preserve the country's cultural and religious landmarks.

We have, perhaps, in the past taken what academics call this Sacred Geography for granted. When you consider how far our country has come in the last 25 years and the obstacles we have overcome together, it is easy to see why attention has been focused on other challenges.

But the President is right to underline how important this unique and rich heritage is. By both protecting and celebrating this history, we provide the basis for a modern patriotism, which helps strengthen connections between citizens and also

provides a barrier to cultural traditions from outside our borders. A society that is comfortable with its own roots finds it easier to push back against foreign and damaging religious and ideological influences.

And the President was right to say that Kazakhstan has an extraordinary heritage. The Mausoleum of Khoja Ahmed Yassawi in Turkestan, for example, has a significance which resonates far beyond our borders. Its importance explains why it was listed internationally by UNESCO as World Heritage site in 2003 and draws pilgrims from across the world.

But Kazakhstan's history, of course, goes back many centuries before the acclaimed poet. Neolithic settlements and Bronze Age cave paintings are included in the 500 major sites already identified for enhanced protection. So, too, are the burial places of the descendants of Genghis Khan.

Identifying and providing additional protection, where necessary, is essential. But the President's initiative goes beyond simply preserving monuments. He called as well for a concerted national education campaign to underline their importance for every citizen and to Kazakhstan's history. As he said, these diverse sites provide the thread which binds the Kazakh people through the centuries.

The communication efforts around the comprehensive mapping, for the first time, of these heritage sites should also provide a major boost for domestic and international tourism. Enthusing Kazakhs about their own history will lead to many more visiting other regions. Internationally, it will help Kazakhstan capitalise on the increased global interest and ensure the country continues to feature high in the global lists of must-visit destinations.

Any society which loses sight of its history is storing up trouble for the future and putting in danger all its achievements. By taking the time to celebrate its rich religious and cultural heritage and reminding all our citizens of why it is important, Kazakhstan shows it is not going to make this mistake.

Successful societies are those which don't forget their history, traditions and culture but build on them. Without this understanding and appreciation, the risk is that connections are lost and societies become rootless and unstable.

Celebrating U.S.-Kazakhstan Ties at World EXPO 2017

By Dr. Joshua W. Walker

This year America's Fourth of July Independence celebration was shared with hundreds of other countries and countless guests on the other side of the world at EXPO 2017 here in Astana, Kazakhstan. Since June 10 our USA Pavilion has opened its doors to Central Asia's first World's Fair, welcoming guests from all over the globe to see how the United States is driving towards the future of energy through American innovation. On July 4, the USA Pavilion cordially invited the world to join in our celebration.

Fittingly, the Fourth of July was not the only important celebration at the Expo 2017 World's Fair this week. On July 6, Kazakhstan celebrated the 19th annual anniversary of the creation of Astana, its beautiful capital city (and quickly becoming my second home). It truly is amazing how Astana transformed from a new-born city to the host of this year's largest global event in such a short time!

It is fortuitous that our two nations, the United States and Kazakhstan, share crucial holidays so close to one another. Since Kazakhstan's independence over 25 years ago, our two nations have accomplished a great deal together through mutual cooperation and respect. Now, the USA Pavilion serves as a physical testament to the strength of the U.S.-Kazakhstan bilateral relationship.

The theme of the USA Pavilion, inspired by the general Expo theme of 'Future Energy', is anchored by the idea that the source



of infinite energy is within all of us, manifesting as the energy that spurs innovation to do amazing things. Ultimately it was the energy of the relationship between the United States and Kazakhstan that powered the USA Pavilion from dream to reality. Driven not just by our political leaders but our private sector and peoples, the partnership between the United States and Kazakhstan has only grown stronger as a result.

Maintaining a robust partnership with Kazakhstan is extremely valuable for American interests abroad. Kazakhstan's markets are becoming increasingly attractive as economic liberalisation continues, the nation's significant energy resources, geography and demographics place it literally in the centre of the world along with its critical role in the continued fight against global terrorism. Kazakhstan's role in security specifically will only continue to grow, as evidenced by its joining the UN Security Council as a non-permanent member for

2017-2018. This historic recognition (the first time a Central Asian nation has joined the UN Security Council) only increases the importance of Central Asia at the UN.

A close relationship with the United States is also very valuable for Kazakhstan. The Central Asian nation has made admirable efforts to liberalise its growing economy, and the United States, as the largest liberal economy, is the perfect partner to boost Kazakhstan's international trade. Increased American investment would significantly expedite the high standards of growth of Kazakhstan has set for itself, while American businesses are natural partners to increase the ease of doing business in this emerging market. Kazakhstan's ability to bridge various worlds and paradoxes makes America, despite its geographic distance, a natural partner along with other important stakeholders in the region for the heart and soul of Eurasia and the ancient Silk Road.

I encourage all of Expo's visitors to come and be inspired by the power of human energy this summer at the USA Pavilion in Astana, while remembering that the only reason the USA Pavilion stands at all is thanks to the friendship between Astana and Washington. Concrete and paneling are not the foundation of the USA Pavilion; the building's true bedrock is the vital relationship between the United States and Kazakhstan.

The author is President and CEO at USA Pavilion at EXPO 2017.

Stress on education to help success of Kazakhstan's Third Modernisation

By Mike Thiruman

The bold proposals shared by President Nursultan Nazarbayev to consolidate and strengthen Kazakhstan's place on the world stage are timely and consistent with his articulated vision on the "Third Modernisation of Kazakhstan." Further, the President's focus, beyond knowledge and skills, on attitudes of the Kazakh people cements from his deep understanding of what is required for the fundamental shifts Kazakhstan has to make to ensure continued success.

The emphasis on transformations needed in education signals the President's earnest desire that every Kazakh has an agile mind that is able to overcome future challenges. He has wisely directed that the agility of the mind can be partly achieved through an effective trilingual education policy. Education research has shown that people competent in more than one language become experts at selecting relevant information and ignoring information that can distract from a task, thus enabling them to solve problems better. A trilingual Kazakhstan would not just be economically competitive but also be culturally more confident, enabling it to be more open to diverse perspectives and truly enhancing its economic and cultural gravitas in the global arena.

The President's declaration



that education would be a priority underscores his intention to fundamentally evolve the psyche of Kazakhstan's youth who would become cognisant of the need for lifelong learning and be able

and vision are to ensure Kazakhs have strong roots and strong winds – being patriotic while maintaining global perspectives; being culturally entrenched while embracing modernity; and being ideologically rooted in rich Kazakh values while understanding need for pragmatism.

If Kazakhstan is able to implement with fidelity the vision of President Nazarbayev, it will become a cultural, political and economic pillar in the modern world.

The key to achieving the vision is education, including lifelong learning. It has often been professed that a quality education system requires quality teachers and school leaders. The modernisation

If Kazakhstan is able to implement with fidelity the vision of President Nazarbayev, it will become a cultural, political and economic pillar in the modern world.

to constantly adapt to new and changing environment, including the workplace. More than half of the future jobs, in 10 to 15 years time, have not been created yet. Just like today, where jobs in app development, social media, cloud computing and Uber driving were not around 10 to 15 years ago.

President Nazarbayev's hope

journey requires continued investment in and upskilling of teachers and school leaders in order to build their capacity and the capability to educate youth for continued success of Kazakhstan.

The author is President of Singapore Teachers' Union, President of Educare International Consultancy.

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THE ASTANA TIMES

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Advertising: +7 727 252 08 82
Inquiries: info@astanatimes.com
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: 1200

PRINT RUN: 6,000

OPINIONS

WEDNESDAY, JULY 12, 2017

Kazakh, German partnership is versatile, says Kazakh ambassador

By Galiaskar Seitzhan

On the eve of the official visit of German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier to the Kazakh capital on July 11-12, The Astana Times spoke with Kazakhstan’s ambassador in Berlin, Bulat Nussupov.

How do you evaluate the current state of Kazakh-German relations? What are the current dynamics of bilateral contacts between our countries?

This year our countries celebrate the 25th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations. This date is of great symbolic and practical significance for us – over these years, Kazakh-German relations were put on the trajectory of strategic partnership. A strong political dialogue has been established, multifaceted trade and economic ties are developing, cultural and humanitarian cooperation is being strengthened. All these positive trends and the progress of bilateral cooperation have become possible due to the personal participation and will of the leaders of our countries.

A significant impetus to bilateral cooperation was given by the visits of our head of state to Berlin in February 2012 and in January 2015. German Chancellor Angela Merkel visited Kazakhstan twice in 2010. Bilateral meetings of the leaders of the two countries are held regularly in the framework of major international events; for example, in 2014 in the framework of the ASEM forum in Milan and in 2016 during the G20 Summit in China. Current President Steinmeier visited Kazakhstan in November 2014 as foreign minister.

Interparliamentary ties between our countries are developing very actively. There is an intensive and various exchange of delegations of all levels to Kazakhstan and Germany, not only in capitals, but also in regions.

Thus, it can be stated with certainty that in recent years the quantity and quality of meetings at the high and highest levels have contributed to the strengthening of the entire range of bilateral relations.

In your opinion, which are the key areas of cooperation between Kazakhstan and Germany? What is the specificity of these relationships and how do they differ from other countries in the world, in particular, in Europe?

It is well known that Germany is the locomotive and the main donor of the European Union, which is based on its economic strength and active foreign policy. With the expected exit of the UK from the EU, Germany’s responsibility for



Bulat Nussupov

the future of unified Europe will only increase. This circumstance certainly plays one of the key roles in the process of the future alignment of the EU’s relations with our country.

Germany, as you know, in 2007 initiated the development of the EU Strategy for Central Asia, which has now, in an updated form, brought our region’s cooperation with the EU to a qualitatively new level. In Berlin, the so-called Water Initiative (the Berlin Process) was launched, designed to address the use of the region’s water resources in the interests of all Central Asian countries.

In addition, in Germany, much attention is paid to the peace process in Afghanistan in the framework of the Bonn conference. During the German presidency of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) last year, one of the key areas of the organisation was the economic dimension, which was reflected in the German initiative of “connectivity.” In general, in all the above-mentioned areas, we are actively cooperating with German partners.

Germany is an industrially developed, highly technological, innovative and export-oriented country. This creates good prerequisites for our active interaction in the sphere of industrial production and technology transfer. Now more than 90 percent of German investments go to the non-primary sector of Kazakhstan’s economy, i.e. to the processing industry, the chemical industry, the production of building materials, engineering, the agro-industrial complex and agriculture. This, as you see, corresponds to the tasks of the state programme on industrialisation of Kazakhstan and the Nurlı Zhol economic policy. In this I see the difference in the specifics of German investments from those of other countries, which are mainly directed to the oil and gas and energy sectors.

At the same time, Kazakhstan is the fourth largest supplier of crude oil to Germany and thus plays a key role in ensuring the energy security of Germany and Europe. Germany, in turn, is a strategic partner of our



country in the field of energy efficiency and energy saving, as well as the development of the system of dual technical and vocational education in Kazakhstan. Currently, we are actively cooperating in the implementation of elements of the German programme “Industry 4.0” in our country on automating and detailing production processes. All this will also meet the goals and objectives of President [of Kazakhstan Nursultan] Nazarbayev’s “The Third Modernisation – Global Competitiveness” state-of-the-nation address from January 2017.

The European Union is the leading trade partner of Kazakhstan. What are the current indicators of our foreign trade with Germany?

First of all, I must say that for today a solid institutional base has been created between the two countries, designed to help strengthen and expand trade and economic cooperation at the state level.

According to the German statistical service, the volume of mutual trade turnover between Kazakhstan and Germany in 2016 amounted to 4 billion euros, and this year during only four months of the year the trade turnover between the two countries increased by 30 percent compared to the same period of last year and amounted to 1.6 billion euros. We expect that by the end of the year the growth of trade turnover between our countries will be about 40 percent and we will be able to return to the record level of foreign trade in 2013, when it exceeded 6.5 billion euros.

Kazakhstan remains Germany’s key trading partner in the Central Asian region. In 2016, about 85 percent of Germany’s trade turnover with all five Central Asian

countries was with our country. The structure of mutual trade turnover has remained traditional for a number of years. Of Kazakhstan’s exports, more than 91 percent is mineral resources, and the rest is ferrous metals (2.4 percent), inorganic chemicals (2.2 percent), non-ferrous metals (1.7 percent), fish (0.7 percent), oil and vegetable crops (0.6 percent) and other. According to the volume of oil exports, Kazakhstan, as I have already said, is in the top five countries among Germany’s main partners.

In general, despite the decline in prices for raw materials, commodity turnover between Kazakhstan and Germany shows its stability. Germany remains the main partner of Kazakhstan in the process of industrialisation of the country, raw material and technological partnership.

How do you assess the investment cooperation between Kazakhstan and Germany?

Investment relations between the two countries are characterised by the dynamics of stable strengthening and the search for new opportunities for interaction at the federal and regional levels. As I have said before, German investments go mainly to the non-raw sector of the economy.

According to the National Bank of Kazakhstan, from 2005 to 2016 gross inflow of direct investment from Germany to Kazakhstan amounted to about \$4 billion (249 million in 2016, 319 million in 2015). In total volume of gross inflows, the share of investments from Germany to Kazakhstan in 2016 was about 1.2 percent (2.2 percent in 2015). This is generally not a high figure, but these investments go into the sphere of indus-

trial production, which is very important for Kazakhstan.

Over the past three years, the number of economic entities registered in Kazakhstan with the participation of German capital has increased from 1,200 to 1,450 in the form of joint ventures, representations of German companies and banks. Investment cooperation is carried out in the manufacturing industry, trade, construction, transport and communications, agriculture, social and personal services and other branches of the economy. Example of these are the investments of German companies such as Knauf, Heidelberg Cement, Metro, Linde, Funke and others.

A specific business card of our economic relations with Germany is our raw material and technological partnership. How is the agreement signed in 2012 currently being implemented in this area?

The implementation of the inter-governmental Partnership Agreement in raw, industrial and technological spheres is the priority of our work in the field of economy and investment. The uniqueness of this document is that Germany has so far concluded similar agreements only with Mongolia and Chile; currently they are negotiating with a number of other countries.

As you know, the agreement provides for the access of German companies to the raw materials of our country, in particular to rare earth metals, in return for their introduction of high technology and innovation in Kazakhstan. In other words, German business, using local labour resources, creates products with high added value from the extraction of raw materials, its processing on the ground, to

the creation of a finished product. This scheme, in my opinion, corresponds to the goals of the Third Modernisation of Kazakhstan as a new model of economic growth, which will ensure the global competitiveness of our country.

As part of the implementation of the agreement, we have achieved some success between our countries in the study and reassessment of Kazakh deposits of solid minerals (copper, lead, zinc, tin, vanadium, tantalum, tungsten, molybdenum and titanium) of strategic interest to the German economy, in accordance with international standards.

In particular, for two years the German Raw Materials Agency conducted an analysis of these deposits and in 2015 issued a special catalogue that was distributed among German firms. A number of companies have already started implementing specific projects.

Thus, Ulmus Funds launched a project to explore noble and non-ferrous metals in Karaganda region. Aurum Deutschland AG, a subsidiary of the Quest Capital concern, is engaged in the development of gold, tungsten and molybdenum deposits, as well as the construction of a gold mining plant in Zhambyl region. The International Corporation of Metal and Ella Development Holding GmbH in 2016 signed an agreement on the construction of a ferroalloy plant in Kyzylorda region. Soon, Ulmus Funds will sign an agreement with Kazgeologiya JSC on carrying out prospecting for copper in the framework of the state geological study of mineral resources in the Shubarsai area in Karaganda region. Thus, the first stationary German laboratory will be created in Kazakhstan. Work in this direction continues and the agreement is filled with real content.

Germany at EXPO 2017 in Astana is represented by an original pavilion. How actively are German companies participating in the expo?

Germany, having supported the candidacy of Astana during the voting in Paris, was very proactive, both in the preparation of the expo in our capital, and in their representation at it now. Two large German concerns acted as sponsors of the exhibition – Siemens as a technology partner and DHL as a logistics partner – and Bosch became the partner of the expo in safety issues. This was a good example for other German companies. In general, in Germany, the interest in the expo is high; it was seen by the reaction of German visitors during the presentation of the Mobile Expo in Berlin in May this year.

Kazakhstan and America at the Creation

By William Courtney

From the outset of its modern independence in 1991, Kazakhstan has been a close and valued American partner. I will share with you a personal perspective on how the partnership took shape in the early years.

Before doing so, let me praise the remarkable contributions of President Nursultan Nazarbayev and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Under their leadership, Kazakhstan developed deep and productive ties with a superpower half a world away. Among the original Ministry figures who made this possible were Minister Tuletai Suleimenov, Deputy Ministers Vyacheslav Gizzatov, Bulat Nurgaliyev, and Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, and rising diplomatic stars Erlan Idrissov, Erzhan Kazykhanov and Kairat Umarov. Ambassador Akmaral Arystanbekova contributed much through her pioneering work at the United Nations. As well, President Nazarbayev’s national security advisers, including Marat Tazhin, played important roles.

How did U.S.-Kazakhstan relations take shape after independence?



First, our two countries engaged early and visibly.

In March 1991, Secretary of State Baker met with Nazarbayev. In July, President George Bush and Baker met with Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev and Nazarbayev, building further confidence. Later in 1991, Baker visited Alma-Ata. Only five weeks after the dissolution of the USSR, Charge d’affaires Jackson McDonald opened the U.S. embassy in Alma-Ata. I arrived a week later. America was the first country to recognize Kazakhstan, and our embassy was the first new U.S. embassy to open anywhere in the former Soviet Union.

Washington moved fast because it wanted to strengthen perceptions inside and outside Kazakhstan that

it was an independent state. U.S. and other Western leaders voiced strong support for the independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity of Kazakhstan.

Second, Kazakhstan and America worked early to reduce nuclear risks.

The destructive legacy of Soviet nuclear testing at the Semipalatinsk polygon, and the rise of the Nevada-Semipalatinsk social movement, had led many people in Kazakhstan to be averse to nuclear weapons. Before coming to Alma-Ata, I was the last U.S. negotiator with the USSR on nuclear testing. In Geneva, I spent long hours dealing with Soviet nuclear experts, but then Kazakhstan changed the equation. The courageous decision to end testing at the polygon responded to the will of Kazakhstan’s people, and it helped erode the influence of militarists in the Soviet security establishment.

The international community has long attached high priority to avoiding the proliferation of nuclear-armed states. To this end, Kazakhstan, Russia, and the United States cooperated on the removal to Russia of leftover Soviet nuclear forces. Through the Nunn-Lugar programme, America

assisted Kazakhstan with the destruction of remaining fixed infrastructure for nuclear and biological weaponry.

This cooperation achieved a revolution in military cooperation. Two fields of giant SS-18 ballistic missiles in Kazakhstan may have held over one thousand nuclear weapons. The world’s largest anthrax factory was at Stepnogorsk. Kazakhstan and America had a shared interest in militarising these facilities and the polygon, and in converting others to civilian use.

The third reason why our two countries got off to a good start was the potential of Caspian energy.

In the Soviet period it was known that Kazakhstan’s part of the Caspian basin held a bounty of hydrocarbon resources. Soviet technology was inadequate to recover oil that lay deep below salt domes and had high sulphur content. In spring 1993, Kazakhstan and Chevron signed an agreement to carry out the largest project in the former Soviet space. Later ExxonMobil and other U.S. energy companies came to Kazakhstan. Today, Tengiz is one of the best performing projects in the global energy sphere.

The fourth reason for early U.S.

activity was to assist Kazakhstan to recover from Soviet impoverishment and improve its economy.

The winter of 1991-92 was harsh. In February 1992, America launched a series of emergency flights carrying medicines and food to a number of Kazakh cities. Washington backed early admission of Kazakhstan to the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development. These organisations, and USAID, provided expertise to assist Kazakhstan to define property rights, privatise state-owned enterprises, introduce the tenge, and develop laws and regulations for a market economy. Early reforms and energy development helped lift Kazakhstan’s economy to middle-income status. This achievement was hard to foresee a quarter century ago.

Fifth, Kazakhstan and America shared many diplomatic goals.

A top priority for both was that Kazakhstan forge cooperative ties with Russia and China, the two large neighbours. Kazakhstan’s policy of tolerance – ethnic, national, and religious – was essential to this success. Cooperation with neighbours helped to stabilise a vast region of Eurasia, and now

helps to make possible a modern Silk Road.

In the diplomatic arena, Kazakhstan has achieved far more than anyone expected. It was the first former Soviet state to chair the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe. Astana has hosted major international negotiations on the Middle East. Kazakhstan has contributed further to non-proliferation by hosting the fuel bank of the International Atomic Energy Agency. All of these accomplishments build on priorities and habits of moderation that Kazakhstan pursued from the outset of its independence.

It is an honour to be with you to celebrate twenty-five years of Kazakhstan’s diplomacy. Perhaps no other country in modern times has so soon after independence contributed so much to international diplomacy. I am proud to have been present when Kazakhstan began its record of diplomatic achievement.

The author is the first U.S. Ambassador to Kazakhstan who currently serves as adjunct senior fellow at the RAND Corporation and President of the United States-Kazakhstan Business Association.

Islamic Organisation for Food Security office to open by end of year

By Zhazira Dyussembekova

ASTANA – The office of the Islamic Organisation for Food Security will open in Astana by the end of the year, Kazakh Vice Minister of National Economy Yernar Bakenov told a meeting during the 10th Astana Economic Forum on June 15-16. “Since our chairmanship in the Organisation of the Islamic Cooperation in 2011, we have initiated and supported the idea of establishing an Islamic Organisation for Food Security. At present, this process is

at the final stage, and it is planned to finish the work on the location of its headquarters in Astana by the end of this year,” said Bakenov. Director General of the Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries (SESRIC) of the OIC Musa Kulalikaya said his organisation will be directly involved in the implementation of the project. “Since the beginning of 2000, I have repeatedly visited Kazakhstan. For seven years I have worked as the head of the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA) un-

der the government of Turkey. With each visit, I note positive changes in Kazakhstan. I am personally pleased with these changes. This is a great achievement and pride for Kazakhstan to hold events such as the Astana Economic Forum. Speakers, invited participants and agreements show the high level of the forum,” he said, according to inform.kz. President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev first broached the initiative to establish the Islamic Organisation for Food Security in an address to the 38th session of the Council of Foreign Ministers of

the OIC in 2011. Two years later at an intergovernmental expert meeting in Astana, experts from 30 OIC member states agreed on a draft statutory document. The new organisation aims to solve the problems of providing the population of Islamic countries with more affordable food based on their natural and climatic conditions and geographic location, creating the most profitable transport and logistics routes that will minimise the cost of sending food supplies to OIC member countries and stabilise food prices through the forma-

tion and management of joint food funds. “Kazakhstan is a member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), where Astana has respect and authority. Moreover, Kazakhstan itself has developed and began to provide economic assistance to its neighbours. I wanted to emphasise the agricultural potential of your country. Kazakhstan can fruitfully share its experience with the members of the OIC,” said Kulalikaya. SESRIC was created by members

of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation in Ankara in 1978. Its purpose is to promote cooperation between OIC countries, collect and process statistical data on socio-economic development, develop recommendations and organise training programmes within the OIC. “I again hope that the Islamic Organisation for Food Security and SESRIC will find ways of effective cooperation. First of all, we hope for a mutually beneficial exchange of experience between Kazakhstan and OIC countries in the field of agricultural security,” he added.

Foreign policy experts praise 25 years of Kazakh diplomacy

By Aigerim Seisembayeva

ASTANA – Diplomats, politicians and diplomacy experts from Kazakhstan and abroad praised the country’s quarter-century of diplomatic efforts at a June 29 conference in Astana held on the eve of the July 2 25th anniversary of Kazakhstan’s diplomatic service. The conference was held jointly by the Kazakh Foreign Ministry, the Foundation of the First President of the Republic of Kazakhstan – Elbasy and the Institute of World Economy and Politics (IWEP). The event was attended by Kazakh Foreign Minister Kairat Abdrakhmanov, Presidential Aide for International Affairs Nurlan Onzhanov,

Chairman of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defense and Security of the Mazhilis (lower house of Parliament) Maulen Ashimbayev, Board Chairman of the Astana EXPO 2017 national company Akhmetzhan Yesimov, high-ranking representatives of foreign diplomatic corps, veterans of the Kazakh Foreign Ministry, international political scientists, experts and the media. Abdrakhmanov said in his opening remarks that Kazakh diplomacy has created a reliable system of relations with all countries and international organisations based on cooperation and pragmatism. “Thanks to the First President’s well thought-out foreign policy course, Kazakhstan is deservedly perceived on the world stage as

a generator of stability and a dynamic and prosperous model of state development. Our country has rightfully become a recognised nuclear disarmament leader and an active moderator in the dialogue of cultures, religions and civilisations. Today, Kazakhstan equally participates and contributes to the solution of regional and global issues of the modern world,” he said. Abdrakhmanov also praised the work of Kazakh Foreign Ministry veterans who laid the foundation for Kazakhstan’s role on the international stage. Onzhanov, whose new book “Peacemaker. The Syrian Knot” was presented during the conference, noted Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev’s contribution

to resolving conflicts, including tensions between Russia and Turkey in 2015-2016 and the six-year-long Syrian crisis. Kazakh diplomatic service veteran Akmaral Arystanbekova, who served as the Foreign Minister of the Kazakh Soviet Socialistic Republic in 1989-1991 and later the first Permanent Representative of Kazakhstan to the United Nations (UN), spoke about the first stages of the Kazakh diplomatic service’s development. “Entering the UN became a landmark event in the creation and development of independent Kazakhstan’s diplomatic service. The UN has always been and still is Kazakhstan’s top foreign policy priority in multilateral diplomacy,” she said.

First Minister of Foreign Affairs of independent Kazakhstan Tuletai Suleimenov noted in his remarks that Kazakhstan’s diplomatic service contributed to the creation of Kazakhstan as we see it today. “The history of modern Kazakhstan’s foreign policy is the history of our country’s independence. Over the years of independence, our foreign policy has come a long way marked by many important events that helped build an independent and a politically stable country,” he said. Numerous figures also said President Nazarbayev’s multivector foreign policy is the best option Kazakhstan. The country’s large-scale initiatives and projects

have become firm guarantees of the state’s sovereignty and territorial integrity, the basis for safe and stable development in a long-term historical perspective. The conference also included a photo exhibition illustrating the milestones of the formation of independent Kazakhstan’s diplomatic service. The exhibit and the short video included rare archive photos and video footage relating to Kazakhstan’s first steps in the international arena in 1991, President Nazarbayev’s initiatives to convene the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA) and the summit of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), active mediation in complex global political crises, election as a non-permanent member to the UN Security Council, EXPO 2017 and more.

Gas exchange trading to begin in Eurasian Economic Union

By Dana Omirgazy

ASTANA – The Eurasian Economic Commission (EEC) is set to start a roadmap launching gas exchange trading in the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU). The decision was announced at the Russian Federal Antimonopoly Service gas subcommittee meeting with the participation of representatives from the EAEU, EEC and St. Petersburg International

Commodity Exchange (SPIMEX), according to an EEC press service. The EEC works on forming common gas markets and introducing trading on one or more commodity exchanges. The procedure for gas trading is supposed to be adopted in 2019 and will serve as a basis for member states to carry out exchange trade. “The parties support this approach. We heard proposals from individual countries to participate in pilot projects,” said Energy Ef-

ficiency Department Director Leonid Shenets. “The key issue is the formation of price indicators both at exchange and off-exchange, as well as the regulatory framework for bidding. Member states of the union need to solve these issues by joint efforts. It is already now possible to gain experience, even before a separate decision of the heads of state; we shall begin to bring our positions closer together,” he added. The concept of the common gas

market formation, approved by the Supreme Eurasian Economic Council decision in May 2016, envisions gas stock exchange trade in the EAEU. To implement the project, parties need to ensure the basic principles of the market: fair and transparent pricing, as well as removing barriers. The launch of exchange trades may require review of the current regulatory framework, noted meeting participants. At present, Russia has a law on gas exports, whereby

Gazprom Export, a 100-percent subsidiary of Gazprom, is the only exporter of Gazprom’s natural gas. According to SPIMEX, Gazprom accounted for 11.26 billion cubic metres of gas in 2016, or 67 percent of sales from the volume of exchange trades. Regulating the exchange trade in gas, the Russian government’s decision restricts Gazprom’s exchange contracts with a volume of 17.5 billion cubic metres. At the same time, the entire volume of gas is intended for use in the domestic market. In the

case of initiating the EAEU common gas market, the limit should be significantly increased, said the meeting participants. There will also be a need to determine rules for exchange trading, such as whether it will be carried through the supplier or each consumer will be required to go to the stock exchange independently. Along with the Gazprom structures, intermediaries may possibly appear who will also provide services in Belarus and Kazakhstan.

Hungary, Kazakhstan share “common past, dynamic present, promising future,” envoy says

By Galiya Nurzhan

ASTANA – This March, Kazakhstan and Hungary marked the 25th anniversary of diplomatic relations. The common roots and historical ties between the two nations have always served as a firm basis for mutual sympathy and trust. Today, a real boost in the bilateral cooperation is observed with significant growth in trade turnover, promotion of fruitful political dialogue and the sharing of common views on many issues on the international agenda. To bring ties between the two countries closer, on June 8, direct flights connecting the two capitals – Budapest, often called the “Pearl of the Danube,” and Astana, the “Heart of Eurasia,” – were launched. In an interview with The Astana Times, Hungarian Ambassador to Kazakhstan András Baranyi discussed prospects for the development of bilateral relations and opportunities within the framework of Hungary’s foreign economic strategy of “Opening to the East.” “Kazakhstan is the only strategic partner of Hungary in Central Asia and, in turn, Hungary is the only strategic partner of Kazakhstan in Central-Eastern Europe which covers 16 countries,” he said. “One of the new instruments for further enhancing the relationship between our countries is the bilateral Strategic Cooperation Council, which consists of three representatives from both sides, co-chaired by the Foreign Minister of Kazakhstan and the Minister for National Economy of Hungary. The first meeting of the council took place last October in Astana, and we are using this format to follow up on the implementation of our bilateral agree-

ments and to coordinate our joint activities in achieving long-term strategic goals and tackle important issues on the international agenda, such as global security, fight against terrorism, environmental protection,” the ambassador explained. “As far as the bilateral trade turnover is concerned, we are proud to highlight that after the years of global decline, in 2016 it grew by 16 percent and amounts to \$188 million. Moreover, the results of this year’s first quarter show us on an even faster, 40 percent growth so that now we can speak about a clearly positive trend,” Baranyi said. According to the ambassador, since July 1, Hungary took over the presidency in the so-called Visegrad Group which also includes the Czech Republic, Poland and Slovakia. “The ‘Visegrad 4’ is the most effective and reliable alliance in present day Europe. Initially we established this cooperation in order to put together our efforts in integration to the EU and we still use it to coordinate our positions at the European decision-making institutions. Today, Central Europe is the engine of economic growth within the EU and there are no doubts that Central Asia is a driver of the whole Asian region. Therefore, one of the main priorities of the Hungarian presidency in Visegrad Group is strengthening the relations between Central Europe and Central Asia by establishing a new cooperation platform,” the diplomat explained. This initiative was announced by Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Hungary Péter Szijjártó during his official visit to Astana on June 26 and was supported by his Kazakh counterpart Kairat Abdra-

khmanov, he continued. “I am convinced the V4+CA5 cooperation will also result in strengthening the ties between our countries, in particular, and promoting dialogue between the EU and Eurasian Economic Union, in general. Central European and Central Asian countries could serve as a bridge between the two integrations in order to move forward towards the common aim stated in the St. Petersburg Declaration a few years ago, i.e. establishing single economic area from Lisbon to Vladivostok,” he said. The ambassador also discussed efforts toward the facilitation of the visa regime between Kazakhstan and the EU. “Hungary has always been one of the sincere lobbyists of the visa facilitation for Kazakhstan. In a few weeks, we will sign an amendment to the Consular Agreement between Hungary and Kazakhstan for holders of diplomatic and service passports, allowing to stay in each other’s country for 90 days instead of the current 30 days visa free,” he said. “The fact that the EU signed an Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement with Kazakhstan in December 2015 reflects the fact that Europe considers Kazakhstan the most important partner in Central Asia. We believe the decision of the government of Kazakhstan on providing from January 1 a visa-free regime for citizens of all member states of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and EU will soon, in return, get a positive response from the European Commission on facilitation of a visa regime for Kazakh citizens as well,” Baranyi said. Talking about the international

specialised exhibition EXPO 2017 in Astana, the ambassador focused on the Hungarian pavilion and elaborated on Hungary’s strategy on promoting a green economy and green technologies it can share with Kazakhstan. “First of all, from the bottom of my heart, I would like to congratulate Kazakhstan on successfully organising this important event. It is a great opportunity to showcase the whole world the significant, incredible achievements of Kazakhstan, and it also serves as a venue for different countries and nations, a great mixture of different cultures. I also would like to highlight the Nur Alem pavilion, which is really amazing, presenting the different types of energy and the ancient traditions of the Kazakh nation. The exhibition is a really great success and I am proud that Hungary is also participating in the EXPO with its national pavilion, which we hope, will also contribute to the overall success of the exhibition. Let me take this opportunity and invite you to the National Day of Hungary on August 18,” he noted. “The main element of our pavilion is a tree of life, which is a common symbol of both Hungarian and Kazakh mythology on the one hand and a model of the artificial photosynthesis developed by Hungarian scientists on the other hand. At the Energy Best Practices Area, another invention of a Hungarian startup Platío is presented – a special cover for urban surfaces, such as a pedestrian pavement, generating energy by using solar panels,” Baranyi explained. “In addition, Hungary is among the leaders in developing electromobility. The government has elaborated a programme, one of



Ambassador of Hungary to Kazakhstan András Baranyi visited the village of Saga in Kostanai Region where Madyars, a clan within the Kazakh Middle Horde (Zhuz), live. They are believed to be related to the tribes that invaded Central Europe in the Early Middle Ages and settled there under the name of Magyars (Hungarians).

the aspects of which is significant financial assistance for those who choose electro-mobiles instead of traditional fuel consuming cars. The special green number plates allow such cars to use special bus lanes, parking lots and battery recharge stations for free. There is also a new factory in Hungary producing buses with electronic engines. This is one of the most interesting topics we could share with Kazakh partners,” he elaborated. The ambassador also shared his impressions of his recent trip to Kostanai Region as part of the scientific expedition titled “In the footsteps of our ancestors.” “I do believe that the majority of Kazakhs and Hungarians know about their common historical background and cultural ties. One of the main elements testifying to these common roots is the fact that some tribes of Kipchaks led by Khan Koutyan settled in Hungary in the 13th century. Even now the two central counties in Hungary are called Great Cumania and Little Cumania and around 250,000 an-

cestors of Kipchaks are still living there. Even though they have lost their language, they have kept their Kipchak identity,” he said. “Some centuries earlier, Hungarians themselves arrived to the Carpathian region as the only horse-riding nomadic nation of Europe,” the ambassador explained. “The ancient homeland of Hungarians was Western Siberia and Southern Ural, which is the western-most part of Kazakhstan now. But not all of our ancestors moved to their present place of living, so called Eastern Hungarians remained in this part of the world, and according to some historians, now they are living in Kazakhstan. Moreover, within the Argyn tribe there is a genus of Madiyars who live in the south of the Kostanai Region, and in fact, in Hungarian, we also call ourselves Magyars. As a sign of eternal friendship and brotherhood between us, some years ago we opened a special monument there, which impressed me the most – a tree of life with two branches symbolising Kazakh Madiyars and Hungarian Magyars.”

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Understanding technology brings more benefits, says young scientist

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CULTURE

Winners named in International Tchaikovsky Youth Competition in Astana

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SPORTS

Astana Pro Team cyclist Fabio Aru second overall after nine Tour de France stages

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Air Astana named Best Airline in Central Asia and India



Air Astana President Peter Foster (C) poses for a photo with airline staff at Le Bourget Air Show in Paris.

By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – Air Astana, Kazakhstan’s national carrier, won the Best Airline in Central Asia and India award at the June 20 Skytrax World Airline Awards at the Le Bourget Air Show in Paris. The airline is celebrating the award for the sixth successive year.

Air Astana is the nation’s largest airline, with state-owned Samruk Kazyna Sovereign Wealth Fund holding 51 percent and the remainder belonging to BAE Systems, a British multinational company.

Airline president Peter Foster spoke about the company’s focus on service delivery.

“The key is that all successful airlines concentrate primarily on service delivery. By service delivery we mean not just what happens in the cabin, but what happens on the ground, the punctuality of the airline. We really take the view that our senior managers, myself included, have to be deeply involved in the details of service delivery, because if you take care of the details, the big picture looks after itself,” he said in an interview with The Astana Times.

In a Skytrax survey conducted from August 2016-May 2017 by phone, questionnaire and online, customers evaluated their experi-

ence with airlines based on a wide range of indicators such as check-in, boarding, cabin cleanliness and comfort, entertainment system and onboard service. The survey analysed more than 200 airlines, including large international carriers as well as small regional ones, with the results based on 20 million votes from 100 countries.

“We have been building the airline virtually from scratch. It was founded in 2002. I came here in 2005,” he added.

Air Astana flies to more than 60 international and domestic destinations. The carrier has a fleet of 31 aircraft, including Boeing 767-300ER, Boeing 757-200, Airbus

A320, Airbus A320neo and Embraer E190, a number it plans to increase to 64 by 2026.

“We have strong support from stakeholders, shareholders and government at a very high level. So, we are not doing this alone,” said Foster.

He added quite a bit of work must be done to take the airline to a new level.

“I think the next challenge is now to grow from a relatively small medium-sized carrier to a global connecting carrier. That is the challenge on which we have embarked at this time,” he noted.

Using the capital as a transit hub, which is in line with the Plan of the Nation – 100 Concrete Steps put forward by Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev, is one of many measures to be used to achieve the goal. This is especially important given the recent opening of a new international terminal at Astana Airport, which will increase its capacity from 3.5 to 8.2 million passengers per year, and the staging of the three-month long EXPO 2017 in the capital.

Air Astana now operates more than 400 flights to and from the city and is considering opening new destinations and increasing the frequency of flights.

“In the last few weeks we launched Astana-Kiev and now we have Astana-Delhi. We have increased Astana-London to five times a week. We have increased flights between Astana and St. Petersburg, Astana and Ekaterinburg, Astana-Novosibirsk, Astana-Tbilisi, Astana-Seoul and Astana-Beijing. There are a lot of increased frequencies and new routes opening at the moment primarily from Astana and this is likely to develop as we move forward,” said Foster.

Minister proposes extending Astana’s open skies regime

Staff Report

ASTANA – Kazakh Minister for Investments and Development Zhenis Kassymbek has proposed extending the open skies regime to next year to attract more foreign tourists to the capital.

“The open skies regime has been launched in Astana for the period of EXPO 2017; all restrictions on flights of foreign carriers have been lifted up to seven flights a week. Nine new international routes from Astana have been opened since the beginning of the year and the number of flights on existing routes has significantly increased. We propose extending the period of the regime to next year,” he said.

Kasymbek also noted air passenger traffic increased from 20,000 to 478,000 from 2010-2016.

“The key passenger flows through Kazakhstan are mainly

from China to Europe, from China to Russia, from China to Turkey, between Europe and India and Southeast Asia and between Ukraine and Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and South Korea,” he said.

He added there are plans to transport up to 600,000 transit passengers by the end of 2017, a number expected to reach 1.6 million by 2020.

“According to Air Astana, the cost of one transit passenger is \$600 per day, of which \$250 is the money that passengers leave at the hotel and food points,” said Kassymbek.

The open skies regime over the capital was introduced one month before the start of the international exhibition and is expected to last until the end of summer. The city will be able to receive planes of air carriers who notified the Kazakh side about their intention to fly there.



Identity of Kazakhstan’s 18 millionth citizen revealed

By Dmitry Lee

ASTANA – Baby girl Muslima Samatkyzy born May 11 to a family from Taldykorgan, in the Almaty region was recently identified as Kazakhstan’s 18 millionth citizen.

“All the way, while we were going home, our heart was beating with excitement, we knew that in July there will be the 18 millionth inhabitant of the country, but the fact that it was our Muslima was a complete surprise for us,” said father Samat Bestybayev.

Muslima was born weighing 3.3 kilogrammes and measuring 51 centimetres to Bestybayev and mother Diana Omarkhanova. City Akim (Mayor) Bagdat Karasayev called the family to congratulate them and the official designation of the baby as the country’s 18 millionth citizen was announced



Diana Omarkhanova holds her newborn baby girl Muslima.

by Minister of National Economy Timur Suleimenov, tengrinews.kz reports.

“The phone call from Akim

Bagdat Karasayev was an absolute surprise for us,” Omarkhanova said the media.

The akim congratulated the fam-

ily and informed them they would be gifted a three-bedroom apartment in August.

According to the Statistics Committee of the Ministry of Education and Science of Kazakhstan “in May, the population of Kazakhstan reached 18 million people. The date of birth of the 18-millionth resident was May 11, 2017.”

The committee explained the parameters that helped determine the date of birth of the 18 millionth inhabitant. “Growth components (births and immigration) and reduction (death and emigration) of the population [were taken into account] when searching for the born children in the birth database. The candidacy was determined in the country as a whole, irrespective of the place of residence of their mothers, their level of education and occupation, and sex, weight and height of newborns.”

The Kazakhstan population has seen an uneven growth over the last 25 years. It used to be 17.5 million people in 1991, then fell to 14.9 million by 1999 due to outward migration of ethnic Russians, Ukrainians and Germans, among others, and has now reached 18,014,200 people.

MFA, Chief Editors’ Club announce foreign media contest winners

By Aigerim Seisembayeva

ASTANA – The Kazakh Foreign Ministry and Kazakhstan’s Chief Editors Club announced July 10 the winners of the Fourth International “Kazakhstan Through the Eyes of Foreign Media” contest. Authors from Azerbaijan, Belgium, Canada, Israel and South Korea won from each of their respective geographical regions and will make a week-long trip to Kazakhstan in August this year.

According to a press release by the Kazakh Ministry of Foreign Affairs, this year, the con-



test received 83 entries from 29 countries. This was quite a jump from last year’s roughly 60 submissions. The five winners were picked from five geographical regions.

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Kazakhstan has huge tourism potential, says UNWTO Secretary General

Staff Report

ASTANA – World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) Secretary-General Taleb Rifai said during the June 26-27 “Tourism and Future Energy: Unlocking low-carbon growth opportunities” conference in Astana that Kazakhstan has great tourism potential and needs to be branded globally.

According to him, Kazakhstan is full of mysteries and discoveries, as well as landscapes, history of traditions and culture, which makes it unique. Also, the potential of Kazakhstan as a tourist destination is huge, since it is a young country with one of the youngest capitals in the world, he added. It is vital for Kazakhstan to use its



World Tourism Organisation Secretary-General Taleb Rifai.

potential, and travel must be used for political and economic interest.

“One of the fastest-growing economic sectors nowadays, tourism represents 10 percent of the world’s GDP, 7 percent of global exports and one in every 10 jobs. But with growth comes responsibility as we work towards building a better fu-

ture for the people and planet of prosperity and peace,” said Rifai at the conference.

“Tourism is estimated to account for 5 percent of global atmospheric CO2 emissions. We need to move towards a truly green tourism economy where growth is decoupled from environmental or cultural degradation,” he added.

Participants of the conference discussed the contribution of the tourism sector to reducing carbon emissions. The event was a joint initiative of Astana EXPO 2017 and the UNWTO with the support of the Ministry of Culture and Sports of Kazakhstan.

Discussions were focused on how to implement mitigation and adaptation measures in transport, accommodation and destinations

in the scope of the Sustainable Development Goals, especially Goal 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), Goal 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production) and Goal 13 (Climate Action).

“Tourism is a priority for Kazakhstan. Tourism is a driver of socio-economic development and we plan to increase the share of GDP from one percent to eight percent by 2025,” said First Deputy Prime Minister of Kazakhstan Askar Mamin, who requested UNWTO’s support to construct a sustainable tourism sector.

At the conference, EXPO 2017 Board Chair Akhmetzhan Yessimov said that the expo is a unique opportunity to introduce Kazakhstan to the world and provide an impetus for comprehensive development of tourism.

THINGS TO WATCH & PLACES TO GO

NATIONAL MUSEUM

- | | |
|--------------------|--|
| June 14 – Sept. 10 | Exhibition of Russian Art Masterpieces |
| June 15 – Aug. 10 | Beibars Sultan Exhibition |
| June 23 – Aug. 3 | Ancient Egypt Monuments Exhibition |
| July 3 – Sept. 20 | Ancient Arms Exhibition |

EXPO 2017

- | | |
|-------------------|--------------------------------|
| June 17 – Sept. 9 | Cirque du Soleil. Reflekt Show |
| July 20, 7:30 pm | Spirit of Tengri Festival |

ASTANA OPERA

- | | |
|---------------|--------------------------------|
| July 20, 7 pm | Kazakh Classical Music Concert |
|---------------|--------------------------------|

Air Astana presents documentary about Kazakhs living abroad

By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – Kazakhstan’s national flag carrier Air Astana presented July 6 the documentary “Air Astana: Connecting Destinies” that captures the lives of Kazakhs living abroad.

The premiere coincided with Astana Day and 15th anniversary of Air Astana, noted Air Astana President Peter Foster.

“Now we are at the middle of international exhibition EXPO 2017, which makes our meeting more symbolic. I am very glad that Kazakhs living abroad were able to be here with us today. I imagine how you feel coming back home after such long time abroad,” said Foster in his opening remarks, as quoted by Karavan.

“The main idea of the film is that we serve as a bridge in lives of our people,” the airline noted.

The documentary reveals six stories of people who were either born in Kazakhstan but in a twist of fate ended up living abroad and ethnic Kazakhs who were born abroad and stayed there. Yet, what all six people share in common is their love for the motherland and respect for their roots that they preserved for generations.

“Kazakhstan has always pulled me back and I was coming back here with great pleasure,” said Ewald Hering, doctor in traumatology and orthopaedics who has lived in Germany since 1992.

He was born in Konstantinovka



(L-R): Abdolvahap Kara, Altynai Zhunussova, Peter Foster, Akbar Mazhit.

village in the Pavlodar region. As a child, he used to help his father with farming and cattle, but his interest in medicine eventually brought him to then Tselinograd, current Astana, where he graduated from the Tselinograd Medicine Institute in 1992. He got a job in a hospital in Hannover, where he continues to work.

He still keeps in touch with his colleagues in Kazakhstan to exchange advanced practices and ideas, noted Hering.

One of the six stories is the story of Altynai Zhunussova, head of the Siberian Centre of Kazakh Culture in Omsk in Rus-

sia. “I was born in Omsk. My ancestors are from here as well. We are indigenous Siberian Kazakhs and we are very proud of that. We are connected to Kazakhstan by the Irtysh River. I frequently visit Kazakhstan and thanks to Air Astana it takes 50 minutes to fly from Omsk to Astana,” added Altynai.

Altynai recalls a moment from her childhood, when she was asked to sing a Kazakh song during the celebrations of the 60th anniversary of the Kazakh Soviet Republic at her school with warmth. “When I walked to the stage in one and half metre sauke-

le [traditional Kazakh bridal headwear], other peers were giggling at what I was wearing. Then I realised that I was different and that we have a culture that we do not know,” noted Altynai.

At that moment, she decided to revive Kazakh culture in Omsk. She has been working with people of different ages in her centre, who were eager to immerse themselves in diverse and vibrant culture of Kazakh people.

The next story is Abdolvahap Kara, who was born in 1961 in Istanbul where he received a history degree from Istanbul University. “My ancestors lived in East

Kazakhstan near Markakol Lake. In the 19th century, they moved to China and we have been living in Turkey for 65 years. As a historian, I believe my mission is to teach Kazakh history to young Turkish people,” said Kara.

Nearly 20,000 Kazakhs live in Turkey, he noted.

Another person featured in the documentary, Seljuk Biyikli, was born in Paris, where he lives now with his wife, a Kazakh national born in Turkey, and two children, who speak Kazakh.

He works in the Airbus, but also manages Paris Kazakh Sport football club, which has two big teams of 40 players – half of them are Kazakhs, another half are Afro-Americans, Arabs and French. In 2010, it joined the French league and now plays in the seventh division.

The documentary also captures the story of Akbar Mazhit, head of a community of poets and scriptwriters in China, who has also been working in the Chinese Parliament for more than 20 years. He is also one of the honoured heads of Chinese cuisine and culture pavilion at the expo.

Speaking fluent Kazakh, he marked a special role of Kazakhstan in his books. “I write a lot about Kazakhstan and stories of Kazakhs in my books and I continue writing. More than 1.6 million Kazakhs live in China. They are engaged in farming, business and medicine,” Mazhit noted.

“I have many friends in Kazakhstan. After all, Kazakhs are all relatives,” added Mazhit.

Born in Almaty, Farida Chulakova has lived in Frankfurt since 2002. She finished Kulyash Baiseitova Secondary Specialised Music School for Gifted Children in Almaty, but then decided to move to Germany, where she works at the Russian Chamber Philharmonic.

“Kazakhstan is my motherland. I miss Kazakhstan very much and especially our food and people,” she noted.

Air Astana was not alone in producing the film, as well-known documentary director Zhanna Balakayeva together with a team of professionals assisted them.

“When the national carrier got in touch with me with an offer to direct this film, I was excited. Different people, different stories, but all of them love their motherland. Our heroes are not successful business people or Bolashak students. These are people of middle class and the representation of the diversity of the nation. They are committed to their life principles. We were searching for heroes in different ways – through acquaintances, the internet, embassies. It was a sort of extreme work, during which together with cameramen, we were like a reaction group flying to different parts of the world,” said Balakayeva, as quoted by Karavan.

Initially the organisers planned to include a larger geographical space, but due to time limitations and visa issues, they decided to have five countries.

Understanding technology brings more benefits, says young scientist

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – What are the prospects of using blockchain? How can genetic profiling transform lives? Why are robotics classes popular in the country?

To learn about the top digital trends and their advantages, The Astana Times interviewed Nazarbayev University Science and Technology School robotics instructor Artur Saudabayev. He was invited to speak about blockchain this year at the Eurasian Media Forum.

“I had a wonderful opportunity to take part in the forum as a speaker on the panel dedicated to the digital revolution. Talks were mainly focused on blockchain. This technology as one of the most significant trends is a decentralised database for storing and conducting transactions in various fields,” he said.

Saudabayev is confident the transformative, revolutionary technology is a popular topic, as many governments want to create their own cryptocurrency and transfer certain processes to blockchain.



Artur Saudabayev

“We need to consider this technology, too,” he said.

Saudabayev, 28, started his career as a robotics department teaching assistant at the university in 2012. He then received a Master’s Degree in Informatics from the University of Edinburgh.

“There are different opinions about blockchain. Some say that it can change our life and blockchains today are like the Internet,” he added. “Cryptocurrency

and bitcoin prices have increased recently. This attracts much attention as people see this as a way to invest money.”

He also presented an analysis of technologies, their social significance and the prospects for their introduction in Kazakhstan.

“It is important to understand what this technology is, what prospects it has and how it works. The cryptocurrency market is actively developing and people are interested in investing without

understanding the mechanisms. There is a need to instruct people to make a more informed decision,” he said.

Saudabayev noted the interesting and dynamic transformations taking place in the country.

“People are given the opportunity to express themselves via social media. Local authorities and state agencies became open and accessible to dialogue with the population. This has increased respect for some individuals and state institutions. Blockchain can also be developed in our country. This technology stores all its data on transactions on the computers of network members; that is, everyone has their own copy. The main advantage of this is absolute transparency, so you can track all the transactions,” he said.

Recently, there was a proposal to transfer the value-added tax (VAT) system to the Kazakh blockchain.

“This will improve the relationship between people and government, not to mention the technological advantages of this system. It creates an advantage in preserving data from its centralisation and availability,” he said.

Saudabayev shared his experience participating in FameLab, a competition initiated by the British Council with the support of Chevron.

“Science communication is at its early stages of development in our country. The researcher not only needs to exchange ideas with colleagues, but also tell the public about his or her studies. This is not a simple task, as people used to reject or did not agree with new information. People believe that science is something not interesting, boring, but there is a unique opportunity to break this stereotype,” he said.

After winning the national stage in the FameLab competition, Saudabayev took part in FameLab in the U.K. with skilful millennials from more than 20 countries in Africa, Asia and Europe.

“I spoke about ‘Genomewide association studies for human diseases.’ I consider the analysis of DNA will greatly change our lives. The contest performances were fascinating. It was broadcast all over the world and I’m glad that our country is part of this movement,” he said.

People should understand what

lies behind the changes, how technologies and science are developing and what progress brings, and the event is a unique chance for scientists to share their knowledge, he added

“We can live proactively, not reflectively, and evaluate our prospects for health and lead an informed lifestyle with the analysis of DNA. Of course, there are a number of challenges, because if these data are available, they can be stolen or they can provoke discrimination. Genes speak only about chance, but they can become instruments of discrimination,” he said.

Saudabayev’s main area of interest is machine learning as a subsection of artificial intelligence.

“I’m working on the cognitive neurosystems of robots, their visions and brains. It’s great when students participate in the process of creating robots that understand where they are and make some decisions according to the code that our students have invested. It’s inspiring. Robotics are trending because it is a motivating and interesting way to learn programming and logic and this course always attracts students,” he said.





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WEDNESDAY, JULY 12, 2017

Ancient Egyptian artefact exhibit opens in Astana



First Vice Minister of Tourism of Egypt Ahmed Shukri (C) at the Tutankhamun collection's ribbon-cutting ceremony.

By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – An exhibit featuring the Tutankhamun collection and artefacts of ancient Egypt opened June 24 at the National Museum of Kazakhstan, giving locals and guests the chance to acquaint themselves with the northern African nation's rich history. The display is timed with EXPO 2017.

Kazakh Deputy Minister of Culture and Sports Aktoty Raiymkulova was present for the opening, reading opening remarks on behalf of Minister of Culture and Sports Arystanbek Mukhamediyuly.

"The 3,000-year history of ancient Egyptian civilisation brought rich historical and cultural legacy to the modern world. One-third of the world's monuments of ancient culture and architecture are located in Egypt. I congratulate you on the opening of the exhibition

of ancient history. This exhibition includes items that demonstrate the stage-by-stage development of Egypt. These historical artefacts tell about the past era. I hope the exhibition helps you learn more about the history and culture of Egypt," she said.

More than a year was needed to prepare the exhibit, according to organisers.

"We came up with this idea last year. We welcomed a delegation visiting Astana on this occasion. The delegation's visit does not only deal with this issue, but also other issues related to tourism. We went to Cairo and we met with the Minister of Antiquities and the Minister of Culture. We are trying to strengthen cultural ties. Therefore, it will have a huge impact on our people so they can learn the history of Egypt," said Ministry Department of Culture and Arts head Almaz Nurazkhan.

The exhibit demonstrates a high level of cooperation between Kazakhstan and Egypt, noted Egyptian First Vice Minister of Tourism Ahmed Shukri.

"Egypt will donate all the exhibits to Kazakhstan," he added.

The show also features items from the Tutankhamun collection, including the Pharaoh's gold-plated, semiprecious stone encrusted wood chariot and throne, outer sarcophagus, a statuette of a girl with sacrificial gifts and gold collar inlaid with semiprecious stones.

Incorporating a variety of items, each display represents a particular period of Egyptian history and culture from Predynastic to the Middle Ages.

The Predynastic period, dated prior to 3100 BC, is represented by the Narmer Palette, an ancient engraving depicting the first king of Egypt, his victorious battle and unification of the country. A group

of British archaeologists discovered the item in 1897-1898 at the Temple of Horus in Nekhen, once a political and cultural centre of Predynastic Egypt.

The history of the Ancient Kingdom period is reflected in the Hesy Ra wood panel. The Egyptian official became prominent due to his tomb paintings and cedar wood panels, which among others were discovered by French archaeologists Auguste Mariette and Jacques de Morgan in 1861.

The exhibition also includes items from the Middle Kingdom period, including a painted wooden statue of Pharaoh Senusret I, the second pharaoh of the 12th dynasty who carried out an aggressive expansionist campaign. In addition, visitors may become acquainted with the Greco-Roman and Islamic periods.

The exhibition will last until Aug. 3.

Winners named in International Tchaikovsky Youth Competition in Astana

By Chris Stanton

ASTANA – Approximately 125 pianists, violinists and cellists from 20 countries demonstrated their accomplishments June 15-25 at the 10th International Tchaikovsky Competition for Young Musicians. The event, held for the first time in Kazakhstan as part of EXPO 2017, offered musicians up to age 17 the opportunity to declare themselves the best of the best in their respective spheres.

According to www.Russia-Expo2017.ru, Kyle Hu (USA) was named the winner in the piano category, with second place shared by Ilya Papoyan (Russia) and Hechao Yang (China) and third going to Russians Maria Andreyeva and Anastasia Makhamedrikova. Na Kyung Kang (Korea) and Yujin Kawai (Japan) were first among the violinists, followed by Akbike Algi (Kazakhstan) and Anne Maria Wehrmeyer (Germany) in second place and Zhengyi Jiang (China), Rakhil Mussakhodzhaeva (Kazakhstan) and Alexey Styckin (Russia) in third. The cello competition had single winners at each level. Yo Kitamura (Japan) captured first place, second prize went to Namisa Sun (China) and Yeeun Kang (Korea) was third.

Competition namesake Pyotr Tchaikovsky is considered by some to be one of the most talented composers the world has ever known. Works such as his classic "Scherzo in C-minor" and "Waltz of the Flowers" could surely warm the coldest human heart.

"A pure innovative revolutionary" are words that come to one's

mind when the thought of a Tchaikovsky piece slowly fills listeners' ears. The legend of the Russian's wondrous works has lived for more than a hundred years, inspiring up-and-coming composers through the painstaking endeavour to bring the genius of his musical mind to an ever-changing world.

The competition has been held in various countries, travelling to Russia, Japan, South Korea, China and Europe. Only the most famous maestros and outstanding musicians from different nations have the rare opportunity to set foot on-stage.

The jury was composed of more than 200 world-famous musicians and teaching professors from 24 countries, providing an unbiased way to discover the most gifted talent due to the members' vast years of experience. One of the main goals of the event is to provide both competitors and laureates a unique opportunity to jump-start their careers.

"Of course, this competition is an opportunity for us Kazakhs and we want to see our children compete not just abroad but also at home. For them, it is a big ego boost and a stimulus to be able to have the opportunity to win as well as open themselves up even further due to the sheer competition at hand that they face," said People's Artist of Kazakhstan Aiman Mussakhodzhaeva.

The International Tchaikovsky Youth Competition has involved thousands of talented young people eager to have their voices heard and the event has become a stepping stone not only for recognition in their native countries, but worldwide.



Kyle Hu from the U.S. was named the winner in the piano category.

Astana hosts ethnic music festival



Tamikrest, a Mali-based band, performs at the Spirit of Astana ethnic music festival in Astana.

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – Tamikrest gave a concert featuring incredible guitar mastery as part of their world tour June 24 during the Spirit of Astana, an ethnic music festival held in the capital.

The Mali-based musicians became famous synthesising traditional African music with western rock and pop styles. They performed on electric guitars, bass guitar, djembe and other traditional percussion instruments.

"Our music unites completely different parts of the world. We are very happy to be here. The festival brought together many good artists; it was great to be a part of this atmosphere," said one of the band's soloists.

Almaty has hosted the Spirit of Tengri, which is considered a national cultural brand, for four years and the event was initiated for the first time in the capital this year.

Fourteen folk music bands took part in the festival, including Huun Huur Tu, the throat singing group Tuvan, two-time Grammy nominated recording artist Carmen Rizzo, GeoTrain from Georgia, Motiva Zenekar from Hungary, Ljubojna from Macedonia and Namgar from Russia.

"We want this festival to be held here every year because ethnic music is the popular musical trend. We became famous all over the world. Foreign musicians and producers attend our festivals because they are interested in the music content of Central Asia, which

means that this content will soon appear on world music venues. It is very important. For example, there are more Arab and African motives in Europe," said Batyr Kazybayev, Director General of Alash Media Group, which organises the festivals.

The largest open-air event introduced by Tengri FM national radio station and the Astana akimat (city administration) was a great success. The concert, featuring unique soloists, was specifically organised for the capital audience.

"Local bands presented their new songs and there are groups that came to Kazakhstan for the first time. We have an interesting and powerful schedule of events," said festival and Zhyldyz FM and Tengri FM producer Zhan Kasteyev.

Kazakhstan was represented by the ethno-rock band Tigrahaud, Drums of Almaty, a percussion instrumental band, Edil Khusainov & Satzhan Project and DJs Roman Bazhanov, Nariman Issenov and Rustam Ospanov.

"We are very pleased. In general, we were worried that we wouldn't gain an audience in Astana on a weekday. It turned out that the audience was more than the average. People responded very well," said Aldaspan founder Nurzhan Toishi.

The fifth Spirit of Tengri, with the participation of hundreds of ethnic groups from more than 30 countries, was held May 20-21 in Almaty. The multicultural project is aimed at demonstrating the ethnic traditions of the countries on the Kazakh land.

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Liquefied petroleum gas becoming very popular among drivers

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – Kazakhstan drivers continue to convert their vehicles to liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) consumption. In 2016, LPG sales increased by 43 percent, while gasoline sales fell by 5 percent. Experts find this trend promising and favourable not only for the drivers, who save money, but for the national economy and environment as well.

“As of today, LPG is 2.5 times cheaper than low-octane gasoline and three times cheaper than high-octane gasoline. Up-to-date LPG equipment sufficiently increases engine life, decreases engine oil pollution and the converted car has two fuel tanks, which means that its trip distance doubles. We can talk about the increase in demand for our services from one year to the next,” said Gazcentre Manager Varvara



Gutchenko in an interview with The Astana Times.

Gutchenko, who works at a major service station for LPG vehicles, finds that one of the reasons for converting is that it makes vehicles more environmentally friendly.

The number of LPG filling stations in the country year increased by 51 percent in one year, as driver demand for gasoline fell in response to a sharp increase in prices in the last 12 months after the government refused to control fuel prices. In 2016, the average price

of the most popular type of gasoline increased by 13 percent compared to 2015. Consumers found the price increase excessive and actively converted their cars to the cheaper LPG fuel.

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

In 2016, LPG sales reached 457,800 tonnes and 28.9 billion tenge (US\$89 million), approximately two times the 2015 numbers.

Gutchenko believes up-to-date equipment is absolutely safe and that LPG equipment is safer than a car’s standard gasoline system. She noted it is extremely impor-

tant to select a qualified company to complete the conversion.

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

“The minimum price for LPG converting is 260,000 tenge (US\$800) for a four-cylinder passenger car. We don’t give preference to any brand, because every brand has its own advantages and peculiarities without regard to the country of its production. But we can say that Italian, Turkish and Polish equipment is the best. Italian companies started to produce the equipment in the 1960s and have great work experience,” she added.

The conversion has one disadvantage – the loss of free space in the trunk, which is solved by using a toroidal tank, she said. The tank is installed instead of a spare wheel or under the body of the car, truck, pickup or SUV.

Gutchenko noted the station has a variety of customers. The company converted even tiny three-cylinder cars and worked on brand-new BMW, Lexus and Range Rover models and other luxury cars whose owners want to save money. In addition to the fact that these cars are expensive, they are complicated and have very protected electronics. Sometimes, experts need to dismantle half the car to install LPG equipment and electronic adjustment is difficult.

“The Toyota Land Cruiser is the most popular model we are working on. This model amounts to approximately 50 percent of the cars we convert and maintain,” said Gutchenko.

Ukrainian business people show investment interest in Yereimentau wind farm

By Chris Stanton

ASTANA – Kazakhstan has the potential for renewable energy throughout its sprawling land, especially in the form of wind and small hydro power plants. As a result, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) has launched a 50 million euro (US\$56.7) financing

programme for projects that meet specified criteria, especially in either field.

Ukrainian business people are already familiar with the nation’s capacity in these areas and aim to take full advantage of its numerous benefits. As part of EXPO 2017, they visited Yereimentau wind farm, the country’s largest, 150 kilometres from the capital. Twenty-two turbines have already gen-

erated 300 million kilowatt hours of energy. The next phase will be an extension of the current facility, with plans to increase the fleet to 130 units by 2020.

The plant, owned by Samruk-Ergo, was constructed taking into account the harsh climatic conditions northern Kazakhstan faces every winter. To provide a stable operating temperature, generators were placed underground, metal

structures made of reinforced steel for extra protection in the case of -40 degrees and squalls that could potentially damage the structures.

“Perhaps when it’s all said and done we could have hundreds of tonnes of metal. Maybe we will even be able to mount most of it here, because we have great specialists behind us that can get it done,” said wind farm project general director Vladislav Eremenko.

The park location was chosen due its suitability. On average, the wind speed is eight metres per second, which provides a stable flow of energy.

“In the long term, together with the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, we are ready to jointly fund clean technologies. We have good expectations to progress in a short time to the second stage of our project. It has

the potential of 50 megawatts,” said Samruk-Energo Managing Director Kanysh Moldabayev.

A general expansion could increase the output to 300 megawatts. If the work is implemented as proposed, the annual power generation could reach one billion kilowatts of green energy. Although the projects are ambitious, the return could be made back in just seven years.

AllurGroup ships first batch of manufactured cars to Tajikistan

By Zhazira Dyussebekova

ASTANA – AllurGroup shipped June 24 the first batch of 55 Chinese-designed JAC cars worth almost \$600,000 to Tajikistan, according to the company’s website.

“The instrument of export trade financing allowed the domestic manufacturer to make a comprehensive proposal for the buyer, which is a delivery of goods plus financing,” said Kazakh Export’s Chairperson of the Board Ruslan Iskakov.

Holding Asia Group Tajikistan and AllurGroup, with the assistance of the export insurance company Kazakh Export and the Embassy of Kazakhstan in Tajikistan, agreed in April to ship cars manufactured in Kazakhstan to Dushanbe until the end of 2018. The cars will renew the taxi fleet of the Tajik capital. The Kostanai-made crossovers JAC S3 were chosen due to their high cross-country ability and affordability.

The vehicles will be shipped by rail from a temporary storage warehouse located on the territory of the plant in Kostanai.

All cars supplied to Dushanbe



Kuryk ferry port to take one million tonnes of cargo by year’s end

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – Kuryk international ferry port on the Caspian Sea, which started operation in the beginning of the year, has received 93 ships and more than 400,000 tonnes of cargo. Plans are underway to increase the number up to one million tonnes, according to a Kazakhstan Temir Zholy (KTZ) press release.

First Deputy Prime Minister Askar Mamin inspected the Nurlı Zhol projects during his working trip to the Mangystau region. He also visited the construction site of the port’s second phase.

Phase one was launched in December. Last year, 44 areas were put into operation, including the railway road, which allowed handling ferries with freight cars in round-the-clock mode.

Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev’s state-of-the-nation address specified the nation’s third

modernisation must enhance vehicle access, which will provide transshipment of cargo vehicles. That access is part of the second phase of construction, as equipment at the ferry port is currently being built and offshore dredging has been completed. Construction of the eastern and western protection embankments is underway.

The new ferry crossing will provide multimodal transportation of all types of cargo, including liquids, significantly increasing transit cargo traffic and export potential across the Caspian Sea to the ports in Azerbaijan, Iran and Russia. Commissioning the crossing will expand Kazakhstan’s sea gates, appreciably increasing the potential of the Trans-Caspian International Transport Route. The route arrangement includes countries such as Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey.

Mamin was also familiarised with the execution of projects to



reconstruct the region’s nationally important highways. A number of projects, such as Aktau-Shetpe (167 kilometres) and Shetpe-Sai Otes (60 kilometres), are proceeding and regional authorities have also started rebuilding the 85-kilometre Beineu-Akzhigit-Uzbekistan border highway. After

the loan agreement is ratified this fall, reconstruction will begin on a 73-kilometre section of Zhetysai-Zhanozen Road.

Mamin instructed local authorities to take measures to complete the work in the shortest possible time to significantly increase the region’s transportation potential.

MFA, Chief Editors’ Club announce foreign media contest winners

Continued from Page B1

Pervane Sultanova, a contributor to Azerbaijani Inews.az, won among journalists from the Commonwealth of Independent States and Baltics for her article “Kazakhstan’s new mission: from energy to peace diplomacy,” which focuses on Kazakhstan’s foreign policy initiatives and bilateral relations with Azerbaijan.

The winner among European journalists is Ilaria Capitanio, an Italian based in Brussels. She was awarded for her story “Kazakhstan is riding the wave of modernisation through opportunities and challenges,” published in the Vocal Europe online magazine. The article dwells upon Kazakhstan’s domestic policy aimed at modernising the economy, politics, culture, national identity and its energy mix.

Tom Taylor of Canada wrote the best publication among journalists from the Americas. His “Five

reasons you need to visit Kazakhstan,” published on Wildlives.co, provides readers with information about Kazakhstan’s tourist sites, hospitality, culture and even currency.

The winner from Asia, Australia and Oceania is Joel Lee of South Korea. His article “Ethnic Koreans sow the seeds of success in Kazakhstan” was published in The Korea Herald daily newspaper. It tells the history of Kazakh Koreans through the story of a parliamentarian who was born to a Korean agrarian family and made it to the top of government.

Udi Shaham from Israel was announced the winner in the Middle East and Africa region. He published an article titled “Kazakhstan seeks role as capital of ‘New Silk Road’” in The Jerusalem Post that says, “Hosting major international fora, Astana is becoming an important venue for the Eurasian economy.”

A press release on the results of the contest also notes that some other authors who submitted outstanding publications will receive the Kazakh Foreign Minister’s Certificate of Appreciation.

All five winners will get a trip to Kazakhstan with visits to the cities of Astana and Almaty and the Borovoye resort. Their trip will include visits to EXPO 2017 International Specialised Exhibition pavilions, cultural and historical sites and an opportunity to interview senior government officials, experts, journalists and representatives in the field of culture, sports and tourism of the country.

Kazakh Foreign Minister Kairat Abdrakhmanov noted that this kind of competition is not only an opportunity to raise Kazakhstan’s profile abroad and promote its peaceful initiatives internationally, but also a contribution to the further development of bilateral and multilateral relations with the

countries where the works of the contestants were published.

“Kazakhstan’s increasing role in the international arena was one of the main topics in the journalists’ reports. The achievements of our country in political, economic, cultural and other spheres also did not escape the attention of foreign media. All of this testifies to the fact that Kazakhstan’s domestic and foreign policy has been a success,” he said.

This year’s contest, according to the Kazakh MFA, was made possible thanks to its partners and sponsors – the Astana EXPO 2017 national company, the Kazakhstan Temir Zholy national railway company, Kazakhstan’s National Olympic Committee, the Ramada Plaza Astana and the Rixos Borovoye hotels, the Argymak transportation company and LOT Polish Airlines, which last May launched a regular connection between Warsaw and Astana.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 12, 2017

Thirty-eight couples marry on Astana Day

Staff Report

ASTANA – Thirty-eight couples were married July 5 in the lead up to Astana celebrating its 19th birthday. The annual ceremony took place at Atameken cultural centre, where every year Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev kicks off the celebrations of the Astana Day during a flag raising ceremony. “This year young people starting from the age of 18 are taking part in the ceremony, but there are also older couples, who are 65 and even 68. We do not have a particular selection process. We accept everyone who is willing to get married on the Astana Day. They just need to submit an application to a registry office,” said project organiser Gulnara Sagyndykova.

An entertainment programme awaited newlyweds as well as a photo and video shoot, reception, presents and souvenirs with all of them being free. The ceremony also featured a large release of doves accompanied by balloons.

This year marks the 10th anniversary of the mass marital ceremony in which more than 500 couples have participated over the years.



“One can say that 10 years is not that much, but at the same time it is a solid age. None of the couples that married July 6 divorced. Why? Because it is a huge responsibility before the entire nation. I believe these couples are the happiest,” added Sagyndykova.

One of the couples, Dmitry and Ainash, initially planned to marry July 1, but soon after they submitted a marriage application, the city’s registry office got in touch with them and told about the opportunity to marry July 6.

“Astana Day, the expo, our wedding. This is a wonderful day. We are very happy. When we learnt about this project, of course, we accepted the offer with great joy. Now we are here. We love Kazakhstan, we love expo and Astana and we love each other,” Ainash shared her feelings.

Unlike in the first years of the project, couples are now eager to participate, noted the organisers.

As part of the ceremony, the couples also left notes in the ceremony book. “We have the book that contains wishes from all couples since 2008,” added Sagyndykova.

Among the prizes in a draw were a trip to Turkey and the Borovoye resort area.

More than 200 children take part in train trip adventure across country

Staff Report

ASTANA – More than 200 children enjoyed a train tour around the country July 2-11. The project was initiated by Fund of Social

Projects supported by Kazakhstan Temir Zholy (KTZ), Samruk Kazyna Trust and a Kazakh radio station.

The unusual excursions and new discoveries were scheduled in the cities of Astana, Ekibastuz,

Almaty and Baikonur. Participants visited EXPO 2017 in Astana and toured the Bogatyr coal mine in Ekibastuz and the Gorky Park and Water Park in Almaty. They also visited the Baikonur Cosmodrome museum.

An entertainment programme, competitions, games and activities were planned during the stops at the stations. English language classes were also held.

The tour participants included children who reside in remote areas, children from large families and single-parent families and 50 winners of the Tugan Elge Sayakhat (A trip to home) essay contest. There were also children of employees of the Samruk Kazyna group of companies.

“Children visited the international exhibition in Astana, learnt the history and development of the coal mine and the state district power station in Ekibastuz, took part in an excursion to the Baikonur Cosmodrome history

museum at the Toretam station. Children went to the zoo, Water Park, a birds of prey show and an excursion around Almaty,” said KTZ Social Projects Fund Director Yerbol Kengerbayev.

The Shymbulak Mountain Resort organised an excursion for children in Almaty.

“Our guide spoke about the surrounding flora and fauna, glaciers and peaks near the city and the ski resort. Children were surprised to learn about our Kazakh climbers as they don’t know about them. It was an interesting tour and children were excited and impressed,” said one of the Shymbulak resort staff members.

It is planned to launch the second tourist train along the route Astana – Aktau – Turkestan – Almaty – Astana in August. About 150 children ages 12 to 15 will be selected. Fifty winners of the “How I see the energy of the future” essay competition can also participate in the tour.

Almaty doubles assistance to people with disabilities



By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – The Almaty Employment and Social Programmes Department has doubled its funding this year compared to 2016 to provide social support for people with disabilities.

The department has allocated \$12.6 million to assist up to 22,000 people with disabilities in 2017. Approximately 13,000 people were assisted in 2016, department head Aigul Akhmetova announced recently.

A portion of the funds will be used for the first time to purchase the highest quality assistive equipment.

“In 2017, 200 million tenge (US\$616,200) has been spent to purchase 958 German and Polish wheelchairs, which were presented to 836 people. Up-to-date equipment was provided to 2,000 deaf people. The equipment worth 593 million tenge (US\$1.8 million) includes laptops with software and spoken speech synthesis and reading machines. All people with disabilities, who have been waiting for the equipment since 2012 will be provided with the necessary means,” Akhmetova said.

Resource Centre for Inclusive Vocational Training and Social Adaptation of people with special educational needs was also opened in May. It hopes to help more than 500 people with disabilities this year improve their employability. The government plans to allocate 60.7 million (US\$187,000) to open three centres for 65 people with mental disabilities in the Medeu district. All people with disabilities in Kazakhstan get social security

and have a right to free rehabilitation, access to social infrastructure facilities and information, education and medical care. The government also provides vocational training and retraining, rehabilitation of work capacity and employment. Such people have first-priority access in healthcare, culture, communication, transport and service organisations.

People with disabilities of the first and second degree also have a shorter working day: not more than 36 hours per week under Kazakhstan legislation. An additional annual paid leave up to 15 working days is provided as well. Work at night is allowed only with the consent of a person with disabilities.

Resource Centre for Inclusive Vocational Training and Social Adaptation of people with special educational needs hopes to help more than 500 people with disabilities this year improve their employability.

Refusal to conclude an employment contract or promotion, dismissal at the initiative of the employer or the transfer of a person with disabilities to another job without his or her consent are prohibited.



Children from large or single-parent families and 50 winners of “A trip to home” essay contest pose for a family photo in the vicinity of Almaty.

Int’l expert community addresses risks of chronic non-communicable diseases

By Dmitry Lee

ASTANA – The international conference “Modern Approaches in Managing Socially Significant Diseases. Diabetes Mellitus” addressed June 28 the prevalence and risk factors of chronic non-communicable diseases, in particular diabetes, reported the Kazakh Healthcare Ministry.

Speakers unveiled current data on the worldwide prevalence of diabetes, shared their expertise in implementing diabetes programmes and provided an overview of national policies and practices in disease prevention.

“The Ministry of Healthcare, in order to improve the quality of life and life expectancy of the population, carries out measures for the prevention, early detection and effective treatment of patients with diabetes mellitus,” said Minister Yelzhan Birtanov.

“Starting in 2011, the national programme for the early detection of type 2 diabetes was introduced and more than 1.5 million people over 40 years old are screened annually. Within the guaranteed volume of free medical care, all patients with diabetes mellitus are

provided with a modern analogue of insulin and sugar-reducing drugs, insulin delivery means and self-monitoring means,” he added. Birtanov summarised the effectiveness of the session.

“Today’s conference and exchange of international experience in the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of diabetes mellitus will be useful for all the participants and will allow everyone to learn about the latest achievements in diabetes. I hope that this meeting will become an effective professional platform for discussing the global problem, the growth of type 2 diabetes cases,” he said.

As part of the meeting, the Ministry of Healthcare signed a memorandum of understanding with Sanofi through 2019. The company, a worldwide healthcare leader, discovers, develops and distributes therapeutic solutions focused on patients’ needs, according to its website. Sanofi is organised into five global business units: Diabetes and Cardiovascular, General Medicines and Emerging Markets, Sanofi Genzyme, Sanofi Pasteur and Consumer Healthcare.

“Sanofi has been a reliable part-

ner of the Ministry of Healthcare of Kazakhstan for many years,” said Sanofi Kazakhstan Chairperson of the Board Ranga Welaratne.

“We are pleased to support the organisation of an important international conference aimed at discussing the prevalence and risk factors of chronic non-communicable diseases. This conference, serving as an international platform for the exchange of experience, is an excellent opportunity for Kazakhstan’s medical community to obtain expert opinion from foreign specialists. We are further aiming at participating in joint projects with the Ministry of Healthcare designed to solve the most critical social and medical problems of the citizens of Kazakhstan, improve their quality of life and effectively develop public-private partnerships,” he added.

The event, held with the support of the ministry of healthcare, the French Embassy in Kazakhstan and Sanofi, included participation by international medical experts and representatives of the International Diabetes Federation (IDF) and World Health Organisation (WHO).

The IDF noted the incidence

and prevalence of type 2 diabetes is increasing worldwide and the disease is an extremely topical issue affecting Kazakh health. According to Wilson and Jungner criteria, the screening method used for the last 40 years, type 2 diabetes is a disease where mass screening of the population is justified and valid, as it can be identified by simple available tests.

The results of NOMAD, an epidemiological study aimed at identifying the prevalence of type 2 diabetes and pre-diabetes among Kazakhstan’s adult population (20-79 years), were announced as part of the conference.

Type 2 diabetes starts to develop nine-12 years before the onset of clinical indicators and diagnosis. At the stage when symptoms are absent, there are effective ways to influence the disease’s development, both medicine-related and lifestyle-related.

Diabetes, one of society’s medical and social problems, is among the four non-communicable diseases that kill large numbers of people each year. It is ranked as a socially-significant disease in Kazakhstan requiring systematic solutions and state response measures.

EXPO 2017

WEDNESDAY, JULY 12, 2017

National Days of Azerbaijan, Latvia and Venezuela

By Dana Omirgazy

ASTANA – EXPO 2017 played host to the celebration of several more countries’ national days last week, in this round Venezuela, Latvia and Azerbaijan.

Venezuela marked its National Day July 8 with the participation of Venezuelan Deputy Foreign Minister Felix Plasencia and Kazakh Deputy Minister of Defence Talgat Mukhtarov.

“The policy and achievement of the Latin American countries in the field of green energy are a valuable experience. All relations between Kazakhstan and Venezuela are concentrated in the field of new energy. We want to thank Venezuela for participating in the international exhibition and sharing its achievements in the field of renewable energy sources,” Mukhtarov said.

Plasencia expressed gratitude



President of Latvia Raimonds Vejonis attended the opening of his country's pavilion at EXPO 2017 on July 9.

for the opportunity to participate in the expo.

“On behalf of my country, I want to express my sincere gratitude for the opportunity to take part in such a grand event. We are convinced that the experience gained at the expo will give a positive impulse to the development of renewable energy sources in our country,” Plasencia said.

Venezuela has a large stock of traditional energy sources, but at the same time, meets 64.8 percent of its energy needs with hydropower and 1.5 percent with biomass. It also has resources for the development of solar and wind energy.

The National Day of Azerbaijan was marked July 9. Azerbaijan’s EXPO 2017 pavilion presents stands, maps and exhibits that show visitors the achievements of Azerbaijan in the field of alternative energy. The concept of the pavilion is based on the reflection of such national values as Azerbaijan’s history, culture, art, human capital and traditions of tolerance. Visiting Azerbaijan’s pavilion is a unique chance for guests to recharge themselves with positive energy of the Land of Fire and even stroll through the old and new city of Baku.

“Azerbaijan is a country rich in oil resources; however, we intend to minimise dependence on oil

resources and strengthen human capital. The state is set to switch to alternative energy. Many environmental projects are being implemented now,” Assistant to First Vice President of Azerbaijan Anar Alakbarov said.

Alakbarov pointed out the trusting relations between Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan, which are based on long friendship and mutual respect. The two states have a strategic partnership.

“Azerbaijan attaches great importance to participation in the expo, which is a truly grand event, uniting a huge number of people from different countries around a common and good goal. The theme of Future Energy fully meets today’s realities and is certainly close, and understandable, to everyone. Developing solutions to problems in the sphere of alternative energy sources is what worries humanity today,” he emphasised.

According to Alakbarov, Azer-

baijan’s approach to energy security implies that energy and resources should serve not conflicts and confrontations, but international cooperation. Kazakh Vice Minister of Energy Magzum Mirzagaliyev stressed that Azerbaijan was one of the first to confirm its participation in the exhibition. Trade and economic relations and agreements in the transport-transit and tax spheres are evidence of the countries’ close and mutually beneficial cooperation, he added.

“Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan demonstrate common views and similar positions on the international agenda. The Caucasian route passing through Azerbaijan provides us access to European markets. In turn, Kazakhstan opens the gates to Central Asia and China for Azerbaijan. We hope that thanks to the expo, the world will get a new impetus and make a big leap by taking on the legacy of this exhibition,” Mirzagaliyev said.

Latvia also marked its National Day on the same day at the expo site. President of Latvia Raimonds Vejonis arrived in Astana to participate in the event. Taking the floor, Vejonis praised the organisation of the expo, and noted the importance of Latvia’s participation in the international exhibition. The country is not only presenting its latest achievements in the field of green energy, but also is also ready for prospective business projects. After a celebratory concert, the foreign delegation visited the pavilions of Kazakhstan and Latvia.

Since the opening of the exhibition, approximately 40,000 guests have visited the Latvian pavilion.

“Participation in the exhibition is an important event for our country. This is a new opportunity for our enterprises to start partnership with different countries. In addition, the expo is held on the eve of an anniversary: In 2018, Latvia marks the 100th year of independence. We invite you to visit our country and have a look at the unique culture of Latvia,” Vejonis said.

Italian engineering companies eye benefit of meetings at expo

By Chris Stanton

ASTANA – Italy and Kazakhstan have been loyal trade partners for more than 25 years and the business council established in 2007 provided insight into the economies and needs of each nation. A fruitful relationship has slowly developed and a regular exchange of cultural events and days, concerts, cinema and exhibitions has only strengthened the stable bond between the countries.

EXPO 2017 has been one of

those staples that has propelled Italy’s top 20 engineering companies to journey to the capital to determine how they can demonstrate their worth. Representatives are in the city to talk business and bilateral meetings have been and will be conducted with potential partners on prospective contracts.

The roundtables could result in Italians leaving the city with a large number of new projects on the horizon.

Spea Engineering, which has worked for more than half a century

building state-of-the-art transport networks around the world, intends to expand cooperation with Kazakhstan. Participating in the expo has presented the promise of establishing a mutually-beneficial partnership.

“Kazakhstan with its geographical position can be a crossroads of communication between the East and West. It is a large international hub for the construction of infrastructure facilities in the region that is now developing. And we certainly want to leave with an understanding of the direction

in which both parties can cooperate and invest and where we can be the most effective in regards to mutual business dealings. Construction of railways and motorways in Italy is a sector that we have been involved in for a long time with a long proven history of success,” said Association of Engineering Companies President Gabrielle Shikolone.

VDP is also working in the transport sector, but the company has set its eyes in another direction. Its purpose is to study the impact of networks on the environment and minimise their harmful effects. The main factors are air pollution and protecting natural habitats.

Shikolone has no doubt about the productivity and outcome of the upcoming meeting, scheduled for July 13 in the Italian pavilion.

Serbians celebrate National Day, promote energy for all concept

By Dmitry Lee

ASTANA – Serbia marked its National Day June 28 with cultural events and films about the country, as well as an entertainment programme with stars such as Jela Cello and Jelena Tomašević.

“The Serbian pavilion at EXPO 2017 in Astana is a project of national importance,” said Assistant Minister of Trade, Tourism and Telecommunications Maja Mandrupa Gašić.

“Therefore, National Day, which we celebrate on Saint Vitus Day, is considered an ideal opportunity to introduce the people of Kazakhstan to Serbia as a country with a rich history and tradition, but with a clear vision of our society in the future. We want everyone who visits the Serbian pavilion to feel our traditional hospitality and friendliness and by participating in the modern exposition, to learn our desire for modernisation and technological development,” he added.

National Day is dedicated to Serbia’s historical and cultural heritage with the aim of promoting the country’s tourism. An additional event will be organised July 10 for National Science Day and the birthday of inventor Nikola Tesla, best known for his contributions to the design of the alternating current electricity supply system.

“The Serbian pavilion will present to the world our young scientists and their ideas and with the help of a modern art presentation, the possibility of investing in renewable sources such as biomass, water currents and wind. We made a significant contribution so the exhibition in Astana would initiate a global dialogue on the topic of new technologies in the production of green energy and to make it

possible so the energy is available to everyone at an affordable price and with maximum environmental protection. At the same time, when we talk about renewable sources, we want to present Serbia as a kind of investment, cultural and tourist destination,” said Gašić.

The 369-square-metre pavilion is based on Tesla’s ideas – the notion of free energy for all. Inspiration and concepts were found in the projects of three young Serbian scientists who are working on innovative solutions and technologies, the future development and application of which could significantly reduce energy losses and change the perception of energy in a global society.

To date, prominent Serbians have visited and participated in opening the national pavilion, including Belgrade Mayor Sinisa Mali, who opened the exhibition June 10; Minister of National Economy Goran Knežević, who also participated in the June 15 Astana Economic Forum; Ministry of Energy and Mining Deputy Minister for Renewable Energy Miloš Banyac, who at the ministerial conference and energy forum presented projects in the field of energy efficiency and wider use of biomass; and Serbian President Alexandar Vučić, who contributed to the launching process on June 9.

In the first two weeks, nearly 30,000 guests have already visited the pavilion, including heads of state, foreign ambassadors and high officials and businesspeople.

As part of the themes Energy for All and Energy Efficiency as a Lifestyle, the Serbian pavilion presents the best energy practices aimed at sustainable development and promoting research and technological advances in the fields of economy, storage, transfer and energy use.

EXPO 2017 features nightly music, laser shows and dancing

By Chris Stanton

ASTANA – EXPO 2017 features nightly music, laser shows and dancing featuring more than 150 performers.

All of the artists are local and were chosen during a casting call in April. Each performance incorporates an electronic vehicle in keeping with the Future Energy theme

of the expo. Each vehicle required more than two months to construct.

The shows are being run by an international team directed by a French company.

“We hired a professional choreographer from Disneyland Paris. The choreographer oversaw the dance part of things. Each section performs with their own group of dancers, the performance in whole lasts for about 40 minutes. We paid

much attention to detail and especially the musical selection. It was written specifically for this presentation,” said Andre Loncle, who is managing the performances.

One of the most difficult part of putting the show together was to project video on the main spherical expo building.

“Behind me you can see four projectors and another four on the other side and two on to the right

and to the left. In total, there are 36 projectors. The aim is that there needs to be a projection at an angle of 180 degrees precisely. To do this, we had to install a special screen that is some sort of a cloak over the sphere. It was the most difficult part because we had to preserve the beauty of the building,” said Andre Topalov, a manager of the company organising the performances.

Duke of Gloucester unveils British pavilion



Professional dancers at the official opening of the British national pavilion at EXPO 2017.

By Aigerim Seiseimbayeva

ASTANA – Prince Richard, Duke of Gloucester officially opened June 26 the British national pavilion at EXPO 2017 as part of the National Day of Great Britain in Kazakhstan.

British national day celebrations included a ballet, musical performances and a reading session. The

national day was opened with the raising of the national flags and hymns from Kazakhstan and Great Britain at expo.

“One cannot ignore the high level of cultural ties between our countries. Students from Kazakhstan are being educated in the U.K. British schools operate in Astana and Almaty. The popularity of British literature in our

country deserves special mention. There is not a single person who does not know Shakespeare, not a single child who does not know Harry Potter. Great Britain is one of the countries where traditions are honoured. In this regard, I am pleased to note the proximity of the traditions of Kazakhstan and Great Britain. We, like the British, like drinking tea, and I am

sure that during your stay in Kazakhstan you will be able to enjoy it,” said Kazakh Vice-Minister for Investments and Development Yerlan Khairov during the national day festivities. Khairov also noted Kazakhstan and Britain have had diplomatic relations for 25 years.

In turn, Prince Richard highlighted that the first world expo was unveiled by his great-great-grandfather Prince Albert in London in 1851. It exhibited the world’s first voting machine and the Mountain of Light – the world’s largest diamond at that time.

“Today, I am happy to be here at the expo that is being held for the first time in Central Asia. Today, I am pleased to realise that this exhibition continues to be held at the same level in the 21st century. More than 100 countries take part in the exhibition in Astana, which is a great achievement for Kazakhstan,” he said.

After the speeches, the London Contemporary Ballet Theatre gave a performance. Festivities also included a Scottish bagpipes performance and a show by the Physics Department of the University of Manchester.

The national day also featured a fashion show, a performance by the Brassroots jazz band and a reading session of extracts from the Harry Potter series of novels.



Belgrade-Los Angeles-based cello player Jela Cello performs at the National Day of Serbia at EXPO 2017.

SPORTS

WEDNESDAY, JULY 12, 2017

Astana Pro Team cyclist Fabio Aru second overall after nine Tour de France stages

By Anuar Abdrakhmanov

ASTANA – Italian cyclist and Astana Pro Team member Fabio Aru and Danish teammate Jakob Fuglsang recently climbed to second and fifth respectively in the overall standings following the ninth stage of the Tour de France.

The 23-stage, 3,540-km race is winding its way from Düsseldorf through Germany, Belgium and Luxembourg to the French capital and will include two individual time trials, five mountain, five mid-mountain, and nine plain stages. Chris Froome of Team SKY was the overall leader at press time.

Aru also won the fifth stage, covering 207.5 kilometres between Mondorf-les-Bains and Vittel, in 3 hours, 44 minutes and 6 seconds.

“When I attacked, I realised that I would have to give it my all. The last 300 metres were incredibly hard. But when I looked back 200 metres before the finish, I understood that I would not lose on that day,” said Aru.

“We were setting our minds on this stage,” said Astana Pro Team General Manager Alexander Vinokurov. “It was the first mountain stage, which could have a big impact on the race for the yellow jersey. And the stage is well-suited for Aru. Besides, we really wanted to win to mark the upcoming Astana Day (on July 6) ... It is a big day in our country and we dedicate

this victory to all the people of Kazakhstan!”

VINOKUROV: “We really wanted to win to mark the ... Astana Day ... It is a big day in our country and we dedicate this victory to all the people of Kazakhstan!”

The Kazakh-backed Astana Pro Team, part of the Astana Presidential Sports Club, features nine

riders, four of which are Kazakh nationals who have shown them-

selves worthy of world-class competition. “Almost 50 percent of the

Astana Pro Team line-up (at the race) is made of Kazakh riders. It is a big step forward for us because the Tour de France is the most important cycling race in the world, watched by billions all over the world ... We selected the best men to participate in the tour and I hope our athletes will show their real strengths and skills to secure their goals,” said Executive Director of Astana Presidential Club Amanbek Kulchikov.



Photo credit: www.astanaprem.kz

Thousands join Alpiniada in Almaty mountains for Astana Day

By Malika Orazgaliyeva

ASTANA – On July 2, the residents of Almaty celebrated their annual Alpiniada at the Shymbulak Ski Resort outside the city.

The festival, a massive joint climb of a 4,376-metre peak called Nazarbayev Peak, marks Astana Day. This year, more than 5,000 people, including foreign tourists, took part, according to the Almaty Physical Culture and Sports Department official website.

“For the first time I have decided to climb to the top of the mountain, although I always liked the mountains. I am here on a business trip and my colleagues recommended me to attend this event. It is very interesting. I am planning to stay for another couple of weeks,” said Sergey Sadovsky from Russia at the event.



Photo credit: sports.kz

Aigerim Zhumadilova from Astana said, “My aunt told me about this event. ... I came from Astana to test my strength. It is hard for a beginner, but I regularly do dancing and athletics, so it helped me.”

Only 290 people actually

made it to the highest point of the mountain. The absolute winners were two marathon runners who do sky running – high altitude or very technical mountain running. The fastest among men was Malik Abdu-Asset, who made it to the pinnacle in 1 hour

and 55 minutes. Among women Aizhan Zhombatyr was the fastest with a time of 2 hours and 27 minutes.

At the finish line were entertainment programmes for participants and visitors at the ski resort.

Nursultan Peak is one of the highest and most beautiful peaks near Almaty, and is visible from almost anywhere in the city. It is always covered with snow, even when temperature surpasses 40 degrees Celsius in the city below.

The Sporttyk Almaty programme, a citywide initiative to develop mass sports in Almaty and popularise active leisure among young people, helped organise this year’s event. The Almaty Physical Culture and Sports Department and the Mountaineering and Climbing Federation of Almaty also supported the event.

Kairat, Irtysh make it to UEFA Europa League’s second qualifying round

By Anuar Abdrakhmanov

ASTANA – Two of the three Kazakh football clubs that began their campaigns in the UEFA Europa League qualifying rounds in late June and early July have made it over the first hurdles. Kairat Almaty and Irtysh Pavlodar are on to the second round, while Ordabasy Shymkent was knocked out of the competition by a Bosnian side.

Opening its European season at home, Kairat secured an impressive 6-0 victory over Lithuania’s FK Atlantas Klaipeda, with Almaty’s top striker Gerard Gohou, former Arsenal forward Andrei Arshavin and midfielder Ivo Ilcevic each scoring a double. The match actually produced the largest margin of victory for any Kazakh club in their 14-year history of participating in European club competitions.

Kairat therefore felt more than confident in the return match, and indeed went on to win again, this time by a more modest 2-1. Early in the game, the hosts scored through Andrei Ciofu’s effort. However, a couple of minutes later, Ilcevic levelled the score, and at the end of the first half, Gerard Gohou gave Kairat a lead. The second half did not see any goals.

In the next round, Kairat will play Skenderbeu Korce, representing the Albanian Superliga.

“I congratulate the team on going through to the next round. Of course, we expected Atlantas to try to bounce back after the first game. They showed a very great desire in the beginning. We tried to prepare the team psychologically to make it more focused, but, unfortunately, we missed a goal at the beginning of the game. Then, of course, we got a hold of ourselves and began playing [better]. The most important thing is that we won this game and earned points for the country and for ourselves. The guys coped with the task and won the match,” said Kairat head coach Kakhaber Tskhadadze after the game.

It was more difficult to secure a place in the second qualifying round for Irtysh, which had Bulgaria’s FC Dunav as their challengers. At home, the Pavlodar club secured a minimal 1-0 advantage, but everyone understood this was not enough to rest comfortably ahead of the return match. As the first game showed, the Bulgarians were a very strong and well organised team.

That is why in the away match, Irtysh decided to attack right away. The decision bore fruit. In the sixth minute, Pavlodar defender Mario Maslach made good use of a cross from a corner strike and sent a header into the top corner of the hosts’ net. Dunav responded with a very dangerous combination that could have ended in a goal, were it not for the skills of Kazakh goalkeeper David Loria.

After half time, Irtysh managed to maintain its advantage, as the visitors were leaving no free space for Dunav’s strikers. Two minutes ahead of the referee’s final whistle, midfielder Aslan Darabayev made a low 17-metre shot that brought the Pavlodar side its second goal in the match. Thanks to the confident 2-0 win, the Kazakh club made it to the second qualifying round of the Europa League.

“Despite arriving [in Bulgaria] in advance to adapt and prepare, it was a bit difficult because of the weather conditions. We mostly train on an artificial field, but there is a natural field here, and it was wet and slippery, so we had to get used to it. The main thing is that we showed grit. We followed the instructions of the coach, went to the next round and pleased our fans,” said Darabayev.

Irtysh will now play Crvena Zvezda, the Serbian club that famously won the European Champions Cup back in 1991. For the Belgrade club this will be a third encounter with Kazakhstan, all in the Europa League (previously known as the UEFA Cup), as it twice met Kairat, eliminating them in 2003 before being crashed away two seasons ago.

Quite a disappointment was Ordabasy’s defeat by Siroki Brijeg. The 0-2 defeat in the first match in Bosnia and Herzegovina put the Shymkent side in a hole they never found their way out of. There was hope that if Ordabasy’s strikers were at their best they could bounce back in Kazakhstan with the support of their fans. However, the hosts failed to convert their few chances into goals.

Kairat and Irtysh will play their next Europa League matches on July 13 and 20, both starting at home. They are joined now by FC Astana, beginning their attempt to return to the UEFA Champions League with an away match in Latvia against FK Spartaks Jurmala July 12. The return leg will be played at Astana Arena July 20.

Children learn to love sports at Derby Football Academy

By Zhazira Dyussembekova

ASTANA – Kids sports seem to be largely developing in Kazakhstan’s regions through the introduction of different activities. Enthusiasts from Kostanai created their own Derby Football Academy in their hometown and Kokshetau last year and are now getting ready to open another one July 15 in Karaganda.

“The idea of creation of the football academy belongs to me and my friend, Ilya Baigabulov. Together with him, we graduated from Kostanai Children and Youth Sports School back in 2004. Later when we were around 26 years old, we started thinking about the school with European standards. We wanted to bring something that was not present in Kostanai at that moment,” said Derby Academy of Children’s Football co-founder and director Miras Adambayev in an interview with The Astana Times.

The academy was launched in October 2016 and 40 children aged three-12 joined in the first month. The centres in the two cities now

train 150 young athletes.

The academy’s main coach is former FC Tobol head coach Sergey Maslenov, who has a coaching certificate from UEFA-PRO. He is assisted by four coaches and five assistants.

“For us, the main part was to gather a team of trainers. While recruiting them, the main criteria was not how they played football on the professional level or how they performed for the clubs. The main criteria was the love of children,” said Adambayev.

Derby Academy uses the Italian Football Federation youth club methodology, German Bundesliga programme developed in conjunction with Adidas and best practices of the Russian Football Union.

“By looking at different techniques, we found out that some exercises can be used for children from a young age,” said Adambayev.

“The main group of children are those who were born in 2010-2011. So, teaching them a new sport is almost the same as teaching them how to write. Children do not understand whether the method is Kazakh, Russian or European. When you show them something,

they absorb it very quickly,” he added.

Local professional football players come to the academy to promote sports and show the participants they can also become professional athletes. The academy cooperates with FC Tobol and FC Okzhetpes and recently agreed with Karaganda’s FC Shakhter.

“The trainings for the smallest children are conducted in game form; for instance, when trainers pretend to be pirates hunting for gold. We want children to love sports and football,” noted Adambayev.

Derby Academy’s strategic goal is to educate professional, competitive players and, as a consequence, replenish the domestic and European clubs with its students.

Derby is working on the main areas of Kazakh football development for 2016-2022, including improving the quality of training children en masse and increasing the centres’ effectiveness and number of regional academies, as well as growing the number of junior national teams and creating their operating conditions.

The training programme for children ages three-five includes

a study of football basics and introduction to the game, developing basic skills such as coordination and interacting with the ball, physical activity and football with simplified rules. The presence of parents is mandatory.

Children aged six-eight train in football technique and tactics, as well as team moves, speed control and primary specialisation on the field, such as goalkeeper, defender, midfielder and striker. They also attend

the professional football clubs’ master classes.

The monthly fee for the academy is 14,000 tenge (US\$44) for eight sessions. All necessary information can be found at derbyacademy.kz.



Astana celebrates 19th birthday

Continued from Page A1

According to him, peacekeeping is among Kazakhstan’s top priorities, which continues its efforts in bringing peace to regions where conflict remains. “Our goal is to keep peace and our unity and strive for success, only success and only forward! Success in a competitive environment will help implement our programmes, which I endorsed and announced to our people. We are working on that. The unity of people will foster international recognition and respect and move Kazakhstan forward, thereby making our people happier,” he said.

Nazarbayev also inspected the city’s sights and attractions the same day and spoke with members of the public. He went to the Baiterek Tower and walked through Nur Zhol Boulevard where he visited the traditional Astana Art Fest, this year featuring the works of the country’s artists devoted to the Nomad Energy theme.

Touring the city in the even-



ing, when most people gather to explore the city or have a walk, the President then went to the city’s river embankment and got acquainted with handmade works

presented in Arbat, a pedestrian street near the embankment that recently opened to display traditional handmade items and souvenirs.

Nazarbayev then joined the public, who came to watch a daily evening show at the river. “Astana is beautiful. Yesterday evening, I walked in the city

and saw many people walking the streets regardless of the late hour. This tells a lot. People feel calm and safe. As the ancestors said, ‘cities are not the walls, but people’,” noted Nazarbayev July 5 during a reception dedicated to Astana Day at the Congress Centre of EXPO 2017.

Addressing deputies, representatives of state bodies, diplomatic corps, intellectuals, business and cultural circles, he cited Astana’s vibrant rhythm as a driver for the development of the entire country. “We carry out large-scale modernisation in the economy, politics and culture. It is aimed at the development of our country. Astana will always be at the vanguard of growth. We find solutions to various issues here, including the establishment of peace in various parts of the world. Our policy of peace, good-neighbourliness and attraction of investments is aimed at creating favourable living conditions for every citizen of Kazakhstan,” added Nazarbayev.

He also pointed out increased

international attention to the city and the nation due to EXPO 2017 happening in Astana until Sept. 10.

The Festival of Nomads, open-air rock concert, the show featuring prominent figure skaters Evgeni Plushenko, Irina Slutskaya and Emanuel Sandhu, and Sport Fest were among many recent cultural events held in honour of Astana Day.

Astana Day is celebrated July 6, as it was this day in 1994 when the Supreme Council of Kazakhstan passed a resolution to transfer the country’s capital from Almaty to Astana. The idea was initially put forward by Nazarbayev, as, in his view, Astana would embrace the country’s vibrant development pace.

Three years later, Nazarbayev signed a decree acknowledging Astana’s status as the capital, though the city’s name then was Akmola, which changed to Astana in May 1998. Astana has changed tremendously since then, turning from a small city on the steppe to the rapidly developing heart of the country.

President thanks scientists, forest rangers for creating ‘Green Belt’

By Aigerim Seisembayeva

ASTANA – Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev recently thanked Kazakh scientists and forest rangers for creating the man-made forest belt that surrounds the city.

“I would like to thank the scientists and forest rangers for their work. It is not so easy to grow trees in this area. Now we have a big forest here that has become a natural oasis inhabited by animals and birds,” he said in a briefing to the media after reviewing the forest belt from the air on July 4.

The 80,000-hectare green belt was planted at Nazarbayev’s direction in 1997 and is expected to reach 100,000 hectares by 2020.



The plan is to connect the green belt with the closest nearby natural forest at the Burabai resort.

“This forest will be here for as long as people live here. This is the wealth of our country. Astana is hosting the EXPO 2017 international exhibition that promotes the capital’s image as a city committed to the principles and ideology of green development,” said the President, noting the forest’s role in improving the local climate and ecology.

He also briefed the media on the construction of a recreation zone in the green belt.

The green belt is supported by the 110-hectare Ak Kaiyn forest kennel near Astana, which produces about nine million seedlings annually for 26 species of trees suitable for the local climate.

The President also chaired a meeting on the green belt after reviewing it from the air. The meeting was attended by Vice-Minister of Agriculture Yerlan Nyssanbayev, head of the Presidential Administration Adilbek Dzhaksybekov, Astana’s Akim (Mayor) Asset Issekeshev, Akmola region Akim (Governor) Malik Murzalin and Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Agriculture Askar Myrzakhmetov.

Nyssanbayev reported that the green zone is constantly monitored and supported.

After flying around the ‘green belt’, Nazarbayev visited the ethnoaul (ethnic village) located in the Bal Karagai recreation area.

Astana moving closer to becoming smart city

By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – The idea of smart cities is gaining ground around the world, and specifically in Kazakhstan, which intends to keep up with the trend. With the capital’s intention to enter the world’s top 50 smart communities, the city is working hard to achieve the goal.

Smart cities merge digital innovations and the physical world to make people’s routines easier by ensuring sustainable development and improving the quality of life. In 2013, Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev instructed the Akimat (city administration) to develop a set of measures that will foster the path to the smart communities list and the item has been on top of the city administration’s agenda.

“It is a global trend. It is a necessity. All cities and developed countries have been working in this field. Those tools and resources that we had before the digital century became outdated. Now, we need to move in a different direction and search for new technological and innovative solutions to ensure the sustainability of the city. Smart City is a foundation for that,” said deputy head of the Centre of City Technologies Expertise Bakhytzhhan Ualikhan.

Time was needed to learn the best international practices from cities such as Barcelona, Dubai,

Moscow and other successful examples, he added.

The Smart Astana project incorporates technology-driven solutions in various sectors, like hospitals, schools, the ticket booking system and street lighting. In conjunction with a comprehensive set of measures to make public services more efficient and accessible, Astana Innovations, a subsidiary of the Astana city administration, developed the Smart Astana app. A beta version was made available in January 2016 and within a few months, Astana residents and guests were able to fully enjoy it.

Available in three languages, the app offers approximately 20 services ranging from making a doctor’s appointment to ordering a taxi.

“A primary purpose is to combine all services into one app. There is no need to download dozens of apps. All systems are integrated,” said Ualikhan.

One of the app’s main features is push notifications that are of a great use to parents, as the city’s cold winter weather often results in school cancellations. Mobile operators used to notify parents, but there were many complaints about untimely announcements – some parents received them on time, while others received them much later.

“The city Akim (Mayor) instructed then to solve this issue and, given a large number of

smartphone users, we decided to develop an app such as Smart Astana, where push notifications became a key component,” he added.

The app also offers another channel to reach 109 service, an intellectual contact centre that deals with a wide range of complaints from locals and guests. Whenever a person is dissatisfied with city or public services or sees something that needs to be fixed, he or she can contact the centre through the app, the Smart Astana website, Facebook, Instagram or Twitter.

Developers continue working on the app to add new features and fix bugs, noted Ualikhan.

“We have updated our app this year and added new services. We plan to continue issuing updates for the app, increasing the number of available services up to 40 and also working on the existing services,” he said.

Users relay remarks on a wide array of subjects.

“There are many comments. Of course, it is impossible to satisfy every person. Someone does not like the design, while another does not like the services. But, in general, people are positive about the app,” he added.

The app will also be useful to residents and guests as it shows the schedule of the city’s cultural events, which is particularly important during EXPO 2017.

Astana International Airport renamed in honour of President

By Yerbolat Uatkhonov

ASTANA – Astana’s international airport has been renamed Nursultan Nazarbayev International Airport in honour of President Nursultan Nazarbayev. The name change follows a large-scale renovation resulting in a much expanded capacity at the capital’s airport and a new terminal.

Kazakhstan’s Civil Aviation Committee is now negotiating with the International Air Transport Association on changing the airport code, TSE, which still refers to the name of the city, Tselinograd, which was abolished in 1992.

Chair of Kazakhstan’s Mazhilis (lower chamber of Parliament) Nurlan Nigmatulin highlighted that the renaming initiative received massive support in the state.

“I want to congratulate all of us, all Kazakhstan citizens on this decision. The proposal to secure the outstanding contribution of the Leader of the Nation to the construction of our state was already actively discussed in society after the adoption of the Declaration

of the Parliament on the 25th anniversary of Kazakhstan’s independence. This also affected the renaming of Astana International Airport. This initiative received massive support from citizens of Kazakhstan, which we saw firsthand during our trips to the regions, during meetings with the people,” Nigmatulin said.

Kazakh Prime Minister Bakytzhan Sagintayev noted that the idea to rename the airport after Nazarbayev, implemented by the government’s resolution, was proposed eight years ago by Senate Deputy Darkhan Kaletayev, who was the first deputy chair of Nazarbayev’s Nur Otan party at the time.

“We all know that the brands ‘Kazakhstan’ and ‘Nazarbayev’ are inseparable. Today, it is actually a single concept. International practice shows that airports are named after national leaders,” Kaletayev said in May 2009 in a programme on the Astana TV channel.

He cited the example of George Bush International Airport in Houston, Texas.

Changing the airport code is another matter. Airports around the world are identified by three-

letter codes, and while cities and airports may be renamed, changing an airport code is difficult and expensive, and therefore rarely done. This is why many airports have codes that don’t seem to match their current city names: St. Petersburg’s airport is still coded LED (for Leningrad), Samara – KUF (Kuibyshev), Vladikavkaz – OGZ (Ordzhonikidze), Bishkek – FRU (Frunze), and so on.

Astana Airport, which serves a city that has been twice renamed (from Tselinograd to Akmola and from Akmola to Astana), is still coded TSE for Tselinograd. The Civil Aviation Committee is negotiating to have it changed, as well as the codes of other cities of Kazakhstan, which have not changed since the times of the Soviet Union.

In an interview with Russia 24 TV channel on July 4, Nazarbayev explained his reaction to the renaming of facilities in his honour.

“This is not my initiative. I am always against it. This happens regularly. I guess people appreciate [my work] and I am grateful for that, for the fact that they see the work I have been doing, even though any

politician, any leader of any state should strive to be remembered in history through his deeds,” he said. He said he believes this is a matter for the future generations.”

“I often recall the expression of Marcus Aurelius, the great Roman emperor and philosopher, who, when asked why there were no monuments in his honour, would

respond: ‘I don’t want people to ask whose monument was that. I would prefer they ask, when I am gone, why there is no monument built to him yet.’”



Photo credit: kapital.kz