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A milestone in non-proliferation

Editorial

The long-awaited launch of the Low Enriched Uranium Bank on Aug. 29 is a bright spot in what has been a gloomy period of increasing international tension. It is a practical solution to help tackle two of the most serious global challenges. It is also a model of what can be achieved through vision, persistence and cooperation.

The two challenges for which the bank can help provide answers are, of course, climate change and nuclear proliferation. Both seem more pressing by the day.

As extreme weather events continue to grow in frequency and severity, scientists warn that this is just a foretaste of what uncontrollable climate change will mean. Heatwaves, storms and flooding, which just a few decades ago were rare in their ferocity, are now becoming both commonplace and affecting far larger areas.

But tackling climate change has to be done in a way which allows economies to continue to grow. Without offering countries the chance of improving living standards, we are not going to bring about the fundamental switch we need from fossil fuels.

Wind, solar and other green energy resources are going to have an increasingly larger role in driving sustainable economic growth. So, too, will nuclear power. As countries are already showing, nuclear power plants can be a major part of the energy mix, helping economies grow without burning fossil fuels.

It is why nations in many parts of the world are either actively developing or considering starting their own civilian nuclear programmes.

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Swiss President meets with Kazakh counterpart, attends national day at EXPO 2017

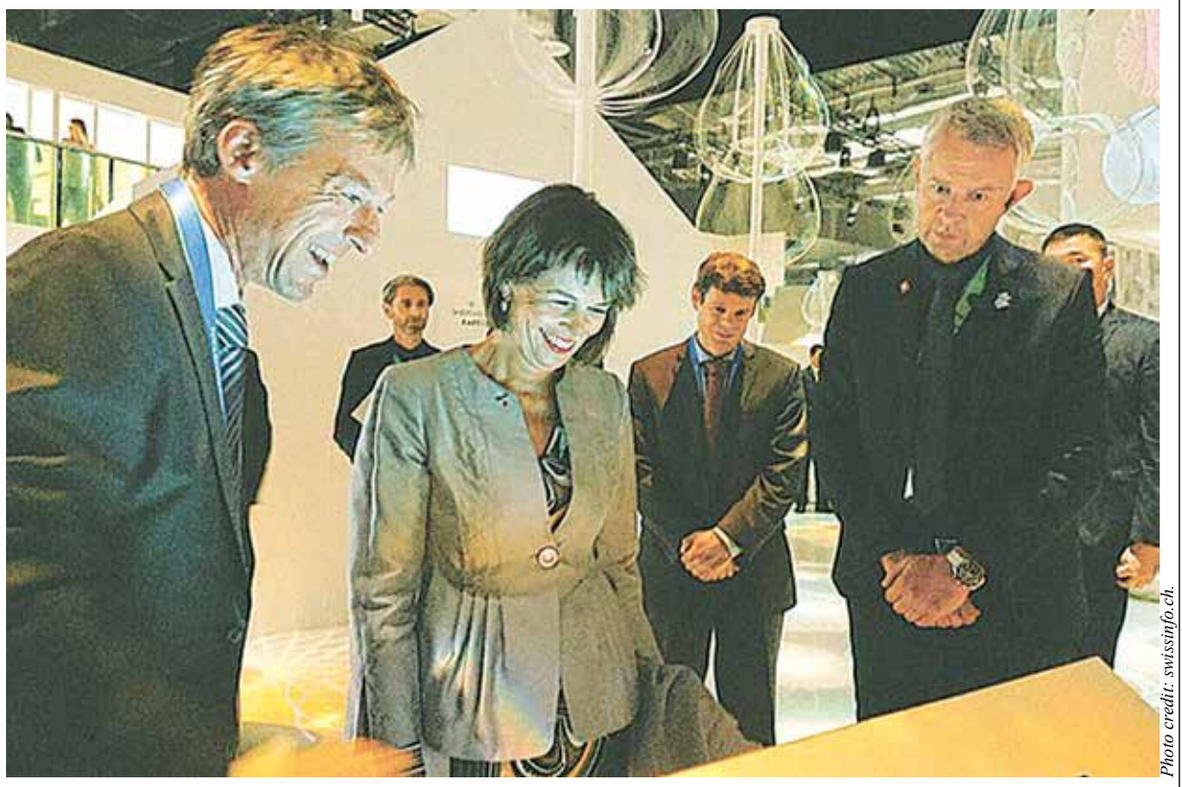


Photo credit: swissinfo.ch.

By Aigerim Seisembayeva

ASTANA – Swiss President Doris Leuthard paid her inaugural visit to Kazakhstan Aug. 11 to unveil Swiss National Day at EXPO 2017 and meet with Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev. Kazakh-Swiss cooperation documents were also signed as part of the trip.

The discussion between the two leaders acknowledged the 25th anniversary of diplomatic relations between the countries and covered developing bilateral political and economic cooperation.

"I welcome your first visit to our new capital. On Aug. 1, Switzerland celebrated Swiss National Day and I congratulate you on this occasion. You also opened the national day at the expo today. I hope you enjoyed it. Your visit to the expo is very important to us," said Nazarbayev during the meeting at the Akorda.

He also noted the high level of cooperation between the nations and expressed hope for its continued progress.

"For Kazakhstan, Switzerland is a very important European partner. We cherish our relations and seek to develop them further. Our trade turnover is growing and we are interested in expanding Swiss businesses' participation in our economy. To date, there are 300 Swiss enterprises operating in Kazakhstan and the number can grow. I hope your visit further deepens our economic and political relations," he added.

Leuthard thanked the Kazakh leader for the meeting and congratulated him on the expo's success.

"The Nur Alem pavilion is indeed very impressive. I think that the Astana International Financial Centre, which will be located here, has very good development prospects. I also confirm that Swiss businesses have a great interest in deepening relations with Kazakhstan," she said.

Speaking at the opening of the Swiss National Day at expo, Leuthard stressed the exhibition could become the basis for building a sustainable future.

"The world is changing. The environment, human values and stability are a big challenge in the 21st century. EXPO 2017 under the Future Energy theme can become a fundamental pillar in building a sustainable future on the planet. More important is the interconnection and interdependence among energy supply, healthy ecology, humanitarian efforts and our duty to create social, political and economic stability.

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Economy grows 4.2 percent, other indicators positive

By Aigerim Seisembayeva

ASTANA – The Kazakh economy grew 4.2 percent, the unemployment rate was 4.9 percent and investment in fixed assets increased 3.7 percent over the first seven months of this year, according to a report presented August 7 by Kazakh Prime Minister Bakytzhan Sagintayev to President Nursultan Nazarbayev.

Inflation increased 0.1 percent compared to June last year, food prices declined 0.5 percent and the level of oil production exceeded 100 percent in all regions except, Kyzylorda and Mangistau, where the level of oil production decreased. Authorities are working with those regions to use new reserves.

The country's industrial programme launched 31 projects in the first quarter and plans to launch 69 projects in the second quarter, creating 10,000 jobs, reported Sagintayev.

Sagintayev also reported on the Nurly Zhol programme, noting that this year 356 billion tenge ($1.1 billion) has been allocated for road construction and 600 km of roads have been built. By the end of this year, 469 km of roads will become toll roads, including the Astana-Temirtau route. The first operating toll road in Kazakhstan, he said, generates up to 1.5 billion tenge (US$4.5 million) per year, covering the cost of construction.

The Nurly Zher programme also built in the first six months of this year 5.5 million of 10.2 million square metres it hopes to complete by year's end.

"My opinion," said President Nazarbayev in response to the report, "is that the government is working hard. I call on everyone: we have to work hard until the end of the year in order to end up with good performance indicators. There are risks, price fluctuations for our energy resources, raw materials, perhaps the influence of Western sanctions against Russia. This must be taken into account."

Kazakhstan and Afghanistan improve ties

By Malika Orazgaliyeva

ASTANA – Afghan Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah travelled to Kazakhstan Aug. 19 to unveil Afghan National Day at EXPO 2017 and meet with the country's high officials and business circles.

Abdullah met with Kazakh Prime Minister Bakytzhan Sagintayev to discuss further developing trade and economic cooperation, as well as implementing the agreements concluded by presidents Nursultan Nazarbayev and Ashraf Ghani in the Kazakh capital in Nov. 2015, reported primeminister.kz.

The parties also reviewed the measures directed at improving the region's transit potential and prospects for bilateral cooperation for railway construction. Educational collaboration was also mentioned.

Sagintayev congratulated Abdullah on his nation's 98th Independence Day celebrated that day. The latter then met with Kazakh officials and investors, where the sides agreed to expand trade and transit relations between the countries, according to tolonews.com.

Addressing the audience, Abdullah said his team will further discuss ways to improve facilities for Afghan investors in Kazakhstan. He also highlighted the need for wider financing by Kazakh investors.

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ATOM Project ambassador pleads to recognise nuclear threat, stand up against it

By Dmitry Lee

ASTANA – The people of Kazakhstan have multiple stories to share on the eve of the Aug. 29 International Day against Nuclear Tests, because this day is part of their fate, part of their national identity.

Along the thorny path the country had taken there lie countless stories of 1.5 million lives which have been affected by nuclear tests conducted by the USSR from 1949-1991 on the territory of the infamous Semipalatinsk nuclear test site.

Karipbek Kuyukov, honorary ambassador of The ATOM Project, was born without arms as a result of his parents' exposure to nuclear weapons testing at Semipalatinsk. To this day, he continues his life-long journey of fighting the madness of the nuclear arms race.

In his numerous paintings he depicts the pain of his people, calling for dialogue to rid the world of nuclear weapons forever. He launched another of his many exhibitions Aug. 9, displaying 20 paintings at the National Museum in the Kazakh capital.

On the eve of the day observed to increase awareness and education about the effects of nuclear weapons, Kuyukov spoke to The Astana Times in an attempt to appeal to the people of the world amid the heightening North Korea-U.S. controversy.



Karipbek Kuyukov

"First of all, I feel sad for the ordinary folk who live in North Korea. We [in the USSR] have been through that, too, we know. We thought having weapons of mass destruction means being stronger and more powerful, but it is like an illusion. For me, it's like carrying a huge rock up a steep mountain on my shoulders," he said in an exclusive interview.

"The ongoing polemic between North Korea and the U.S. needs to be settled by a third party, an independent mediator, I believe. Astana has the experience of hosting peace talks and I think this is a really hard job, but perhaps Kazakhstan could offer its hand to help resolve the issue," he added.

For Kuyukov, Aug. 29, is first of all, the day of remembrance of the fallen as a consequence of the nuclear tests.

"As long as I have the strength and the opportunity to speak about it, I will speak about it out loud," he insisted.

"I was really pleased that on Aug. 6 a Japanese delegation came to my house and spoke to me about the consequences of the nuclear explosions," the artist said. "As you well know, Aug. 6 and 9, 1945 are the two black dates in the history of Japan and entire humankind. Those are the days when the U.S. dropped two atomic bombs on the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and while the exact number is still unknown, the number of dead and injured with permanent health problems is estimated over 300,000 people."

"It was also really nice to see Ambassador of Japan Ichiro Kawabata at the opening of my exhibition called 'Fallout' in Astana on Aug. 9. My exhibition is dedicated, most importantly, to all those who had suffered from radiation and the explosions in Hiroshima and Nagasaki," he said.

Speaking of the first reaction to the bombings, Kuyukov stressed the whole country [USSR] was terrified and felt threatened and unsafe.

"We thought we could be next. Unfortunately, our fears brought the curse to our region, our land. From 1949 commences the tragedy of my homeland, when the officials launched the Semipalatinsk nuclear polygon," he said calling the test site by its Russian moniker.

"I think that back in those Cold War times every country wanted to show its militaristic superiority. I can't comprehend to this day why fate chose Kazakhstan to be used for the nuclear polygon. They said because it was a country with a small population with vast steppes, the damage inflicted by explosions shouldn't have a big impact. We now, after 40 years, understand the true damage to those who lived close by the polygon," he added.

"I have been to Japan numerous times and to the U.S. I have been to the nuclear polygon in Nevada. Obviously, those living around the polygon don't want the nuclear weapons; they are against the government policies that endorse keeping the nuclear weapons.

"I am a son of Earth and I am really worried for our planet. I see the tendency of people just growing complacent with the terrorist acts, ongoing North Korean threats and use of chemical weapons and this worries me most of all. We should stand up against that; we should recognise such threats! That's why such projects as The ATOM Project, launched by our President Nursultan Nazarbayev in 2012, are relevant today more than ever," said Kuyukov.

See story on the exhibition by Karipbek Kuyukov on Page A2.

National investment strategy seeks 26% foreign investment increase in five years

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – The Kazakh government approved Aug. 15 a national investment strategy for 2018-2022 which seeks to increase foreign investments 26 percent in five years and create a more favourable investment climate. Twenty-seven countries were identified as the most important for attracting investments.

Minister for Investment and Development Zhenis Kassymbek highlighted that the investment strategy was developed with the participation of Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev and the World Bank experts. The government hopes the increased investment will facilitate increased exports.

Today, products made in Kazakhstan are exported to 117 countries. Last year, Kazakhstan ranked 52nd among 204 countries with a share of 0.23 percent of global exports. Mainly, the state exports raw materials. But, in the past 10 years, exports of services have almost doubled, reaching $6.3 billion in 2016.

Also, Kassymbek said the volume of investments in fixed assets of non-primary sectors will increase 46 percent.

The ministry and the World Bank have identified priority sectors, which are considered the most important to attract new investments. The first group includes industries, such as food production industry, deep processing of oil, gas and other natural resources, and mechanical engineering. The second group includes sectors such as IT, tourism and finances.

The minister said the strategy seeks to attract foreign investments in non-resource industries to increase the country's export potential.

It was proposed to legislatively fix the status of a single operator to promote exports for Kazakh Export national company, which will function on a single window principle and will have offices across Kazakhstan and abroad.

Twenty-seven countries are identified as promising markets, which are conditionally divided by the degree of export interest for Kazakhstan into priority, high and moderate interest countries and countries of interest in the long term. Eleven countries are considered to be the most important: Russia, the U.S., the U.K., Germany, China, France, Italy, Turkey, Japan, the UAE and South Korea.

Kassymbek said the Ministry for Investment and Development will work with Ministry of Foreign Affairs to develop individual plans of actions for each state.

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US$ 1 = 332.58 KZT € 1 = 390.38 KZT ₽ 1 = 5.63 KZT

ATOM Project Honorary Ambassador's exhibit opens ahead of Int'l Day against Nuclear Tests

By Dana Omirgazy

ASTANA – The Fallout, The Artwork of Karipbek Kuyukov, a personal exhibit featuring 20 paintings by the famous Kazakh artist and ATOM Project Honorary Ambassador, opened Aug. 9 at the Kazakh National Museum. The event, organised by the museum and supported by the Kazakh Ministry of Foreign Affairs, highlights the heavy consequences of nuclear weapons use for the world and serves as a call to action against such weapons.

Born in the village of Yegindybulak, 100 kilometres from the former Semipalatinsk nuclear test site, Kuyukov remembers the horror of nuclear explosions and saw many children who were born with disabilities. A number of them could not be shown to others beyond their family and lived their whole lives in seclusion.

"I am very proud to live in a country that was one of the first to ban nuclear tests. I believe that my most important goal in life is to tell the whole world about what these nuclear tests lead to. You are all healthy people, you have arms and legs and the future is in your hands. We shall strive for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons from the face of the earth. I hope you remember my words for the rest of your life," Kuyukov told the journalists, visitors and mostly school children who attended the exhibit's opening ceremony.



Japanese Ambassador to Kazakhstan Ichiro Kawabata (L) and Karipbek Kuyukov (C) tour the exhibition.



"The Corner," one of Karipbek Kuyukov's many paintings dedicated to nuclear disarmament.

"Today's exhibition is devoted both to the sufferings of Kazakh people and the relentless struggle and tremendous faith in the success of our common deal – the building up of a world without nuclear weapons. As it is known, more than 450 nuclear tests were conducted at the Semipalatinsk test site in the second half of the last century; as a result, more than 1.5 million Kazakh citizens were affected by those tests. Many of them, like Kuyukov, suffer birth defects, lifelong debilitating illnesses and early death," said Kazakh Deputy Foreign Minister Roman Vassilenko.

Kuyukov's paintings were previously presented at the UN offices in both New York and Geneva, as well as at the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organisation (CTBTO) in Vienna. Throughout the world, the pictures arouse understanding and interest among nuclear non-proliferation specialists and ordinary people. Looking at his art, they discover the history of nuclear tests in Kazakhstan and understand why the country is convinced that nuclear disarmament and elimination of nuclear weapons are essential. Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev, Nevada-Semipalatinsk anti-nuclear movement founder Olzhas Suleimenov and Kuyukov have been fighting for nuclear disarmament around the world for more than 25 years and have been recognised as true leaders in this realm, said Vassilenko.

"This exhibition is organised in response to numerous requests from people partly familiar with the works of Kuyukov, not indifferent to his creativity or to his high mission. Some of them plan to visit Astana this month to visit EXPO 2017. Among them are delegates from the Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs, who will meet in Astana on Aug. 25-29 on the eve of the International Day against Nuclear Tests and on the anniversary of the Semipalatinsk test site closure," he said.

"If we are really committed to the idea of nuclear disarmament, then we must not remain silent; we must act. On Aug. 29, 2012, President Nazarbayev came up with a new initiative called the ATOM Project (Abolish Testing. Our Mission). Over the past five years, a large number of people around the world have learned about the history of nuclear testing and Kazakhstan's activity against nuclear weapons and supported the online petition of The ATOM Project to help bring into force the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty. Despite the fact that this document has existed for more than 20 years, it has not yet entered into force and requires the support of certain states. However, at least 300,000 people from more than 100 countries have signed an online petition and every day the number of project supporters is growing," he added.

Every year, Japanese people honour the victims of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki on Aug. 6 and 9. People recognise the similarity of the historic destinies of the Kazakh and Japanese peoples affected by nuclear weapons; therefore, both countries focus special attention on cooperation in this area.

"Aug. 6, 9 and 29 remind humanity of how peace in the world is important for the development of civilisation and the culture of mankind. The works of Kuyukov will give new impetus to our desire to build a world without nuclear weapons," said Japanese Ambassador to Kazakhstan Ichiro Kawabata who was a guest of honour at the exhibition launch.

The exhibition is open for capital residents and guests until Aug. 29.

Nazarbayev calls for agricultural science centre

Staff Report

Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev stressed to Rector of the Kazakh National Agrarian University (KazNAU) Tlektes Yesspolov the need to create a national science centre in the field of agriculture.

"It is necessary to increase the effectiveness of the introduction of research results and training of specialists. In addition, the production of competitive, export-oriented agricultural products should be increased," Nazarbayev said during an Aug. 15 meeting with Yesspolov after receiving a report on the university's activities.

Agriculture remains a key sector of the Kazakh economy. Kazakhstan's steppes and multi-climate zones are ideal for growing wheat, barley, rice, corn, millet and buckwheat, which the country has been heavily exporting.

The Kazakh government has been attempting to stimulate the growth of the sector by providing loans to agricultural enterprises. The state subsidies have been used for equipment upgrades, construction, the development of the veterinary and phyto-sanitary sectors as well as for the industrial energy sector. The government has also lifted some import duties on farm equipment, raw material and spare parts and has introduced exemptions from corporate income and property taxes.

Yesspolov reported to the President that the university is currently conducting 50 scientific projects. He also reported that the university is part of 11 international consortiums and cooperates with the world's best universities.

He also briefed the President on the university's Agro-technological Hub, saying the "hub is designed to search for, attract and transfer new technologies, knowledge, start-up projects, as well as implement mechanisms of public-private partnership, self-financing and the autonomy of the university."

Education ministry is prepared for coming academic year, reports minister

By Dmitry Lee

ASTANA – Minister of Education and Science of Kazakhstan Yerlan Sagadiyev presented a report Aug. 15 on preparations for the new 2017-2018 academic year and assured his ministry is prepared for the coming year.

During the meeting of the government chaired by Prime Minister of Kazakhstan Bakytzhan Sagintayev, Sagadiyev explained that the main conceptual decisions were adopted last year. Therefore, the tasks of the current and next years will be to yield results from those previous decisions.



Minister of Education and Science Yerlan Sagadiyev.

"One of the tasks in this direction is to prepare for the implementation of the zero class in all kindergartens and schools in September 2019. This is the successful approbation of the programme named Alippe and the improvement of the qualifications of teachers and bringing the regulatory framework in line with the 12-year training cycle of 0+11," Sagadiyev said as reported by primeminister.kz.

Schools still focus on the transition to the new updated content, a transition that commenced last year. This year the second, fifth and seventh grades will also transfer to the new content system.

The ministry is also launching a pilot project conducting classes in English. More than 1,500 teachers, who have completed language courses, are involved in this project.

"Another important direction is further formation and strengthening of the school boards of trustees, the transfer of ever more extensive powers to them and the systematic expansion of the academic, managerial and financial freedom of schools under the supervision of the boards of trustees," the statement said.

One of the top priorities relating to higher educational institutions is a goal to pass a law that will allow the professional community, employers, together with the Atameken National Chamber of Entrepreneurs (NCE), to form a real register of educational programmes of Kazakh universities in terms of their quality, modernity and relevance in the market.

"Work in this regard has already begun: the register of IT specialties, together with the NCE will be presented in the near future. This will remove poor-quality and obsolete educational programmes from the market," the report noted.

The academic independence of higher education institutions and the strengthening of supervisory boards as a form of strengthening public control were also part of the agenda.

At the end of the report, the minister stressed that the educational system is "ready for the start of the academic year" and extensive explanatory work will be carried out on all issues.

Almaty to preserve city centre and build new airport

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – The new Almaty general plan includes constructing a second airport while preserving the city centre. The design was developed to make the urban area comfortable for people, not cars, using the best practices of the most up-to-date and environmentally friendly cities.

The general plan was approved 15 years ago and the new one is expected to be ratified before the end of the year. Altai Satybaldin, who developed the latter, noted the work to reconstruct Almaty's central portion, which has already been started, reflects the spirit of future changes.

"The city has developed according to the socialist paradigm for a long time. We expanded the streets and did everything for the convenience of cars. I believe that the large-scale work that is being carried out now has a systematic character. It is better to go through such systemic changes once and to use the results. We, according to the adopted documents, in particular the Almaty 2020 Development Programme, are moving to a new model, a city convenient for people, not cars," he said, according to Kazinform.

The city will become more comfortable and environmentally friendly and use up-to-date public transport.

"Expansion of the city boundaries is not planned. We aim to develop the city in its current territory, which will be linked with the suburbs. A kind of agglomeration is planned. At that, the level of comfort will be same in the urban area and in Almaty settlements. So, we will be able to reduce the number of private transports in the city. People will not need to go to the centre of the city," said the architect.

Satybaldin emphasised the new general plan calls for the need to increase the share of green plantations.

"As of today, the city has only four square metres of green plantings per one inhabitant. This is a very low number. According to the new general plan, the plan is to increase this figure up to 13 square metres per person," he said.

The new general plan envisions building the second airport in an empty area 30 kilometres to the north of the city along the Kapchagai Highway. To free the city of transit passengers, developers have included construction of the Almaty ring road as part of the design.

"The plan aims to manage the city's territories in an efficient way. Other documents regulating the number of storeys and so on will be developed on its basis. I can say that the project envisages the preservation of the appearance of the buildings of the historical part of Almaty, the expansion of the list of monuments of historical and cultural heritage," said Satybaldin.

Almaty's current population is 1.6 million and the plan is designed to accommodate a population of 2.4 million.

NATIONAL NEWS IN BRIEF

The government has approved the national export strategy on local agricultural and food product export promotion. The programme is aimed at achieving the goals set in the Strategy 2050 of increasing the export of non-primary goods by 50 percent by 2025 compared to 2015. "Taking into account that the programme is developed for a five-year period, the proposal is to set the increase in the volume of non-primary exports 50 percent higher by 2022 as compared to the 2015 indicator and to increase the export of non-resource items to priority countries," said Minister of National Economy Timur Suleimenov.

Khabar TV reported that more than 4,000 kilometres of road will be reconstructed as part of the Nurly Zhol programme. About 5,000 kilometres of national significance have been reconstructed in 2017 and more than half of the regional and district roads and 85 percent of national highways were brought to satisfactory condition. More than 356 billion tenge (US$1.06 billion) was allocated this year. "We will start the reconstruction of the Balkhash-Burylbaital road in 2018. The distance of 297 kilometres and 67 kilometres of Kurty-Kapshagai road will be repaired with the participation of the World Bank. The Karaganda-Balkhash road repair is planned in 2019," said Vice Minister for Investment and Development Roman Sklyar at an Aug. 10 press conference.

The postfactum customs clearance regime will be introduced as part of the 100 Concrete Steps Initiative implemented with the entry into force next year of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) customs code agreement, according to the Ministry of Finance press service. "Some categories of participants of the foreign economic activity will be able to get their items released before filing a declaration," noted the Aug. 7 release. The list of goods and participant categories of the foreign economic activity in the status of authorised economic operators with an opportunity to release items before filing a customs declaration is expected to expand.

The Almaty Botanical Garden has become a participant in the Pannon Breeding Innovation Programme. The announcement came at the Study and Use of the Flora of Eurasia scientific conference held Aug.16 in Almaty, reported Kazinform. "We want to work together with Kazakh scientists as part of pannon breeding. We want to find plants suitable for both regions," said Hungarian Minister of Agriculture Sándor Fazekas. The agreement between the Institute of Botany and Phyto-Intrusion and Eötvös Loránd University to plant more than 1,000 new species was also signed at the event.

Five production facilities with an investment of more than six billion tenge (US$18 million) are expected to launch by the end of the year in Taldykorgan, according to the regional akimat (administration) press service. The Dostyk bread-baking complex, Taldykorgan oilseeds processing plant and Almaty Energo Project solar power plant and padding polyester production workshop will soon be put into operation. The Adal Damu Capital biogas production workshop will also be expanded. The oil extraction plant, with a total value of four billion tenge (US$12 million), will employ 130 people.

The volume of industrial waste has increased in the country, said Vice Minister of Energy Gani Sadibekov Aug. 18. "The total amount of accumulated waste is 100 million tonnes of solid waste. The industrial waste has a tendency to increase and we believe there is a need to change the storage periods for processing enterprises to stimulate the processing of industrial waste. Incorporating waste management should be included in the list of parity activities for state support measures. There is also a need to improve the classification of waste in terms of distinguishing between hazardous and non-hazardous waste," he said.

EURASIA&WORLD

EXTERNAL NEWS IN BRIEF

The Astana city administration with the support of Kazakhstan's Embassy in Baku presented the tourism potential of Astana to Azerbaijani tourism operators and media Aug. 15, Kazinform reports. The Astana Convention Bureau, a subsidiary of the Astana city administration responsible for developing tourism and promoting its positive image, is organising presentations about Astana in 10 cities, including the Azerbaijani capital. The goal is to exchange experience and set up business contacts and cooperation in the field of tourism, according to bureau representative Assel Karbayeva. With Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan having similar cultures and societies, the sides hope to develop fruitful and long-term cooperation. Following the presentation, representatives of Azerbaijani tourist agencies will be invited for a tour in and around Astana in September and October.

The International Organisation of Turkic Culture TURKSOY hosted a concert in Ankara Aug. 13 dedicated to the 100th anniversary of the birth of the Kazakh composer and founder of choir music in Kazakhstan Bakytzhan Baikadamov, as reported by 24.kz. The TURKSOY Youth Chamber Choir, bringing musicians from Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkey together, performed the Kazakh composer's prominent works. Chief Adviser to the Turkish President Yalçın Topçu, Kazakhstan's Ambassador to Turkey Abzal Saparbekuly and Ambassador of Turkmenistan to Turkey Ishanguly Amanlyev attended the concert. Bakytzhan Baikadamov's daughters Alua Baikadamova and Aigul Baikadamova also arrived in Ankara to mark the birthday of their father. They were very moved by the concert when they first heard of it, the sisters said.

A sensitive dance group from Petropavlovsk brought home a grand prix and two gold medals from Bulgaria, where the dancers were taking part in the Roses of Obzor international dance contest from July 31 to Aug. 14. The Kazakh dancers, who are students from a North Kazakhstan special boarding school for children with hearing difficulties, beat 280 dancers from 10 countries in Contemporary Choreography and Dance Show nominations. The sensitive dance group members are winners of multiple international dance competitions. Most importantly, the dancers were competing on equal terms with other participants, according to the group's art director, Olga Rostovschikova.

American linguist Jonathan Washington is studying the peculiarities of the Kazakh language with medical ultrasound equipment. The technology helps him monitor the tongue moves needed to pronounce Kazakh words, which subsequently demonstrates how these moves generate sounds. His experiment is the foundation of his Ph.D. thesis. Washington, who is working as an assistant professor at Swarthmore College, has been studying the Kazakh language since 2004, when as a senior student he visited Kazakhstan for the first time. He then devoted his thesis to the Kazakh language.

Kazakh Invest company, responsible for attracting investment and setting up cooperation between local producers and foreign investors, presented Kazakhstan's agricultural products Aug. 17 at the Hong Kong Food Expo. Participating in the national pavilion at the exhibition were five leading national producers of honey, ice cream, dried horse milk, oil and chilled lamb meat. China is among the key export destinations for Kazakhstan and Hong Kong, with its healthy food oriented lifestyle, will appreciate the Kazakh products that are known for their organic and environmentally friendly production, said the representatives of the Kazakh delegation. Kazakh Invest plans to organise presentations of Kazakhstan's agricultural potential in Guangzhou, Shanghai, Urumqi and Beijing soon.

Kazakh, Bolivian FMs sign political declaration

By Malika Orazgaliyeva

ASTANA – During his first official visit to Kazakhstan, Bolivian Minister of Foreign Affairs Fernando Huanacuni Mamani met Aug. 17 with Kazakh Prime Minister Bakytzhan Sagintayev and Foreign Minister Kairat Abdrakhmanov. Sagintayev and Huanacuni discussed bilateral trade and economic cooperation in the energy, culture, science and education spheres.

The sides expressed interest in creating and implementing joint investment projects in the petrochemical, agricultural and transport sectors, as well as developing clean technologies and renewable energy. Bolivia is ready to develop mutual partnerships not only in the gas sector, but also in the rare earth metals field and nuclear industry, said Huanacuni.

Sagintayev thanked the Bolivian diplomat for supporting Kazakhstan in holding EXPO 2017.



During the meeting at the Kazakh Foreign Ministry, Abdrakhmanov and Huanacuni focused on bilateral and multilateral cooperation.

"We need to expand our joint efforts within international organisations, especially in the context of the mutual work of Kazakhstan and Bolivia as non-permanent members of the UN Security Council in 2017-2018," said Abdrakhmanov at the joint press briefing.

The sides discussed developing bilateral relations and the practical aspects of Bolivia's participation in the expo, as well as exchanged views on international situation.

"The talks resulted in the signing of the political declaration reflecting the interests of our countries in further deepening political, trade, economic and energy cooperation," he added.

In his remarks, Abdrakhmanov noted the sides are satisfied with the results of the negotiations, which helped to outline mutual perspectives on the wide range of issues. The two foreign ministries expressed the intention of holding regular political consultations in order to maintain the dialog.

Kazakhstan and Bolivia are also linked through their activities in the Gas Exporting Countries Forum (GECF), an intergovernmental organisation of 16 member states (Algeria, Bahrain, Belarus, Bolivia, Brunei Darussalam, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Iran, Libya, Nigeria, Qatar, Russia, Trinidad and Tobago, Turkmenistan, the United Arab Emirates and Venezuela) and seven observers (Azerbaijan, Iraq, Kazakhstan, the Netherlands, Norway, Oman and Peru). GECF members together control more than 70 percent of the world's natural gas reserves, 38 percent of the pipeline trade and 85 percent of the liquefied natural gas (LNG) production, according to www.gecf.org.

Bolivia is interested in creating a partnership with Kazakhstan in the gas industry. The country currently occupies 29th place in the world and third place in South America in the amount of natural gas extraction, mining more than 21 billion cubic meters per year. At the same time, the nation intends to increase gas production by 33 percent by 2020 and is looking for Kazakh companies which could work in the field.

Huanacuni invited Kazakhstan to take part in the fourth GECF summit, which will take place Nov. 24 in Santa Cruz de la Sierra. In turn, Abdrakhmanov invited him to attend the sixth Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions in the capital in 2018.

MFA, Chief Editors' Club award foreign media contest winners

By Aigerim Seisembayeva

ASTANA – The Kazakh Foreign Ministry and Chief Editors' Club awarded Aug. 21 the winners of the Fourth International Kazakhstan through the Eyes of Foreign Media Contest. Authors from Azerbaijan, Israel, Italy, Canada, and the Republic of Korea were presented with diplomas, souvenirs and a trip to Kazakhstan.

In his welcoming speech, Foreign Minister Kairat Abdrakhmanov stressed the high role of professional journalism in modern society.

"It is a force that can change people's mindset and encourage them to take action. The media is deservedly considered the fourth branch of power for its role as an overseer for the rest of the branches," he said.

According to Abdrakhmanov, the one considers it a duty to encourage high quality, creativity, objectivity and impartiality of journalism. The foreign media's publications, in his opinion, help the people of Kazakhstan receive a fresher look on their own country. Abdrakhmanov also briefed the foreign journalists on the third modernisation – the current political and economic reforms, as well as the priorities of the modernisation of national identity, which he called the modernisation of the mindset. All the three aspects, linked and intertwined, are intended to accelerate Kazakhstan's advancement to the top 30 developed countries of the world.

Abdrakhmanov noted a significant increase in the number of applications: the contest organisers received 83 submissions from 29 countries. Many of them were devoted to the theme of EXPO 2017 in Astana.

The five winners were announced in July, one from each of the five geographies. Parvana Sultanova, a reporter at the 1news.az Azerbaijani news agency, was the winner from the Commonwealth of Independent States and Baltics. The best entry from Europe was submitted by Vocal Europe's reporter Ilaria Capitanio, who hails from Italy. Among the American authors, Thomas Taylor from Canada was announced as the winner for his article on Wildlives.co. Joel Lee, a reporter at The Korea Herald daily newspaper, was chosen as the winner from Asia, Australia and Oceania. The winner from the Middle East and Africa was Udi Shaham from Israel, who published an article in The Jerusalem Post newspaper.

The winners arrived in Kazakhstan and started their trip in Astana. They will also visit Almaty, Kazakhstan's biggest city and former capital, and Burabai, one of the most beautiful destinations in Kazakhstan and a popular tourist attraction. During their visit, the winners will visit EXPO 2017, cultural and historical sights, architectural pieces of modern Kazakhstan, the country's beautiful nature and meet with officials, businesspersons and representatives of culture.

The ceremony was also attended by the President of Chief Editors' Club, Yerlan Bekkhozhin, who noted the importance of such contests in strengthening ties between countries

The representatives of the contest partners, including the Kazakhstan Temir Zholy national railway company, the Astana EXPO 2017 national company, Kazakhstan's National Olympic Committee, LOT Polish Airlines, Rixos Borovoe and Ramada Plaza hotels and the Argymak transportation company, also participated in the ceremony.

LOT Polish Airlines' spokesperson Adrian Kubicki noted the growing popularity of the newly launched direct Warsaw to Astana flight among Polish and European passengers. He highlighted that the growing attention of the international media to Kazakhstan, including through such competitions, contributes to the country's popularity as an attractive tourist destination.

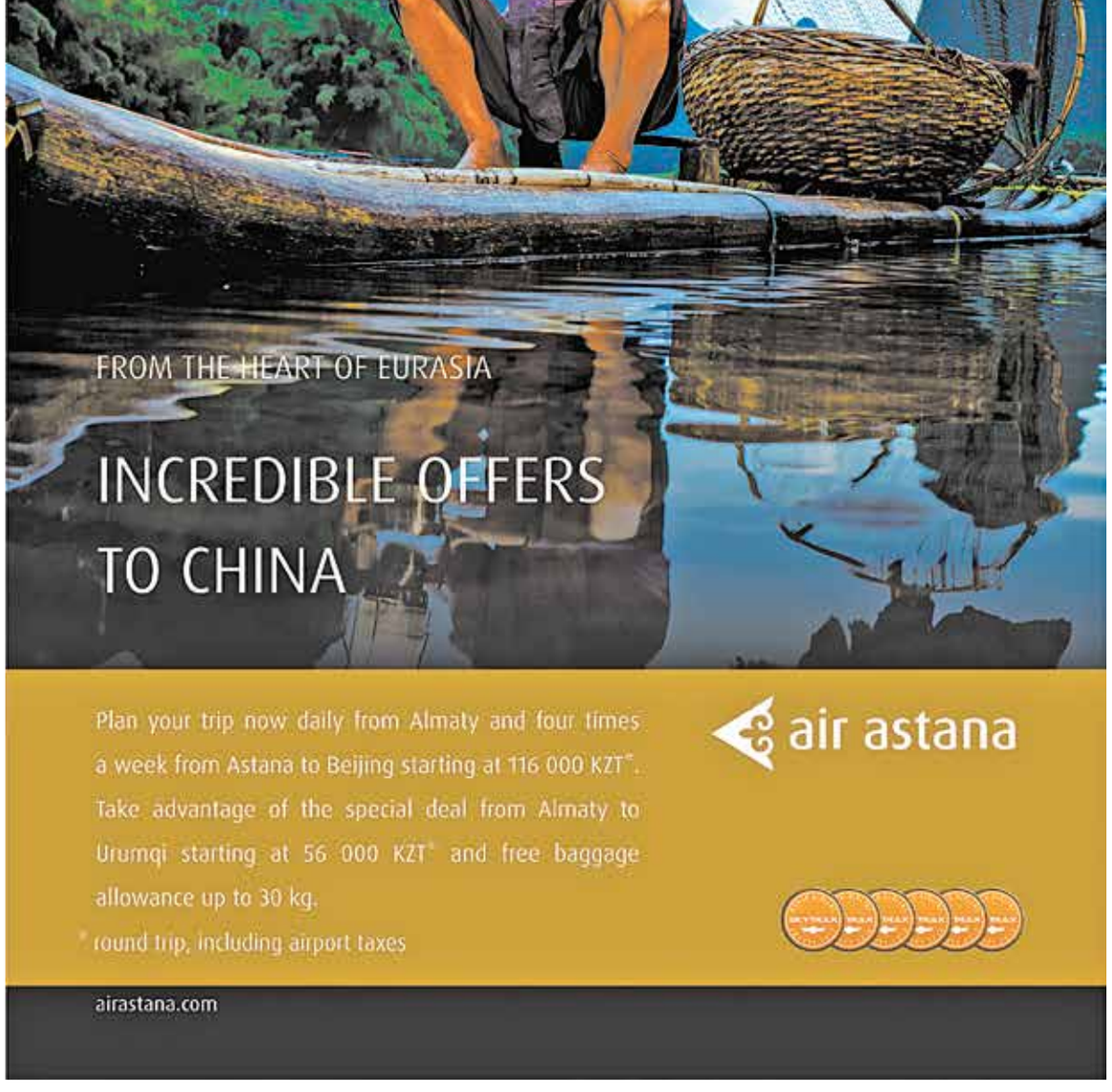
Director of Sales at Rixos Borovoe Hotel Azatbek Usuvayev said the guests were welcome to Burabai and to the hotel and expressed hope that they would enjoy their trip. He also noted that the contest helps promote Burabai abroad and attracts more tourists to the resort.

The contest winners thanked the organisers of the competition and shared their expectations from the trip. It is the first trip to Kazakhstan for Capitanio and Sultanova, and they were excited to see the Kazakhstan that they had been writing about with their own eyes. Capitanio stressed that Italy cooperates closely with Kazakhstan, but there is still great potential to develop cooperation.

Lee noted that it was his second time in Kazakhstan and he was delighted to familiarise himself with the country. What he highlighted was that the country's "most important beauty was its people."

Heads and representatives of diplomatic missions of Azerbaijan, Canada, Italy and the Republic of Korea also congratulated the winners. Ambassador of Azerbaijan to Kazakhstan Rashad Mammadov highlighted the importance of such events in strengthening ties between countries and helping promote friendly and productive relations. Korean Ambassador Kim Dae-sik noted that the Korean journalist's previous visit was fruitful in covering the EXPO 2017 opening ceremony and that the contest helps explain Kazakhstan in his country and beyond.





ECONOMY

Akmola region attracts investments to processing industry, promotes export commodity production

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – The Akmola region administration set an ambitious task to implement numerous projects with foreign investment participation to bring innovation and boost industry profits.

The Astana Times interviewed the region's entrepreneurship and industry department head Yerbol Ospanov to learn about investments attracted to the region and important projects launched this year.

Local authorities closely collaborate with the Kazakh Invest regional office, which supports investment projects from idea to implementation. The investor's service centre based on the Yessil Socio-Entrepreneurial Corporation was also opened in July in Kokshetau.

The entrepreneurship and industry department manages and monitors industrial-innovative small and medium-sized business development, trade, common mineral resources subsoil use and other regulated types of investment activities in all sectors of the region's economy.



Yerbol Ospanov

"The expectation is to implement 100 projects worth a total of 144.5 billion tenge (US$436.6 million) and to create 2,600 jobs in the Akmola region. Thirty-four of these projects have already been put into operation for 14.2 billion tenge (US$42.8 million) and more than 500 jobs were created," said Ospanov.

The largest executed projects include the data processing centre in the Tselinograd district, modernising the Tonkeris grain-collecting station in the Shortandy district, expanding the Makinsk grain reception site and producing flour at Nanar Company in the Bulandy district.

"The work is underway to attract foreign investment to the region. A project with foreign participation to construct AgroMax Astana, a mill complex with a capacity of 36,000 tonnes per year, was launched in the Shortandy district in June," he added.

The volume of investments in fixed assets in 2016 was 223.1 billion tenge (US$674.2 million), or 106.6 percent of 2015.

"This year, we plan to attract investments in the amount of 238.7 billion tenge (US$715.7 million), or 101 percent of real growth. Investments in the manufacturing industry totalled 24.9 billion tenge (US$75.2 million) and the task is set to attract at least 28.5 billion tenge (US$86.1 million)," said Ospanov.

From January-June, the volume of investments in fixed assets in the region was 88 billion tenge (US$265.9 million), or 110.8 percent compared to the corresponding period of the previous year. Manufacturing industry investments were 9.8 billion tenge (US$29.6 million) and foreign investment in fixed assets was 5.2 billion tenge (US$15.7 million).

The Akmola region presentation was developed including general information about the region, main niches for attracting investments and solid and common mineral resources.

"We also identified possible sales markets, transport infrastructure and other useful information for potential investors," he said.

A list of projects requiring funding with specific information and initiator's contact details was also created.

"We organise exhibitions and presentations promoting the region's investment attractiveness at various regional and national events on an ongoing basis and hold meetings with foreign delegations," he said.

This year, there are plans to implement seven projects worth 95.4 billion tenge (US$288.2 million) and create 1,100 jobs as part of the State Industrial and Innovative Development programme. Two projects, production expansion at the Samhat shoe factory in the Tselinograd district and launching the Invest-RT gold recovery plant for mineral processing in Stepnogorsk with a capacity of 108,000 tonnes per year, have already been initiated.

The Kokshe-Cement plant with a capacity of two million tonnes per year and three Kazakhaltyn Technology Company gold recovery plants are currently under construction in the Yenbekshilder district.

The main instrument of industrialisation is investment attraction to the priority sectors of the processing industry corresponding with the region's sectoral specialisation. Traditional processing industries, including food production, metallurgy, mechanical, chemical and construction, are characteristic for the region.

"We also aim to get more cooperation of commodity producers in promoting processed exports in the near future. This is also directly related to attracting investments in export-oriented production, increasing the competitiveness of domestic products," said Ospanov.

The specialisation map, presenting opportunities and state support mechanisms for project implementation stages to reach the designed capacity, helps to demonstrate the region's potential advantages and attract private investments in priority sectors.

"A relatively low capacity of the domestic market, a high cost of energy resources and a shortage of highly qualified personnel are the main factors affecting attraction of investments to the region, especially foreign ones. We believe our joint efforts with Kazakh Invest will improve the situation significantly and help attract foreign investment," he said.

Iluka Resources, Kazgeology launch exploration of titanium-zirconium deposits



Photo credit: mid.gov.kz.

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – Iluka Resources, an Australian mining company, is investing approximately 4 million Australian dollars (US$3.1 million) in geological exploration of titanium-zirconium deposits in the Kostanai and North Kazakhstan regions.

A drilling campaign on 60,000 square kilometres started in the second half of June in conjunction with Kazgeology National Exploration Co., noted Kazgeology's press service. According to the latest data, about 2,500 running metres, or 100 wells, nearly a third of the planned volumes for the current year, have already been drilled. Iluka is expected to invest approximately 2 million Australian dollars (US$1.5 million) in the project this year.

"It is the first geological exploration project in Kazakhstan for our company. Drilling works will be conducted until September 2017 and will move towards the North-Kazakhstan region. The drilling rig that we use is used in Australia to search mineral sands, bauxite, copper, nickel, gold and uranium. Today, drilling at the site already shows very promising results. We are thankful for Kazgeology and the Kazakh government," said Iluka Exploration Kazakhstan Director General Anthony Thornton.

The investment also includes transferring technology to Kazakhstan, analysing exploration data, importing drilling machinery and training meetings for local specialists both in the country and Australia.

The work is carried out using dry drilling technology developed in Australia in 1974. The method, widely used in Australia and Africa, accelerates the pace of the work ten times and reduces the impact on the environment.

The specialists tried to use auger drilling last year, but the quality of the samples was poor. Zirconium and titanium were explored in ore, but not in mineral sands.

"The opportunity to find a titanium-zirconium deposit is very high according to the works carried out in the Soviet period. If the prospects of the sites are confirmed by the end of this year, then we will start to work on the subsoil use contract for direct negotiations," said Kazgeology Board Deputy Chairperson Kadyrzhan Kauldashev.

The preliminary results of the geological subsoil survey will be announced at the end of October. The first results of the chemical studies of the samples will be revealed when the drilling process is completed, at which time the company plans to determine the next phase of the programme. Iluka intends to construct a rare earth metal processing plant upon successful completion of work and further exploration.

Kazakhstan is tenth in the world in titanium reserves. The Ust-Kamenogorsk titanium and magnesium plant, a fully integrated enterprise that extracts ore and produces finished goods with high added value, is the major producer in the titanium and magnesium industry.

Iluka Resources is the world's largest producer of zircon and a global manufacturer of high-quality titanium products.

South Kazakhstan attracts $543 million in investments in first half of 2017

By Dana Omirgazy

ASTANA – Over first six months of 2017, the volume of attracted investments in the South Kazakhstan region reached 180.6 billion tenge (US$543.78 million), having increased 33 percent compared to the same period last year, according to the regional akimat (administration) press service.

Under the State Programme for Accelerated Industrial and Innovative Development, 162 projects totalling 208 billion tenge (US$626.2 million) were implemented in the region, creating 13,500 jobs. To date, three new plants worth 37 billion tenge (US$111.4 million) have been put into operation.

In addition, the region plans to introduce 17 projects totaling 37.1 billion tenge (US$111.7 million) this year.

"One of the implemented projects is a waffle production plant in Shymkent, which is capable of producing 1,700 tonnes of products per year. The second project is the Asia Agro plant in the Otyrar region for corn processing. The third project is a polyethylene plant, designed for servicing the production of uranium in the Sozak district," head of Regional Department of Entrepreneurship, Industrial and Innovative Development and Tourism Batyrkhan Kurmanseit said.

The South Kazakhstan region is considered an attractive destination for investors. Shymkent, as well as Otyrar, Tolebi and Saryagash districts lead in investment attraction. Along with this, the South Kazakhstan region is among the first to implement investment projects. Investors have expressed interest in the pharmaceutical industry, the production of textiles, light industry, agriculture and processing industry.

Local specialists plan to visit Germany, Great Britain, Georgia, Spain, Italy, Turkey, Russia and other countries with business trips to boost machine-building, tourism and agriculture, and share experience on building smart cities. Such measures will familiarise foreign business community with the investment opportunities of the region, and contribute to the development of cooperation.

Five years ago, the region had 120,000 small- and medium-sized business entities, while today this figure soared to 176,684 enterprises. Moreover, the region has emerged as a leader in attracting investments in this sector. In general, the region's economy attracted 380.6 billion tenge (US$1.14 billion) of investments last year.

Development Bank of Kazakhstan offers affordable financing for non-oil export trade

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – The Development Bank of Kazakhstan (DBK), a subsidiary of Baiterek National Holding, is seeking to provide financing for 13 non-oil exporters as part of the Nurly Zhol initiative 2015-2019 aimed at increasing production and exports. At an Aug. 4 press briefing in the capital, the bank presented a special programme to support exporters providing revolving loans for a period of up to 36 months with a reward rate of no more than 9 percent per annum.

During 2015-2016, the bank allocated 65 billion tenge (US$195.4 million) from the National Fund in three tranches, said DBK Managing Director Adil Ismagambetov. The bank also attracted an additional 30 billion tenge (US$90 million) by issuing bonds in the domestic market last year.

"All three tranches of the National Fund have been fully disbursed. The funds were allocated for 13 non-oil exporters for the supply of titanium ingots and alloys, steel pipes and steel reinforcing, confectionery, lead, copper, zinc, silver, yellow phosphorus, diesel locomotives, electrical transformers and substations, vegetable oil, soft drinks, nitrogen fertilizers and motor and transmission oils. The list of exporters-borrowers includes Aluminium, Arcelor Mittal Temirtau, Kazzinc, Kazakhstan KazAzot and Kazphosphate companies," he added.

> During 2015-2016, the bank allocated 65 billion tenge (US$195.4 million) from the National Fund in three tranches. The bank attracted an additional US$90 million by issuing bonds in the domestic market last year.

The bank has 8 billion tenge (US$24 million) from issuing bonds which it plans to invest before the end of the year.

The export proceeds of DBK's borrowers increased 269 billion tenge (US$808.8 million) for the period from 2015 to the first quarter of this year.

Ismagambetov said the number of export loans in the processing industry "has significantly intensified" during the past three years. The bank provided 14.2 billion tenge (US$42.6 million) in pre-export financing to two companies in 2013-2014. It has supported 13 borrowers with 223 billion tenge (US$670.5 million) from 2015 to the first half of 2017.

Such dynamics are primarily attributed to the fact that Kazakhstan has established a system of state support for non-oil exports.

In October, the financial institution revised the lower threshold level of export loans taking into account the needs of borrowers. Currently, the threshold stands at 1 billion tenge (~US$3 million) instead of $5 million.

ECONOMY NEWS IN BRIEF

The revision of rules and criteria for subsidising agricultural producers has saved the country 25 billion tenge (US$75.37 million), 24.kz reports. According to First Vice Minister of Agriculture Kairat Aituganov, these changes will also have a positive impact on production. "According to the previous system of investment subsidies, the criteria were artificially inflated, not allowing small and medium-sized agricultural producers to apply for subsidies. So in 2016, a negative fact was 50 percent or 12.3 billion tenge (US$37.08 million). Subsidies went to only 49 large farms or 2 percent of the total number of participants. Meanwhile, the number of such farms was 2,400," Aituganov said.

Prices in the secondary housing market are falling, according to ranking.kz. Over first seven months of the year, resale prices for well-maintained housing decreased 0.3 percent. At the same time, the price index for the purchase of new apartments from December 2016 to July this year grew 1.3 percent. This contrasts with price dynamics in the residential property market last year: a year ago, prices for new housing fell 1.5 percent over the same period. However, the cost of well-maintained apartments on the secondary market rose 0.7 percent from December 2015 to July 2016.

Kazakhstan's State Revenue Committee intends to increase the collection of taxes to 17 trillion tenge (US$51.25 billion) by 2025, 24.kz reports. The agency plans to achieve such results by introducing new initiatives. Five main tasks have been identified for the implementation of the plan. They are the establishment of feedback from businesses, the availability and simplicity of services, the elimination of barriers, the delegation of control and the reduction of business costs. "The transfer of control functions to business and society was the first step. Already today, the audit report has become a legitimate basis for the liquidation of taxpayers, the reduction of inspections and the creation of favourable conditions for business," State Revenue Committee Chairman of Kazakh Ministry of Finance Ardak Tengebayev said.

Kazakhstan's largest poultry farm will be built in the Akmola region to decrease the import dependence on poultry meat of Astana and Central and Northern Kazakhstan, khabar.kz reports. The future factory is supposed to produce up to 60,000 tonnes of broilers per year. The capacity of the poultry farm will fully cover Astana's need for chicken meat. This, of course, will be a huge contribution to the formation of a food belt in the capital. The cost of the first stage is 33.5 billion tenge (US$101 million), of which 16.1 billion tenge (US$48.5 million) will be financed by a 10-year Development Bank of Kazakhstan loan.

The transport arteries of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) are becoming increasingly saturated with the movement of goods between the member states, 24.kz reports, referring to representatives of the transport ministries of the EAEU countries. The representatives met in Kyrgyzstan to indicate the next steps to creating a single transport space on land, water and in the air. Transparent borders and the absence of customs barriers allowed Kyrgyzstan to dramatically increase the volume of sales of its products on the EAEU market. Over the two years of Kyrgyzstan's participation in the EAEU, its freight exchange with Russia grew 2.5 times, and with Belarus grew five times. The record holder for this indicator was Kazakhstan: Kyrgyzstan's freight shipments to that country increased 13 times, reaching 241,000 tonnes.

The Kazakh-Hungarian direct investment fund will start financing the first project in Kazakhstan – a greenhouse complex in the Aktobe region, reported Kazinform. The initial capital is $40 million and the fund will enable private agricultural companies to attract investments to develop and expand their activities.

BUSINESS

BUSINESS NEWS IN BRIEF

Kazakhstan Temir Zholy Vice President for Development Arman Sultanov and Nippon Express Executive Officer Tatsuo Sugiyama discussed the issues of organising transit container transportation between the countries through Kazakh territory, reported the national railway company press service. Both sides highlighted the need to improve cooperation to attract more cargo from China, Japan and South Korea to Europe through Kazakhstan, as well as to attract more investment to develop the Khorgos – Eastern Gate special economic zone. The meeting resulted in signing a memorandum of cooperation between the companies.

Kazakh retail trade turnover reached 4,674.2 billion tenge (US$14.1 million) in January-June, 6.4 percent higher than the same period last year, reported the Ministry of National Economy press service. Retail trade business in Almaty leads the ranking at 29.2 percent, followed by Astana (12.4 percent) and the East Kazakhstan and Karaganda regions (9.3 percent and 8.9 percent, respectively).

Kazakh insurance companies were unable to maintain last year's high profitability in the first half of this year, reported Ranking.kz. The companies had a net profit of only 29.9 billion tenge (US$90 million), almost 50 percent less than January-June 2016 when they earned 54.5 billion tenge (US$164.1 million), the highest profit since 2006. As a result, insurance market participants returned to the indicators of 2015. The profit reduction is attributed to the slowdown in the growth of collected insurance premiums. From January-June, the total volume of insurance premiums was 219 billion tenge (US$659 million) or 8.4 percent more than the same number in 2016. Last year, premiums totalling 202 billion tenge (US$608 million) were collected for the six months, 33.4 percent higher than the same amount collected a year earlier.

U.A.E.-based Schneider & Danzey has expressed the intention of building a solid waste recycling plant in the South Kazakhstan region, reported the regional administration press service. Schneider & Danzey has more than 25 years of industry experience. The company plans to work in two directions – solid waste recycling and green economy development. The project developed for the South Kazakhstan region is environment friendly and will benefit both sides. The facility is expected to be constructed near Turkestan and Kentau cities.

The retail loan portfolio volume is growing for the fourth month in a row, because banks find retail loans more attractive and less risky than financing corporate clients, according to ranking.kz. In June, the amount of loans provided by banks to individuals increased 2 percent, reaching 4.2 trillion tenge (US$12.6 billion). Retail loan portfolio growth has reached 4.2 percent or 169.5 billion tenge (US$510.4 million) since the beginning of the year. Lending to the country's corporate sector is declining, as the volume decreased 3.7 percent, or 327 billion tenge (US$985 million), for the last six months. The fall in banking activity in the corporate sector is the consequence of the increased risks of financing such customers.

The trade turnover between Kazakhstan and Germany increased 36 percent exceeding 2 billion euros (US$2.3 billion) over five months, 24.kz reports. Kazakhstan is Germany's key trading partner in the Central Asian region. Over 91 percent of exports are mineral resources. The rest is made up of ferrous and non-ferrous metals, chemicals and fish. In terms of oil exports, Kazakhstan is in the top five countries of Germany's main partners. The record indicator of foreign trade turnover between the countries was fixed in 2013. Then it exceeded 6.5 billion euros (US$7.6 billion).

Turkish AIGP invests $30 million in pharmaceutical plant in Kazakhstan

By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – This year marks the fifth anniversary of the presence of Turkish pharmaceutical industry leader Abdi İbrahim on the Kazakh pharmaceutical market. Over these years, the company has been expanding its operations in Kazakhstan as well as constructing a modern pharmaceutical plant worth $30 million in Almaty region.

In 2012, Abdi Ibrahim bought a 60 percent share of Global Pharm, a leading Kazakh pharmaceutical producer.

The agreement envisaging the construction of the plant was signed in 2013 at the Turkish-Kazakh business forum in Istanbul. Kazakhstan President Nursultan Nazarbayev and then Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan took part in the ceremony.



Photo credit: abdiibrahim.com

The facility with an annual production capacity of 24 million boxes and extensive portfolio of more than 100 varieties of pharmaceutical products now employs 200 people.

Increasing its presence in Kazakhstan allows the company to access the markets of the Commonwealth of Independent States countries and the Eurasian Economic Union members.

"Abdi Ibrahim managed to transfer its huge experience in pharmaceutical industry and advanced technologies in this field to AIGP, which produced a significant boost in the entire pharmaceutical market in Kazakhstan. At this moment, AIGP have several goals – further development of the industry, import substitution programme and increasing export volumes," said AIGP General Manager Ziyatkhan Gassanov.

AIGP is among 300 pharmaceutical companies in Kazakhstan that together generated 457 billion tenge (US$1.37 billion) in revenues in 2016, a two-fold increase from 274 billion (US$823.92 million) in 2013.

The Turkish producer launched a supply of pharmaceutical products from the Kazakh plant to Afghanistan, Azerbaijan and Georgia in April.

Apart from Kazakhstan and Turkey, the company also operates in seven countries – Albania, Algeria, Azerbaijan, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Georgia, Iraq, and Portugal.

Zhambyl region promotes renewable energy projects, expands production at 50MW solar park

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – Burnoye Solar – 2, the first large-scale solar plant in the country with a capacity of 50 megawatts, will be constructed in the Zhualynsky district of the Zhambyl region.

The project, implemented by Samruk Kazyna United Green Energy, is a joint venture of the UK-registered private investment company UG Energy and Samruk Kazyna Invest, reported the regional administration press service in early August. The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), in partnership with the Clean Technologies Fund, will finance plant construction.

As an environmentally-friendly project that meets world standards, the solar plant is expected to lead to a significant reduction in carbon dioxide emissions in the region. It may also cover energy shortages in the southern regions.

"Twelve investment projects for the construction of hydro, wind and solar power plants with a capacity of seven-300 megawatts have been implemented and are planned for launch with the adoption in 2009 of the law on Renewable Energy Sources Support in Kazakhstan. There are plans to implement seven renewable energy projects with a total capacity of more than 230 megawatts. The development of renewable energy sources is becoming increasingly urgent due to hydrocarbons' falling prices. This will be our contribution to the development of the green economy," said Zhambyl Region Akim (Governor) Karim Kokrekbayev.

The Zhambyl region is one of the leaders among the regions in developing renewable energy sources. The list of projects includes the first 1.5-megawatt industrial wind power plant at Kordai pass, the small 9.2-megawatt hydropower station at Tasotkel reservoir, the 1.5-megawatt Merken hydroelectric power station and the 2.3-megawatt Karakystak hydropower plant in the Ryskulovsky district.

The share of green energy in the region's total electricity production will increase to 40 percent.

The Otar, the first solar power plant in Kazakhstan and Central Asia with a capacity of seven megawatts, was put into operation in the Kordai district in 2012 using $1.3 million in private investments.

The 50-megawatt Burnoye Solar – 1 solar power station, situated on 150 hectares with approximately 192,000 energy-producing solar panels, was built in the Zhualynsky district in 2015. The plant, which is able to produce 73 million kilowatt-hours of electricity per year, has created nearly 250 jobs.

Chinese entrepreneurs to build solar power plant in South Kazakhstan

Staff Report

ASTANA – Chinese entrepreneurs plan to build a 200 MW solar power plant in the Otyrar district of the South Kazakhstan region, according to Chinese company Qingdao Beihai representative Ming Ie.

Local authorities plan to allocate 300 hectares and provide infrastructure. Also, in accordance with a bilateral agreement, the station will be called Kunnery.

"In recent years, the problem of energy security has come to the forefront in the world. Therefore, we see the need in the building of a solar power plant in the southern region. In your region there are mainly sunny, hot days and few cloudy days. After recovering costs, we will return the station to your order," said Ie.

Akim (Governor) of the region Zhanseit Tuimebayev has expressed support for the' proposal and stressed that the demand for electricity in the region is increasing every year.

> Local authorities plan to allocate 300 hectares and provide infrastructure. Also, in accordance with a bilateral agreement, the station will be called Kunnery.

"The main theme at the EXPO 2017 exhibition is green economy. We are in search for alternative energy sources. In regard to this, I fully support your proposals. You will be allocated a land plot and provided all necessary infrastructure. In the South Kazakhstan region, about 300 days a year are cloudless, this is very profitable for the implementation of this project," he added.

Following the meeting, Deputy Head of the South Kazakhstan region Baurzhan Zhamalov and the special representative of Qingdao Beihai signed a memorandum to implement the investment project in the energy sector.

Three new brands to export Kazakh meat

By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – Kazakhstan's Ministry of Investments and Development along with the Ministry of Agriculture are setting up three meat brands to export to international markets, according to First Vice Minister of Investments and Development Alik Aidarbayev.

KazakhMeat, Qazaq Organic Food and Halal Kazakhstan are three umbrella brands controlled by the National Chamber of Entrepreneurs incorporating multiple local producers under one brand. This gives them an opportunity to push their products to foreign markets, otherwise hardly accessible if acting alone.

"In general, the agricultural products have a huge potential that we are not using fully. Thanks to such umbrella brands, local producers can use it and promote their products abroad," Aidarbayev said.

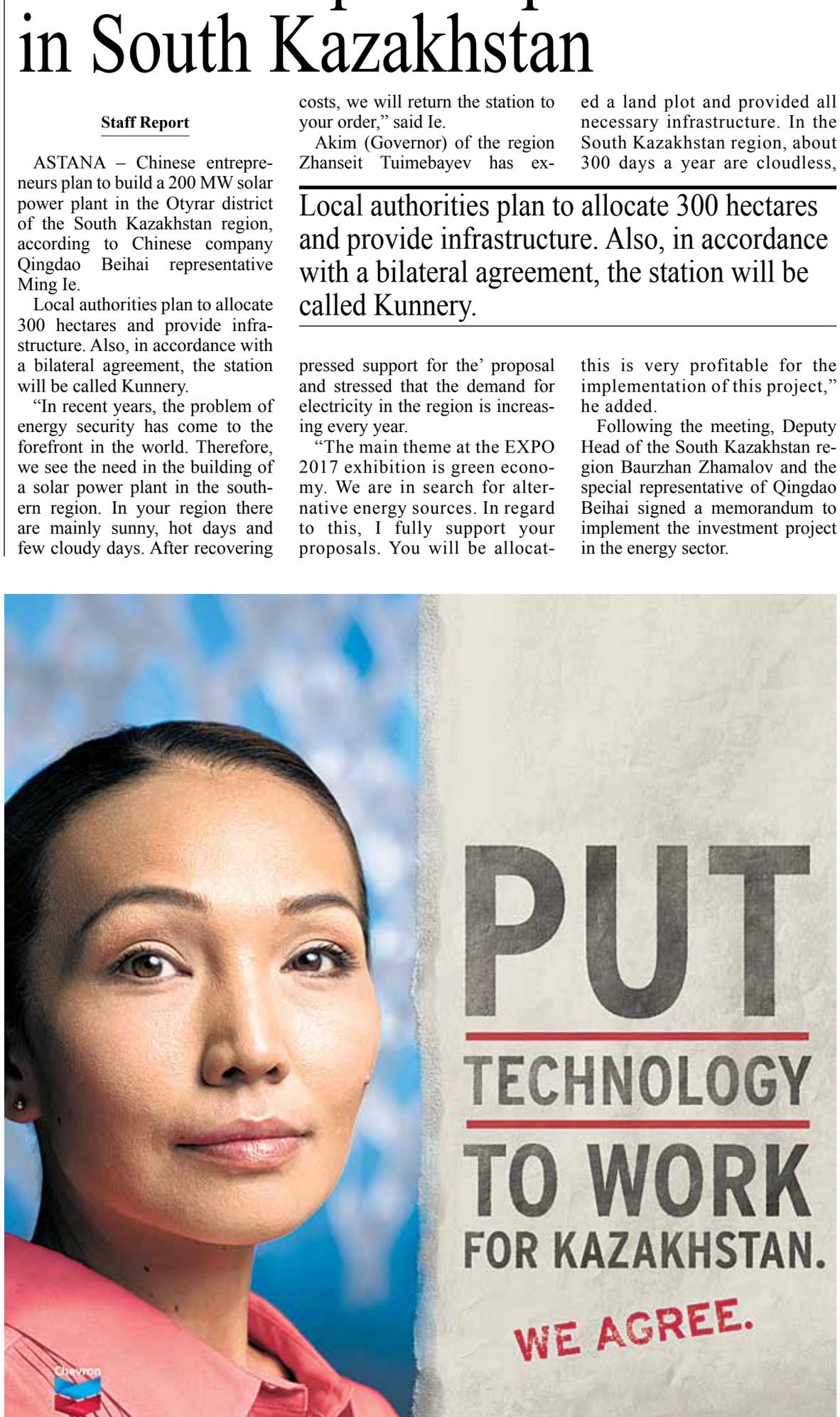
The project is implemented within the 100 Concrete Steps programme initiated by Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev in 2015.

The Kazakh Invest national company is running the project. Established this year, the company, with several offices worldwide, serves as a bridge between local producers and foreign investors and promotes Kazakh products abroad.

The concept and the roadmap stipulating further development and advertisement of these brands on international markets are ready, the minister noted.

The brands were also presented at international exhibitions in Russia and China, by far the largest importers of the Kazakh meat.

The agriculture ministry and the national chamber are in the process of certifying the brands, according to the ministry.



EDITORIAL&OPINIONS

A milestone in non-proliferation

Continued from Page A1

But the danger is that these plans risk making worse the challenge that Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev has rightly called the cause of our time – reducing the threat of nuclear war.

Nuclear reactors need enriched uranium to produce electricity.

Countries making the huge investment in civilian nuclear programmes need to make sure they have supplies of this fuel. But the problem is that any facility which produces it could technically be altered to produce the more highly enriched uranium needed for nuclear weapons.

The LEU bank is the answer to the challenge of how countries can be guaranteed supplies of the uranium they need for reactors without making the proliferation of nuclear weapons more likely. It will hold, under the auspices of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), around 90 tonnes of low enriched uranium which can be accessed by countries if their usual market supply is disrupted, provided they do meet the IAEA clear-cut criteria of adherence to non-proliferation.

This guarantee from the independent IAEA takes away the need for countries to develop their own uranium enrichment facilities. By doing so, it both reduces costs for them and also suspicions that the civilian plants are just a cloak to hide a nuclear weapons programme. It should help cut both carbon emissions and international tensions.

Before the bank could move from drawing board to reality, it needed both funding and a secure site. Initial funding came from the Nuclear Threat Initiative – thanks to the generosity of philanthropist Warren Buffet – with the non-governmental organisation's $50 million donation being topped by government contributions from countries such as the United States, Kuwait, Norway, the United Arab Emirates as well as the European Union.

Kazakhstan, right from the start, made clear it was ready to host the bank. As a country with extensive nuclear expertise, a track record of campaigning for nuclear non-proliferation and a trusted member of the international community, the offer ticked all the boxes and was accepted with enthusiasm by the IAEA. The site chosen is the Ulba Metallurgical Plant, which has been a nuclear facility for over 60 years and meets all health, environmental and security standards, and Kazakhstan has made its own in-lind contributions to the construction of the unique storage facility.

It is fitting that the opening ceremony in Astana takes place on Aug. 29, 26 years after Kazakhstan announced it was closing the Semipalatinsk nuclear test site. That surprise announcement had a much wider impact as it gave fresh momentum to efforts for a global agreement to end testing – momentum which the world urgently needs to rediscover.

That is why the true prize from the launch of the IAEA LEU Bank would be if its impact went beyond enabling countries to develop their civilian nuclear programmes without increasing fears of nuclear proliferation. We must hope that, by demonstrating what can be achieved through international cooperation, ambition and determination, it will give fresh impetus to finding agreed global solutions to common problems.

Pugwash movement: against nuclear war

By Alimzhan Akhmetov

In July 1955, eleven internationally renowned scientists signed the Russell-Einstein Manifesto, which laid the foundations of the Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs.

The movement's first conference took place in July 1957 in the village of Pugwash in the Canadian province of Nova Scotia.

In 1995, the Pugwash Movement was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize "for their efforts to diminish the part played by nuclear arms in international politics and, in the longer run, to eliminate such arms."

The authors of the historic manifesto in 1955 noted with concern that "the general public, and even many men in positions of authority, have not realised what would be involved in a war with nuclear bombs" and "what perhaps impedes understanding of the situation more than anything else is that the term 'mankind' feels vague and abstract."

The authors of the manifesto warned that "in any future world war nuclear weapons will certainly be employed."

Unfortunately, after more than 60 years, the text of the manifesto remains topical.

In his Nobel lecture in 1995, the President of the Pugwash movement Joseph Rotblat said, "I have to bring to your notice a terrifying reality: with the development of nuclear weapons Man has acquired, for the first time in history, the technical means to destroy the whole of civilisation in a single act."

In fact, any war, any murder, any use of weapons and violence are contrary to a brighter destiny of man.

Nuclear weapons, the use of which will lead to "universal death, sudden only for a minority, but for the majority a slow torture of disease and disintegration," is an extreme expression of evil created by humanity.

In this sense, the words of the Chairman of the Norwegian Nobel Committee Francis Sejersted on the occasion of the award of the Nobel Peace Prize to the Pugwash Movement in 1995 are more relevant than ever: "Since we have no way of banning knowledge concerning nuclear weapons, the only guarantee that they will never be used is, in the last analysis, probably a world without war."

This year, the Pugwash Movement marks the 60th anniversary of its activity, and its 62nd conference will be held on August 25-29 in Astana.

It is symbolic that the conference will come to its end on the day of the closure of the Semipalatinsk test site, which saw 456 nuclear explosions. Our country, our people know about the horrors of nuclear weapons firsthand. More than one and a half million people were affected by nuclear tests, and the echo of nuclear explosions still resonates to our days.

The mere fact of the existence of nuclear weapons poses to each of us, as Erich Fromm wrote, a question point-black: is a man inclined to destruction or creation?

The root of the problem of the existence of nuclear weapons lies not in strategic stability or nuclear deterrence, nor in multilateral arms reduction and control treaties.

The problem is in a man himself. In good and evil. In culture. In education. In the aesthetics and ethics of human existence.

The author is Director of the Astana-based International Security and Policy Centre.

Confronting nuclear dangers

By Paolo Cotta-Ramusino



The goal of eliminating nuclear weapons from this planet received a timely boost this year with the successful negotiation of a Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in July 2017.

This Treaty is a remedy for some of the shortcomings in the existing legal and moral framework on nuclear weapons, but it is by no means the end of the road.

Prohibition sends a clear message that the majority of people in this world do not believe that nuclear weapons increase their security; but getting to elimination is a long-term activity.

While disarmament can take place, there remain areas of the world that can be described as being of "nuclear danger" – relatively new areas where nuclear weapons are present or where there is a serious risk of further nuclear proliferation.

Of course, "new" here is meant in relation to the time of the Cold War, the height of nuclear weapons folly. The legacy of the arms race means that the majority of nuclear weapons are still possessed by the U.S. and Russia, and nuclear disarmament must take place in the context of ever-more strained relations between these two.

Creative measures and reinvigorated political will are necessary to overcome the antagonism, not just between the U.S. and Russia, but equally amongst the other states possessing nuclear weapons. The fact that none of these states saw fit to participate in the UN-backed process on the prohibition of nuclear weapons shows the stark divide between haves and have-nots.

Since the early days of the Cold War, and continuing to this day, the Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs has been a relentless champion of disarmament. Since the very first conference 60 years ago, Pugwash has been synonymous with "dialogue across divides", providing opportunities for scientists and policymakers to meet and confront the conflicts and issues of the world.

At this time, perhaps more than ever, such dialogue is needed. It is not simply that progress toward nuclear disarmament is slow, nor that too many weapons – 15,000-16,000 – continue to pose a threat to humanity. Rather, the world is in a dangerous moment with respect to forms of extremism and non-state actors, protracted and unresolved conflicts and the rise of various nationalisms. It is precisely at this time that more must be done to ensure people talk, listen and understand one another in efforts to build peace.

The founding goal of Pugwash is to decrease the salience of nuclear weapons that continue to threaten people's security.

Kazakhstan set an example to the world by categorically rejecting the possession of nuclear weapons and the continuation of their testing at Semipalatinsk. Kazakhstan was also a leader in the establishment of Central Asia as a zone free of nuclear weapons. These are concrete actions that must be supported and other countries should follow their lead.

For the past 15 years, Pugwash has addressed the changing international environment. The Middle East, South Asia and North-East Asia are all areas where there is a propensity for conflict that is unfortunately matched with the existence of nuclear weapons or nuclear capabilities. The combination can create very dangerous situations of global significance, as we are seeing on the Korean Peninsula most recently.

Furthermore, where insecurity prevails there continues to be the danger of states seeking to rely upon nuclear weapons, either through developing their own programme or by the de facto reliance on other states to provide a nuclear umbrella. These examples of possible proliferation should be of grave concern to all states – they provide yet another reason to strengthen the existing normative framework governing nuclear weapons.

Promoting dialogue across the divides in these areas is with the hope of helping to lower conflict and hence the risk of possible nuclear use. This is the message of the founding document of the Pugwash movement, the Russell-Einstein Manifesto of 1955: "We have to learn to think in a new way. We have to learn to ask ourselves, not what steps can be taken to give military victory to whatever group we prefer, for there no longer are such steps; the question we have to ask ourselves is: what steps can be taken to prevent a military contest of which the issue must be disastrous to all parties?"

In a country that is geographically very close to Kazakhstan, namely Afghanistan, there is war that has been going on for 37 years, with the direct involvement of Russia first and the U.S. later. The instability that comes from Afghanistan can further cause the spread of chaos in the entire region, and creates possible risks of spill-over into nuclear-armed Pakistan. For this reason, Pugwash has been very much committed to helping Afghanistan to find a peaceful way out of a conflict where no side is reasonably allowed to have a military victory. Afghanistan will be just one subject of a wide debate in Astana during the forthcoming 62nd Pugwash International Conference this week that aims to confront nuclear dangers.

The author is Secretary General of Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs.

Kazakhstan's Constitution: from Soviets to democratic values

By Ruslan Zhakupov



On August 30, 1995, the Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan was adopted. The current constitution is the supreme act in Kazakhstan's system of law. It has the highest legal force and has a direct effect on the entire territory of Kazakhstan.

The legal formalisation of real relations in society, i.e. the actual constitution, is ensured by a written legal constitution. In the history of Kazakhstan there have been five such constitutions. Three of them were adopted during the Soviet period, the other two adopted during the years of Kazakhstan's independence. Undoubtedly, all of them in one degree or another affected Kazakh statehood and its development.

The foundation of the first Constitution of an independent Kazakhstan was the Declaration of State Sovereignty of the Kazakh SSR of October 25, 1990, and the Constitutional Law of December 16, 1991, "On State Independence of the Republic of Kazakhstan." This demonstrates that the sovereign people and sovereign country have a sovereign constitution. It organically proceeds from the inalienable sovereign right of the people to have statehood and to be a full-fledged subject of the world community.

At the same time, being adopted by the Supreme Soviet (the parliament of the time), it had a compromise character. The question of whether Kazakhstan was a presidential or parliamentary country at that time remained open.

At the first session of the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan in March 1995, Nursultan Nazarbayev initiated the adoption of a new constitution. The Constitution of 1995 embodied the will of the people – it passed through a broad public discussion and was then adopted through a national referendum.

The main feature of our constitution is that it takes into account the fact of the multi-ethnicity of the people and does not infringe on the interests of the state-forming Kazakh nation. It is enough only to pay attention to its preamble: "We, the people of Kazakhstan, united by a common historical destiny, creating statehood on the ancient Kazakh land…" Both chambers of the Parliament stipulate the existence of a quota for representation of national, cultural and other significant interests of society, and the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan is given a constitutional status.

The preparation of the draft constitution was initiated by the, First President of Kazakhstan, and he played a key role in its development with the assistance of a group of leading local and foreign lawyers. As is known, it is based on the model of the French Constitution from 1958. The system of supreme bodies of state power with the "arbitration" position of the President practically reflects the Constitution of the French Republic. The President is elected by citizens and without the participation of the Parliament. At the same time his authority, on the one hand, is limited by the constitution and laws, on the other hand, it is balanced by the functioning of the bicameral Parliament and the Constitutional Council.

The ideas expressed by the President laid the foundation for the construction of the Basic Law. In his book "The Kazakhstan Way", President Nazarbayev detailed the history of drafting the constitution and elaborating the main approaches of the constitutional reform.

For example, among Kazakhstan's fundamental principles, the current constitution includes public consent and political stability, economic development for the benefit of the whole nation, patriotism and the solution of the most important issues of state life by democratic methods, including voting in a national referendum or in Parliament. He made a direct contribution to fixing those principles, whose immutability in 2017 was designated by parliamentary deputies as part of constitutional reform. With the huge support from broad sections of society, we can call our constitution both charismatic and national.

Kazakhstan claims to be a democratic, secular, legal and social state. In other words, the country intends to progressively develop as a modern, strong state, whose power is based on the law that restricts it and reflects progressive universal ideals. The individual; his life, rights and freedoms; are proclaimed as the highest values of the state.

It is very significant that one third of the articles of the constitution is devoted to the legal status of a person and a citizen.

The people are defined as the only source of state power, exercising power directly through the national referendum and free elections, as well as delegating the exercise of their authority to state bodies.

The presidential form of government, as history demonstrates, is the most acceptable for multiethnic Kazakhstan and helps avoid political crises. Ideological and political pluralism is recognised. Unified state power is exercised on the basis of the constitution and laws in accordance with the principle of its division into the legislative, executive and judicial branches and interaction among themselves using a system of checks and balances. Moreover, the coordinated functioning of all branches of state power and the responsibility of the authorities to the people is provided by the President.

Since the adoption of the current constitution, amendments and additions have been made to it four times: in 1998, 2007, 2011 and this year. The need for reforms every time was initiated by the President. Neither the government nor the Parliament have taken advantage of this opportunity.

We see that the reforms that have been undertaken have been consistent, reconciled and carried out while preserving the entire framework of the political system in order to achieve the goals of phased implementation of democratic reforms, without excessive politicisation, shocks and tensions in society. They are relevant to the historical situation and the objective level of the country's development.

Approaches that are aimed at reviewing certain articles of the constitution are possible and are not excluded, because the introduction of new articles and the modification or abolition of already obsolete ones takes into account the political, economic and social needs and demands of society.

The stability of constitutional norms is guaranteed by the fact that the constitution contains provisions on subjects entitled to make a proposal to amend the constitution and make a final decision. The procedure and limits of such reforms are stipulated.

Proceeding from the fact that the President is a symbol and guarantor of the unity of the people and state power and the inviolability of the constitution, draft amendments and additions to the constitution are submitted to a national referendum or to the Parliament only by the President. The unity and territorial integrity of the state established by the constitution, the form of government, as well as the independence and fundamental principles of the activities of the republic, are not subject to any change.

From the point of view of current conditions and foreseeable prospects, Kazakhstan's constitution is quite conducive to the consistent formation and promotion of the state policy, its sustainability and continuity, as well as comprehensive modernisation of all spheres of life.

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OPINIONS

UNIDO will support EXPO 2017 legacy projects, its chief says

By Aiman Turebekova

ASTANA – It may be argued that industrialisation is one of the most important events in the history of humanity. Due to this process, relatively more goods were produced in relatively less time. Average real incomes rose dramatically. Thus, more time was left for education, innovation and recreation.

The United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO) meets the industrial development needs of its member states through a variety of highly specialized and differentiated services that promote social inclusion, economic competitiveness and environmental sustainability, as well as the promotion of knowledge networks and institutional partnership.

In an exclusive interview, UNIDO Director General Li Yong speaks of his priorities at the helm of the organization, efforts to ensure sustainable industrialisation globally and cooperation with Kazakhstan as part of EXPO 2017 and beyond.

Mr. Li, you give great importance to fiscal and financial measures. As Vice-Minister of Finance of the People's Republic of China you prompted major financial institutions to establish corporate governance, deal with toxic assets and strengthen risk management. So, what has changed in your personal agenda since you started to serve as the Director General at the UN specialized agency, UNIDO?

My experience of growing up, and of living and working in China taught me a lot. In Asia we saw countries like Japan and the Republic of Korea develop very fast after World War II, and become members of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development. What created the 'miracle' of the South-East Asian countries? Industrial development. Thanks to industrialisation, these so-called 'tigers' and 'dragons' quickly reached the status of middle- and high-income level countries.



Li Yong

China learnt from them in the 1980s. We opened up a very poor country with a big population to the world. You can't imagine that in 1978 GDP per capita at current prices was US$228, and now, more than 30 years after the reforms to open up the economy, GDP per capita is over US$6,000. What was the driving force? Agriculture? No. Over the past 30 years China transformed from an agricultural-based to a more industrialised country.

I have a finance background. I think everyone agrees that the global financial crisis beginning in 2008 taught us many lessons. One of them is that we should re-focus on the development of the "real sector". This does not just apply to developing countries or middle-income countries, but is agreed on by countries at all income levels. I am very happy to see that many advanced countries are re-focusing on industrialisation.

In many ways my personal agenda has not changed. As Vice-Minister of Finance of the People's Republic of China and member of the Monetary Policy Committee of the Central Bank for a decade, I was involved in setting and harmonizing fiscal, monetary and industrial policies, and in supporting long-term economic growth in China. I accorded great importance to fiscal and financial measures in favour of small and medium-sized enterprises, the cornerstones for creating economic opportunities, reducing poverty and promoting gender equality.

As Director General of UNIDO, I am heading an organisation that forges partnerships, in which governments, the private sector and other stakeholders work together to create an enabling environment for inclusive and sustainable industrial development.

UNIDO pursues noble goals such as promotion of industrial development for poverty reduction, inclusive globalisation and environmental sustainability. However, one may argue that there are not only benefits but also negative effects of industrialisation such as deforestation, extinction of species, widespread pollution and excessive waste. So, how does your organisation work with these problems? Is it possible to advance the country's economy without causing harm to the environment?

> UNIDO will continue to work closely with the Government of Kazakhstan to support the adoption of clean and sustainable energy standards and best practices in order to achieve the 2030 Agenda and thereby a sustainable future for all.

As we all know, no developing country has ever become a developed country without a concerted policy focus on industrial development. UNIDO estimates that manufacturing alone provides more than half a billion jobs globally per year. Thanks to the multiplier effect of industry, every job in manufacturing creates 2.2 additional jobs in other sectors.

Nevertheless, industry is also one of the largest contributors to climate change and environmental degradation and, therefore, has a particular responsibility in ensuring the highest environmental standards and safeguards.

UNIDO strongly believes that sustainability must be the foremost consideration of any industrial development process. Our mandate makes explicit reference to this aspect. We work to harness industry's full potential to create economic growth and shared prosperity, while safeguarding the environment.

In order to achieve sustainable industrialisation, we work closely with our member states, the private sector and various development partners to scale up green industry solutions and technologies. We advise on resource-efficient cleaner production techniques. We provide expertise on the implementation of multilateral environmental agreements. And we bolster energy efficiency standards.

For example, UNIDO has helped to phase out 340 million tonnes of CO2 per year, which corresponds to the exhaust emitted by more than 71 million passenger vehicles in one year.

Furthermore, UNIDO has contributed to the phase-out of over one third of ozone-depleting substances in the developing world since 1992. UNIDO is promoting inclusive and sustainable industrial development to mitigate the potential negative impacts of industrialisation. When we manufacture products to use and to trade, we need to consume raw materials. We need to use energy, water, electricity, oil, etc. This creates pollution. UNIDO and the international community are working very hard to avoid, or at least reduce, such negative effects. This is, and will remain, a learning process.

This summer's EXPO 2017 in Astana on Future Energy will give a powerful boost to Kazakhstan's scientific and technological fields. A plentiful and sustainable energy supply to all parts of the world will help create conditions for peaceful co-existence. Despite the fact that Kazakhstan has an abundance of oil and gas reserves, the country hosts this exhibition in order to create a clean and sustainable future for us all. Are there any common points that Kazakhstan and UNIDO have? Could you please share with us if there are any joint programmes?

The theme of the Astana EXPO 2017, 'Future Energy', could not be timelier. Nearly two years have passed since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement on climate change. The realization that we need sustainable energy solutions to guarantee our planet's integrity and achieve sustainable development has reached all corners of the world.

We at UNIDO recognize the importance of sustainable energy when we support our member states in achieving industrial development, in a way that is both socially inclusive and environmentally sustainable. We are convinced that sustainable energy provides the foundation for shared prosperity around the world.

That is why UNIDO was very pleased to accept the invitation to participate in the Astana EXPO 2017. Over three months, we have the chance to demonstrate in the International Organisations Pavilion, how our work will help secure sustainable energy, for example, by promoting green finance and green technologies, and by facilitating the flow of expertise and best practices across countries.

To move the sustainable energy agenda forward, we need to accelerate clean energy innovation. We also need holistic technology solutions, entrepreneurship and policy innovation. For these reasons, in my recent meeting with Zhenis Kassymbek, Minister for Investment and Development of Kazakhstan, I commended the initiative of the Government of Kazakhstan to establish the International Centre for Green Technology and Investment Projects, the Astana International Financial Centre, and the techno-park for IT start-ups in the EXPO City, as legacies of the Astana EXPO 2017. We are looking into ways to support these initiatives. I can also add that the minister expressed an interest in establishing a UNIDO Investment and Technology Promotion Office in Astana, and this is something we will discuss further.

We are already working with the Government of Kazakhstan and signed a joint declaration of cooperation in May 2014. UNIDO is delivering on its commitments to develop three projects that are financially supported by the Government of Kazakhstan. One is for industrial modernisation and enterprise competitiveness in Kazakhstan. A second is for trade capacity building through strengthening standards, metrology, testing and quality infrastructure. And a third is the development of Kazakhstan's industrial statistics.

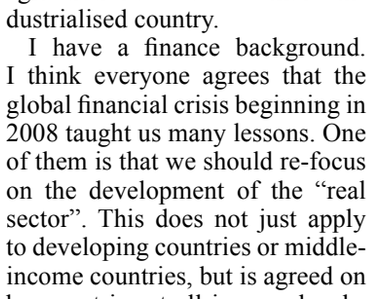
Furthermore, UNIDO will continue to work closely with the Government of Kazakhstan to support the adoption of clean and sustainable energy standards and best practices in order to achieve the 2030 Agenda and thereby a sustainable future for all.

U.S. options in Afghanistan and why Kazakhstan should care

By Charles J. Sullivan

This autumn, the War in Afghanistan will slip into its sixteenth year. America's Afghan War, which currently serves as one of several theatres in the global war on terrorism, has been labelled as the longest armed conflict in the history of the United States. Nowadays the U.S.-led military operation shows few signs of letting up as American, NATO and Afghan soldiers continue to battle against the Taliban and other violent extremists. Yet, as Washington plots America's next move it is important for Astana to pay attention, for whatever happens in Afghanistan will likely influence future developments across Central Asia.

The United States militarily intervened in Afghanistan in late 2001 in response to the Sept. 11th terrorist attacks. CIA and U.S. Special Forces ousted the Taliban regime from power with the help of an assortment of Afghan militias, and, thereafter, began hunting Al-Qaeda and Taliban leaders. Washington has since experienced some successes, with drone strikes decimating enemy leadership ranks and the killing of Osama bin Laden. But the war has not gone so well over the past decade and a half. Years of state-building has only led to the creation of a wobbly central government in Kabul. The United States and its coalition partners have not defeated the Taliban and other insurgent groups, namely because enemy forces hide out in the rugged border region and tribal areas in neighbouring Pakistan. In addition, the Afghan government cannot exert much authority in the countryside, leaving portions of territory heavily contested. All of these factors are causing the U.S.-led campaign to flounder.



Charles J. Sullivan

> If America seeks to pummel the Taliban into submission, it remains to be seen as to how the U.S.-led coalition can force the enemy to the negotiating table. The Taliban, on the other hand, have a strategy: undermine popular confidence in Kabul by staging attacks against civilians and wait for the Americans to leave the battlefield.

At present, there ostensibly are four courses that the United States can follow: keep fighting in the hopes that the enemy will be pummelled into submission and forced to partake in negotiations with the Afghan government; start experimenting with controversial ways to possibly bring the level of violence in Afghanistan down by placating the interests of other foreign powers with a stake in the war's outcome; replace the bulk of U.S. military forces with contractors to assist the Afghan government; or fully withdraw the U.S. military from Afghanistan and leave Kabul to fend for itself. None of these options look promising.

Washington and Kabul are in need of a grand strategy that will ensure the military degradation of the enemy, followed by political reconciliation and economic recovery. So far, however, no such strategy has come to fruition. America briefly surged troop levels in Afghanistan several years ago but this did not exert much of an effect. U.S. airpower and drone strikes have been effective, but these tools cannot win the war outright. War fatigue in the U.S. and NATO countries will also eventually set in if soldiers continue dying. Taken together, if America seeks to pummel the Taliban into submission, it remains to be seen as to how the U.S.-led coalition can force the enemy to the negotiating table. The Taliban, on the other hand, have a strategy: undermine popular confidence in Kabul by staging attacks against civilians and wait for the Americans to leave the battlefield.

Peace is seemingly unobtainable in Afghanistan and will remain so absent strong pressure on the Taliban to enter into good-faith negotiations with Kabul. Pakistan in particular needs to apply much of this pressure but it remains to be seen as to whether Washington can convince Islamabad to do so. Pakistan has played a key role in assisting the United States in Afghanistan and the Global War on Terror. But Islamabad has also historically sought to establish a sphere of influence in Afghanistan by supporting proxies to serve as a check against India. Moreover, applying too much pressure may serve to destabilise Pakistan's political system. So, might Kabul and the Taliban be able to broker a peace if the former cedes some territory to the latter, which arguably may also further Pakistan's aforementioned geostrategic aim? While this idea may sound alluring it is a perilous option with little chance of success. Such a policy would likely embolden the enemy (which already controls sizable portions of territory in Afghanistan) to seek more political concessions, strain relations with India, weaken U.S. credibility and global prestige, undermine Afghanistan's territorial integrity, and risk the occurrence of a humanitarian catastrophe if cities and towns are suddenly overrun. For all of these reasons, it is thus highly doubtful that Washington would adhere to this course of action.

Washington is now allegedly considering the option of replacing U.S. troops with contractors to continue the war effort, thereby essentially privatising the Afghan War. While such a strategy sounds appealing at first glance, the overall war effort will nonetheless endure. Afghanistan's harsh terrain and weak economy favour the Taliban, and it is unclear as to how such a strategy would assist the Afghan government in terms of enhancing its political legitimacy and improving its war-fighting capability.

> Kazakhstan should strive to continue balancing great power interests while maintaining friendly relations with other states, but in order to do so Astana will need to keep the United States focused on regional affairs as well as work to prevent Afghanistan's troubles from spreading across the region.

Consequently, Washington may simply run out of patience and choose to pull the plug on the Afghan war. Fully withdrawing though may not work out so well in the long-term. In Iraq, Washington has been forced to reengage militarily since 2014 (albeit with a smaller footprint) due to the rise of the so called Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). In Afghanistan, if the U.S. exits then America would bequeath the war effort to a fragile host government fighting against a bolstered adversary. In other words, history could repeat itself, with America getting pulled back into Afghanistan if the political situation spirals out of control. In summary, Washington is left with only a handful of bad choices at this juncture and Afghanistan's future lies very much up in the air.

There are three reasons why Kazakhstan should pay attention to Afghanistan. First, Afghanistan will likely come to serve as a source of great power rivalry in the future. In anticipation of a security vacuum, neighbouring states and ambitious hegemons will presumably build up local clients. This should worry Astana, for Kazakhstan's lauded multi-vector foreign policy (which emphasises good relations with other states while balancing great power interests) requires a spirited yet tolerable degree of competition between the great powers to be effective. Kazakhstan has sought to resolve conflicts within other war-torn countries principally because adversarial great power relations are detrimental to Astana's geopolitical flexibility. As such, a worsening of relations between the great powers could potentially restrict Kazakhstan's maneuverability within the international realm.

Second, it is worth noting that an unstable Afghanistan poses a challenge to the region's newfound aspirations to revitalise the ancient Silk Road. So far, the violence in Afghanistan has not spilled into the Central Asian republics but the tribulations vexing Kabul are not that distant and a change in the security situation there could upset the relative sense of political tranquillity within bordering countries. Moreover, Afghanistan's illicit narcotics trade is not about to disappear and its regional implications could prove to be very far-reaching. Hence, it is important for the "stans" to address these threats as they become more integrated.

A third concern relates to Kazakhstan's image vis-à-vis America. Kazakhstan aspires to portray itself as a modernising country and play a constructive role in fostering international peace and cooperation. That said, if the situation in Afghanistan does not improve in the near future then U.S. politicians may start questioning America's interests altogether in such a faraway region. Kazakhstan thus needs to keep America engaged in Central Asian affairs in the interest of sustaining its own multi-vectorism.

Kazakhstan should strive to continue balancing great power interests while maintaining friendly relations with other states, but in order to do so Astana will need to keep the United States focused on regional affairs as well as work to prevent Afghanistan's troubles from spreading across the region. Kazakhstan can make use of the new C5+1 (which includes the Central Asian republics plus the United States) as a forum to realise these aims. Central Asia's leaders need to prepare for the coming geopolitical shift in Afghanistan. Kazakhstan should seize the initiative by tweaking its foreign policy, not to try to bring the War in Afghanistan to an end but to contain its fallout and keep the great powers interested in furthering regional development.

The author is Assistant Professor of Political Science and International Relations at the School of Humanities and Social Sciences at Nazarbayev University in Astana. The opinions expressed are the author's and are not representative of Nazarbayev University.

EURASIA&WORLD

Kazakhstan, Romania are stepping up bilateral relations, Bucharest envoy says

By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – Kazakhstan and Romania are taking bilateral cooperation to a new level, tapping into the huge potential for extensive partnerships between the two nations, Ambassador of Romania to Kazakhstan Cezar Manole Armeanu told The Astana Times during a discussion of prospects for Kazakh-Romanian cooperation and priorities for his term.

Armeanu embarked on his duties as Romania's Ambassador to Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan May 16. He presented his credentials to Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev May 30, addressing the leader in the Kazakh language.

"I am very excited to be here in Kazakhstan. I have seen very welcoming and friendly people. I also found that Romania has a very good image and perception in Kazakhstan and there is a real interest in developing mutual partnership. At the same time, the city of Astana, a capital city built in just few years, has greatly impressed me. A lot of work has been done, but the results are in line with the wishes of the ambitious Kazakh people," said the ambassador.

Armeanu is determined to promote and boost bilateral cooperation at all levels. This has acquired a particular importance following the recent visit of Romanian Minister of Foreign Affairs Teodor Viorel Melescanu to Astana and Karaganda July 27-28 to celebrate the National Day of Romania at EXPO 2017 and mark the 25 years of diplomatic relations between Romania and Kazakhstan, home to nearly 20,060 ethnic Romanians.



Cezar Manole Armeanu

"On July 15, we celebrated 25 years of diplomatic relations in this very special context offered by EXPO 2017," added Armeanu, "I take this opportunity to congratulate Kazakhstan for hosting such a prestigious event as well as for the status of a non-permanent member of the Security Council of the United Nations."

"I believe that the visit of Minister Melescanu to Kazakhstan, with the consistent programme he had, sent a clear message that we want to strive for more," noted the envoy.

Kazakhstan and Romania have been steadily expanding their bilateral ties, exchanging high-level visits with the first official visit of Nazarbayev to Romania in 1998 and the subsequent visit of the Romanian President to Astana a year later.

Romania was also among the first to recognise the independence of Kazakhstan on Dec. 17, 1991, just one day after Nazarbayev signed the Constitutional Law declaring the country's independence.

"The history of the bilateral relations between Romania and the Republic of Kazakhstan is not only relevant from a political, diplomatic or economic point of view, but also from the perspective of human interaction, links between our people and of our interest in better knowing each other's culture and traditions to understand our contemporary societies. We consider that education and people-to-people contacts are key elements that can ensure mutual understanding and bring support for values that our countries share, building bridges in areas that are sometimes affected by geographical distance," noted Armeanu.

Kazakhstan is a strategic partner of Romania, according to Armeanu. The total trade volume between the two countries was $957.7 million last year, with Romanian exports amounting to $64.5 million and imports reaching $911.2 million.

According to Romanian figures, the first four months of this year have brought a 99 percent increase in total trade volume compared to the same period in 2016, rising to $510.5 million. Armeanu said there is a huge potential to bring these numbers higher and find more beneficial partnerships.

With the Romanian Rompetrol oil and gas venture becoming an oversees asset of Kazakhstan's Kazmunaygas national oil and gas company in 2009 and the accession of Constanta port located in the Black Sea to the Trans-Caspian International Transport Route this year, Kazakhstan and Romania have unveiled new opportunities for their businesses.

The two countries have also similar international development initiatives and in this regard, Romanian RoAid and Kazakhstan's KazAID could establish a triangular cooperation platform and act as donors to support other countries, the Romanian envoy asserted.

> Kazakhstan is a strategic partner of Romania. The total trade volume between the two countries was $957.7 million last year, with Romanian exports amounting to $64.5 million and imports reaching $911.2 million.

Kazakhstan and Romania also share a significant interest in cooperation in other fields apart from politics and economy, according to Armeanu. "We reaffirm Romania's interest in developing overall bilateral relations with Kazakhstan. In this respect, we noticed the increasing interest shown by our institutions and experts to cooperate in various fields, including education, science and culture," the ambassador pointed out.

The major universities of Romania and Kazakhstan, including the Romanian Polytechnic University of Bucharest, Babes-Bolyai University, the Oil & Gas University of Ploieşti, the University of Bucharest and Kazakhstan's Gumilyov Eurasian National University in Astana, Technical State University and Buketov State University in Karaganda, are collaborating to exchange ideas and new technologies.

Experts from Satpayev Kazakh National Technical University in Almaty are also cooperating with their Romanian colleagues from Horia Hulubei National Institute for Physics and Nuclear Engineering in the development of a modern laser model that will be capable of producing power equivalent to 10 percent of the sun's power.

"The world's most powerful laser is now being developed and installed on the Magurele platform in Romania. ELI-NP is going to be the most advanced research facility in the world focusing on photonuclear physics and its applications. This unique project will enable the tackling of a wide range of research topics in nuclear physics, astrophysics and the management of nuclear materials and life sciences," Armeanu explained.

The ELI-NP laser model along with other Romanian initiatives in the energy field are presented to the public in the Romanian pavilion at the expo, which embodies the "spur of science, research and culture of Romania," according to Armeanu.

With the central theme of "Energy of Light – Journey into the Future," the pavilion welcomes nearly 2,300 people daily. It has reached a daily high of 5,900 visitors.

At this moment, Kazakhstan and Romania do not have direct flights between their cities, making travel for business people and tourists to and from the two countries expensive and time consuming. Armeanu believes that launching a direct flight between the two nations will step up not only business links, but also people-to-people interaction, an important component of ties between the nations.

"Bilateral relations between Romania and Kazakhstan have seen an ascendant course over the last years. Taking into account the geographical position of Romania and Kazakhstan and the recent increase in the number of passengers travelling from Bucharest to Astana and back, I am looking to finding solutions for opening a direct flight from Bucharest to Astana, because I believe it is needed," Armeanu asserted. Romania's national carrier TAROM has already agreed to negotiate the possibility of opening a direct flight between Astana and Bucharest, he reported.

Kazakhstan and Afghanistan improve ties

Continued from Page A1

"The Afghan government is ready to ensure the safety of investors from Kazakhstan and will consider special privileges for them to prevent any challenges on their way," he said.



Afghan Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah (L) and Kazakh Prime Minister Bakytzhan Sagintayev (R) on Aug. 19.

The trade value between Afghanistan and Kazakhstan has reached $50 million, according to Kazakhstan Chamber of International Commerce Chairperson Yerlan Arinov, adding the amount needs to be increased.

"Kazakh investors are committed to increasing the trade volume with Afghanistan in transit, liquid gas, mines, industries, logistics, exports and imports sectors," he said, according to tolonews.com.

Afghanistan is planning to appoint a trade representative to the Kazakh capital, said Minister of Commerce and Industries Humayun Rasa, in the hope the envoy would facilitate the sale of Afghan products in Kazakh markets.

The official delegation also included discussions on the bilateral and international agenda between Kazakh Foreign Minister Kairat Abdrakhmanov and Afghan Foreign Minister Salahuddin Rabbani. The sides, who met Aug. 17, reaffirmed their commitment to achieve stability and security in Afghanistan through the nation's active involvement in economic integration with the countries in the region.

Abdrakhmanov also spoke about Kazakhstan's plans within the framework of the country's two-year membership on the UN Security Council, including during the chairmanship of the body in January 2018, to focus on the regional problems.

Rabbani expressed gratitude for Kazakhstan's continued support of the Afghan government on a number of important issues. He emphasised the worth of the Kazakh initiative to provide grants to Afghan students for training in peaceful professions and noted the interest in continuing educational programmes.

Noting the significance and timeliness of Nazarbayev's initiative to promote the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) First Summit on Science and Technology in the Kazakh capital in September, Rabbani confirmed Ghani's participation in the event.

As the official delegation's visit coincided with Afghan Independence Day, the Afghan Embassy in Astana marked the holiday with a reception attended by high officials from both nations.

Abdrakhmanov congratulated the Afghan people on their independence, noting the importance of partner relations in terms of business, transit and economy and stressing his country's readiness to increase cooperation in each sector.

Swiss President meets with Kazakh counterpart, attends national day at EXPO 2017

Continued from Page A1

In this regard, the expo is important for the global community. It is the place where we can continue to disseminate our latest technologies and build on the stable cooperation that exists between Kazakhstan and Switzerland," she said.

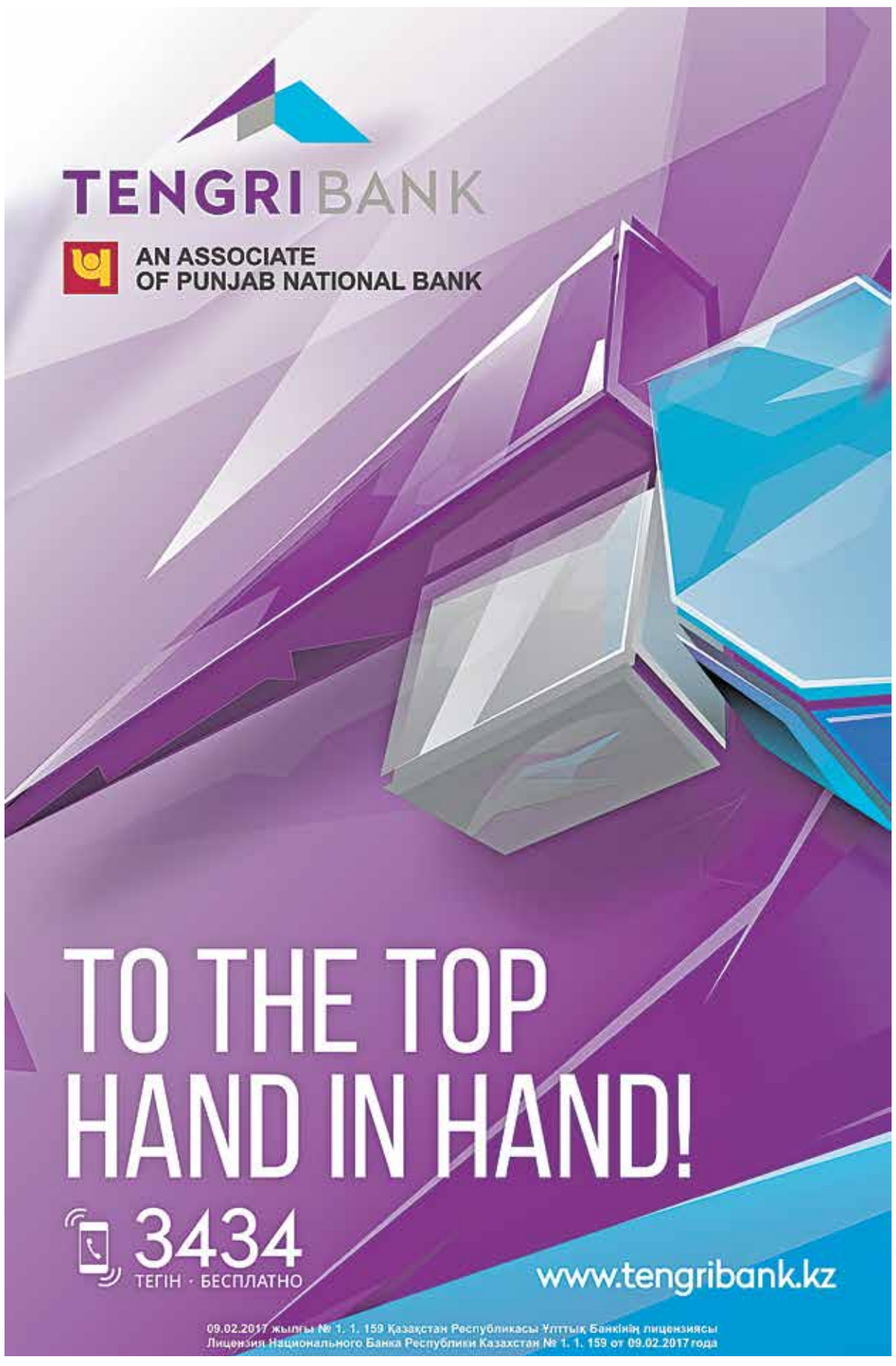
On her expo tour, Leuthard visited the Kazakh pavilion followed by the Swiss Flower Power pavilion. The latter is composed of four sections with interactive displays dedicated to the themes of energy efficiency, renewable energy and global water management. Switzerland's research sector also has a platform in the shape of the so called Swissnex lab.

Kazakhstan's Almaty region and Switzerland's Ticino canton also inked a memorandum of cooperation signed by Almaty region Akim (Governor) Amandyk Batalov and Ticino Council of State representative Christian Vitta.

"The two territories are very similar. The Almaty region is the country's agrarian region; more than 16 percent of the country's total gross output is produced here. In terms of natural and climatic conditions, we are also similar; we have mountains and mountain lakes just like the canton of Ticino," said Batalov.

He noted the memo will facilitate cooperation in agriculture and tourism. Kazakhstan, in his words, can learn a lot from Switzerland in these spheres.

"We also talked about their solar energy and wind power. We learned that they have a good level of processing solid domestic waste, which is very important for our region, because today our region has no complete cycle for processing solid domestic waste. I think they also have something to learn from us. It was they who suggested that it should be the Almaty region to sign an agreement with them," he said.



Nation&Capital

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 23, 2017

PEOPLE
Exhibition dedicated to Bauyrzhan Momyshuly opens in Almaty B2

CULTURE
Young int'l musicians take part in Eurasian Music Games B3

SPORTS
Kazakh boxer claims WBC Youth World Light Heavyweight Title B7

National Geographic features new documentary about Astana's city structures



By Dmitry Lee

ASTANA – "Megastructures: Astana, City of the Future," National Geographic's new documentary about the capital's architectural structures, premiered as part of EXPO 2017. The film includes interviews with expo head Akhmetzhan Yessimov as well as architects Gordon Gill and Norman Foster, who were involved in the city's design.

"We are a young country; our independence is only 25 years," said Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev in the opening interview for the documentary. "During those years, the city where only 150,000 people used to live – it was a provincial town – became a city with a population of one million. By 2030, it will probably rise to two million."

"We were rising up all of these years; the economy rose 22 times over. The energy of the future and renewable resources of energy are today's drivers of technical progress in the world," he added.

The head of state described the city planning.

"We have built a new district in our capital – a beautiful, modern and high-tech area," he said referring to the EXPO 2017 district. You can see the sphere – it will be the biggest sphere-shaped building in the world. The sphere has eight floors – each floor will showcase a different kind of alternative energy. The initial vision is complete – the symbiosis of person, nature and stone. The city has its own way of living now; it develops by itself and this is impossible to stop."

The documentary is part of the National Geographic TV Megastructures series about the world's symbolic architecture. Each episode dives into the historical insight, construction and operation of the largest edifices such as Burj Khalifa in Dubai, Petronas Twin Towers in Kuala Lumpur and Eurotunnel.

The episodes unveil the complex tasks, extraordinary engineering solutions and building technological innovations used to erect these new world wonders. In the capital, in addition to the unique architecture of EXPO 2017, the film focuses on Khan Shatyr shopping and entertainment mall, Baiterek Tower, Nursultan Nazarbayev International Airport and the recently-built railway station.

"Through the support of Kazakhstan, we made a documentary that is compelling, entertaining and a true reflection of one of the youngest capital cities in the world," said the film's executive producer and CEO of Off the Fence production company Ellen Windemuth.

"The capital of Kazakhstan struck us with its interesting buildings and the scale of the project," Ivan Bouso, Executive Producer, National Geographic Partners, Europe & Africa, told the media.

"National Geographic is known for being a leader in visual storytelling and through our popular Megastructures television series franchise, Astana is a perfect subject to create a premium documentary about this astounding city," said Deborah Armstrong, Executive Vice President, National Geographic Partners, Europe & Africa.

The world premiere screening took place Aug. 10 on the National Geographic Channel in more than 40 countries in 22 languages. The documentary will be broadcast on National Geographic's international channels till the end of August.

Kazakh TV takes viewers on a tour of modern Kazakhstan with 'Invite Me'

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – Kazakh TV's new show, "Invite Me," unveils Kazakhstan through the eyes of foreigners as Robert Boyd of Australia visits the country's most interesting destinations at the invitation of families around the country.

"When people live in another country they often tell how much more interesting it is than just being a tourist, because it's all about the people," Boyd said in an interview with The Astana Times. "I have been very lucky to be invited into people's lives around Kazakhstan. I have seen some many beautiful sites and learned so many interesting stories."

Boyd is learning Kazakhstan's culture and history through the lives of its people, he explained. "Kazakhstan has had such an interesting past. People here are very lucky to have so many different cultures because they can enjoy many points of view and foods," he said. "So I am exploring the origin of modern Kazakhstan by understanding its peoples, where they have come from and where they are now; how history and origin has shaped them and where they are going in the future."

The show is already catching the attention of locals and foreigners, the traveller said. "I have so many friends back in Australia who are really interested to see this show, to know more about Kazakhstan, and my friends in Kazakhstan are burning up with curiosity, because they find it so interesting to see their own country through foreigners' eyes."

Boyd has some experience in exploring and interpreting different cultures, he noted. "In 2005, I started to travel and found out that the world was so interesting. People thought different but still the same … different foods and tastes and different clothing and building styles."

He started in Europe, as many Australians do, Boyd said, but quickly strayed to Africa and North America, and then to Asia.

"I explored eastern Asia extensively and during this time I watched a movie called 'Mongol' and it sparked my interest in the Central Asian region. I had a romantic idea – to travel to Mongolia one day. I was working in Brisbane, Australia, and received a phone call to work in Kazakhstan."

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Kazakh oil export revenues have increased 53 percent in 2017

Staff Report

ASTANA – Almost 80 percent of all oil produced in the country is exported. The revenues of the Kazakh budget from the export of crude oil increased 53 percent this year. Oil export increased 46 percent, according to Energyprom.

In the last six months, the prices for crude oil increased 27.2 percent in comparison with the same period last year. At that, physical volume of exports increased 3 percent. In total, the value of exports of crude oil and gas condensate increased 46 percent. The positive balance of the country's trade balance increased 79 percent.

Approximately 33.2 million tonnes of crude oil worth $12.8 billion was exported in the last six months, which is 51 percent of annual oil production in the state, according of the annual forecast of Ministry of Energy. Oil production increased 10 percent, reaching 42.6 million tonnes.

About 78 percent of all extracted oil was exported this year and approximately 83 percent of oil was exported last year. The volume of crude oil used in the domestic market increased 38 percent, reaching 9.4 million tonnes. Price for oil in the domestic market is 2.5 times lower than its export price. Sale of this volume will make 466 billion tenge (US$1.5 billion).

Over the year, the share of oil exports in total exports increased from 59 percent to 62 percent. According to the Kazakhstan 2050 strategy, the country should move from simple supplies of raw materials to cooperation processing energy resources and the exchange of the latest technologies. The government plans to decrease the share of oil exports to 30 percent by 2050.

Continued on Page B4

Hungary celebrates National Day at EXPO 2017, highlights shared cultural traditions

By Dana Omirgazy



ASTANA – The Hungarian pavilion celebrated National Day Aug. 18 with a varied cultural programme. To commemorate the ethnic and economic ties between Kazakhstan and Hungary that have been traditionally strong and are still improving, the pavilion offered conventional folk music performed by the Kun-Captains Ensemble (representatives of the Union of Kuns, the Turkic people of Hungary).

Twelve members of the Szolnok Air Force Band performed traditional Royal Hungarian Army folk music and dancers, musicians and singers presented a grandiose folklore show. The main idea of the celebration was to demonstrate the relationship between the nations.

The official ceremony was attended by Kazakh Vice Minister of National Economy Madina Abylkassymova. In her welcoming speech, she focused on the international cooperation shared by the two nations.

"This year, we celebrate the 25th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Kazakhstan and Hungary. During this period, we have reached the expected development of bilateral cooperation in various sectors, creating the conditions to further unlock the potential of interaction between Kazakhstan and Hungary. The relations between our countries are also strengthened by common historic roots," she said.

Hungary is one of the key states in Central and Eastern Europe, she noted. Kazakhstan considers Hungary to be an important strategic trade and economic partner in the European Union (EU) space and leading Hungarian companies are successfully operating in the nation.

"As a result of the first half of this year, we are witnessing a significant increase in trade between our countries. Thus, according to statistics of Kazakhstan, the commodity turnover has increased 1.6 times reaching almost $80 million," she added.

Mihaly Varga, Hungarian Minister of National Economy, arrived in the capital to join the celebration. He stressed the fact the country's pavilion has welcomed 200,000 visitors during the past two months.

"Hungary is proud of the fact that the friendly relations between our countries have reached a stage where we have a strategic partnership. We appreciate our joint accomplishments and achievements. We appreciate the trust between Kazakhstan and Hungary based on our traditions, which has been strengthened again in recent years. The closeness of our peoples can multiply the opportunities we have today," he said.

The ancestors of the Kazakh and Hungarian people are connected through the nomadic peoples and tribes who still have descendants residing in Hungary, such as the Pecheneg or Kipchak, according to Hungarian Minister of Agriculture Sandor Fazekas.

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THINGS TO WATCH & PLACES TO GO

ASTANA OPERA

September 3 at 7 p.m.	Forever Pavarotti, Concert by La Scala
September 4 at 8 p.m.	Falstaff, Opera

KAZAKHSTAN CONCERT HALL

September 1-3 at 7 p.m.	Pierre Cardin's Fashion Show

EXPO 2017

June 17 - September 9 at 8 p.m.	Cirque du Soleil. Reflekt Show

BARYS ARENA

August 24 at 7:30 p.m.	Barys - Spartak
August 26 at 5 p.m.	Barys - Dinamo Riga
August 28 at 7:30 p.m.	Barys - Severstal
August 30 at 5 p.m.	Barys - Torpedo

Exhibition dedicated to Bauyrzhan Momyshuly opens in Almaty



By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – An exhibition dedicated to the Hero of the Soviet Union, Kazakh national hero and great military leader Bauyrzhan Momyshuly recently opened in Almaty. His personal belongings are presented for the first time. The exhibition also presents dozens of photographs about Momyshuly's life.

Zhas Otan Chairman Madi Akhmetov organised the exhibition. He graduated from the Almaty school named after Momushuly and has been interested in Momyshuly's biography since he was a little boy.

"When people speak about Kazakhstan's patriotism, our legendary hero Bauyrzhan Momyshuly is first to come to my mind. It seems to me that now young people do not have enough patriotic upbringing. So I wanted, together with Almaty museum, school No.131 named after Bauyrzhan Momyshuly and Zhas Otan to hold the exhibition, which will run for two weeks until August 29," Akhmetov said.

The exhibition presents unique photographs and other personal items provided by his daughter-in-law for the first time. Some of the photos are signed by the commander.

Akhmetov said that as the 21st century is considered to be the age of visualisation, it is very important to present such information in such a way, especially for young people. He plans to organise more exhibitions.

There is still no museum dedicated to Bauyrzhan Momyshuly in Almaty nor does the national museum have an exhibition.

"In the future, we plan to organise a number of patriotic exhibitions dedicated to Aliya Moldagulova, Manshuk Mametova, Khiuaz Dospanova, Talgat Bigeldinov and other heroes," Akhmetov said, adding that he hopes to open a military-patriotic museum in Almaty.

"My father's friend" – a lesson in parenthood

By Talgat Zhumagulov

On Aug. 22, my dear father Marat Zhumagulov would have turned 60. The following story is from the series of my interesting memories of him. I hope you'll enjoy reading it.

When I was a little kid, my dad used to raise me in quite a strict manner.

Not that he did not indulge me. On the contrary, I had all imaginable and unimaginable toys, like a model railway, the pedal car, bicycles, all the novelties of automobile and military industry for kids. All these were enough to entertain children of our entire street. Every weekend there were mandatory trips to the Gorky Park, the circus and many other attractions in Almaty and around.

At the same time, any violation of manners or discipline was uncompromisingly punished by a "corner".

Snorted? Disobeyed? Got dirty? Go stand in the corner for a while and rethink your behaviour!

This "education through corner" stressed me out greatly. "Everything is ok in my life. But when will the time come when I will not need to stand in the corner?" I asked myself.

I decided that such a moment came when my younger brother was born. I was four years old.



"Now it's the turn of another guy to stand in the corner," I concluded.

Moreover, while my mom was lying in the maternity hospital, my dad and I did a good job at home and generally got along quite nicely.

And so, one day we prepared a parcel for my mom and went to the hospital. In the trolley bus, I found the right moment and raised the issue straight to the point:

"Dad, you have a newborn son whom you can now scold, pamper and all that. I suggest that from now on I will be your FRIEND...", assuming, of course, the equality and privileges associated with such status.

The boy talked so loudly that a good half of the trolleybus passengers burst into laughter.

"I'll think about it, sonny," Marat answered quietly.

***

Many years later I tried to apply Marat's "corner method" while educating my own children.

Once, my three-year-old daughter had scattered toys all over the room and categorically refused to clean up the place. I decided to deliver her a tough ultimatum (What a naïve dad!):

"You collect toys now, or go stand in the corner!"

The daughter had realistically compared the burdens and made a confident conclusion: "I choose the corner!"

Ayala fund promotes charitable culture, focuses on effective giving

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – The Ayala Charitable Foundation has attracted 3 billion tenge (US$9 million) in donations, assisting 216 children's healthcare and education state institutions in 58 areas throughout Kazakhstan since it was founded in 2007.

Projects in paediatric cardiac surgery ("I also want to live"), neonatology ("Let's Bring to Life") and resuscitation ("Breathe, Baby") are brilliant examples of the participation of non-governmental organisations in healthcare. "I see the world" is a unique project to diagnose retinopathy in premature newborns.

"Our foundation adheres to the principle of effective charity in its activities. We believe that it is not enough to install new equipment in the hospital or educational institution. The training of specialists is also included in an integrated approach to solving problems in the field of children's healthcare and education," said foundation president Aidan Suleimenova in a recent interview for this article.

The organisation also conducts trainings and master classes with the participation of leading specialists from Italy, Lithuania, South Korea and Russia. Local therapists and nurses take part in internships in Italy, India, South Korea, Russia, Turkey and Ukraine.

Since its beginning, the fund has aimed at making a feasible contribution to developing society and becoming an effective tool for helping children.

"Many of our initiatives have been supported by the government and other charitable foundations," said Suleimenova. "We try to introduce innovations into the practice of charity. We launched a Shkola Blagotvoritelya (Charity Worker School) project dedicated to the 10th anniversary of the foundation. In their video clips, popular radio and TV hosts, journalists, bloggers and sportspeople speak about the methods of work, ways to participate in charity and what challenges face charities."



Donations are mostly collected with the help of sponsors – large companies and banks. Students, state employees, individuals, pensioners and other residents help the charity through Internet banking, collection boxes, SMS, payment terminals and other available means.

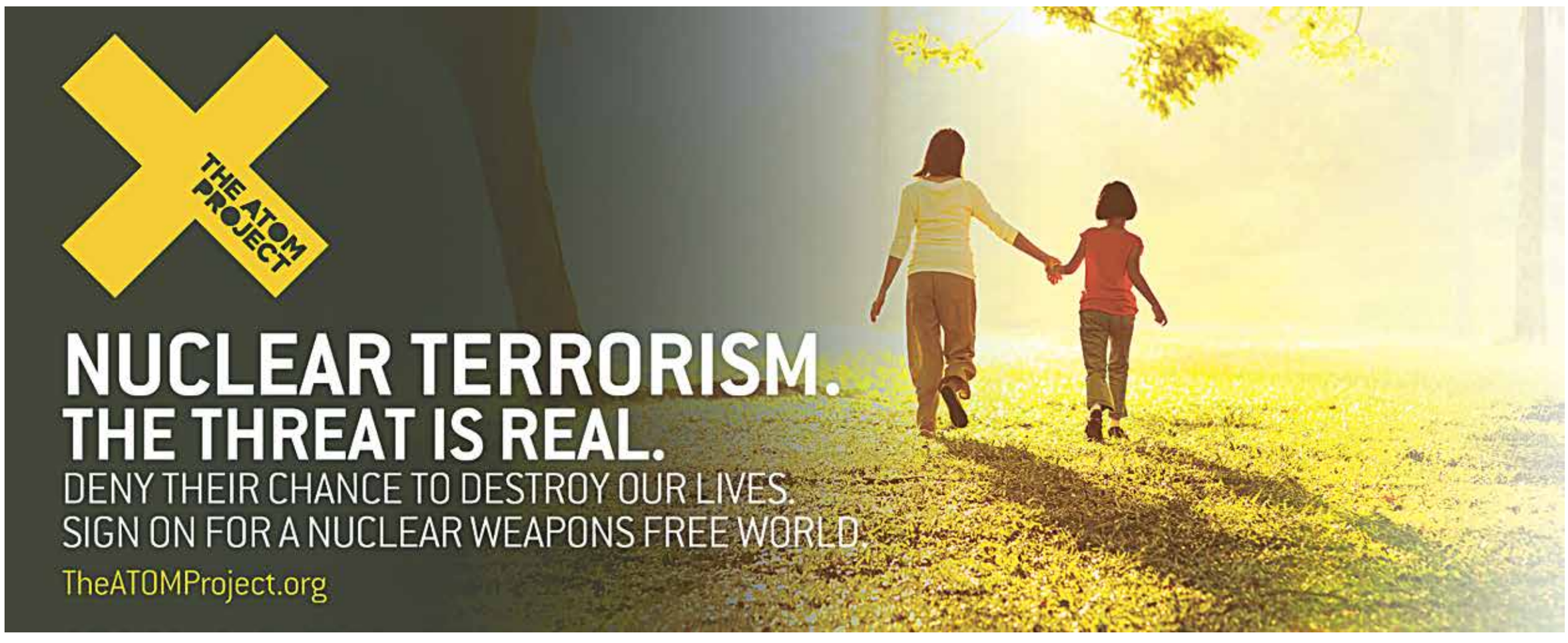
"Tens of thousands of children's lives saved in the neonatal intensive care units, maternity hospitals and regional and district children's hospitals are the most important result of our activities. We also managed to significantly improve the conditions of life, leisure and education of children in foster houses," she added.

Ayala also provides social and domestic orientation room equipment for foster homes so that children have an opportunity to learn the skills of adult life. They work in metalwork shops, sewing workshops and hairdressing training offices, attend computer classes and receive primary skills in demanded professions. The floriculture room, pottery workshops and cardboard-binding cabinet are among the foundation's unusual programmes.

"We launched the controlled hypothermia project in cooperation with the Ministry of Healthcare in 2016. The leading local and foreign neonatologists made methodical recommendations on the application of this new treatment method in the country. We also organised the scientific and practical conference and a master class delivered by Lithuanian professor Arūnas Liubšys in Astana," said Suleimenova.

She feels a sense of pride that the projects and initiatives are widely supported by Chevron, Samsung, Exxon Mobil, Halyk Bank, Kaspi Bank, ATF, Sberbank, Eurasian Bank and many other companies and media.

"This year, we summed up the results of the national contest among reporters which is titled the 'Press Service of Good Things.' Participants from different regions received an opportunity to visit Paris, Hong Kong, Tbilisi and St. Petersburg as a gift from Air Astana, our long-time partner. This competition became one of the facets of the main mission of the foundation – to promote culture and tradition of charity in Kazakhstan," she added.



Young int'l musicians take part in Eurasian Music Games



By Dana Omirgazy

ASTANA – Talented international youth will gather in the Kazakh capital Aug. 15-25, as the city is hosting the Eurasian Music Games for the first time as part of the EXPO 2017 cultural programme. The main organisers of the event are Kazakh National University of Arts and European Foundation for Support of Culture (Malta).

"I am sure that the Eurasian Music Games will be an outstanding event in the calendar of cultural events in Kazakhstan, one of its main attractions. For many of you, this week will become the time of your professional debut. I am pleased to welcome the future stars in Astana who wil l determine the face of the art for the next decade," said Kazakh National University of Arts Rector, Professor and People's Artist of Kazakhstan Aiman Mussakhajayeva.

According to the organising committee, the event intends to reveal and support gifted creative youth, educate and form moral values among young people, strengthen countries' common cultural space, preserve and develop the participants' cultural potential and create conditions for creative self-realisation. Musical competitions include three disciplines – vocal, violin and piano within the 12-35 age range. Young musicians have arrived from at least 18 countries.

The jury consists of prominent performers: Mussakhajayeva, Soviet and Russian opera singer Lyubov Kazarnovskaya, USSR People's Artist Konstantin Orbelian, Pablo Sarasate International Violin Competition winner Karen Shahgaldyan, Honoured Artist of Kazakhstan Shahimardan Abilov, pianists Yuri Didenko and Albert Mamriev, Talent Music Master Courses of Brescia (Italy) President and Artistic Director Paolo Baglieri, Honoured Worker of Kazakhstan Timur Urmancheyev, Italian violinist and conductor Pierclaudio Fei, State Symphony Orchestra in Bursa (Turkey) Director and Concertmaster Gokce Ozler, Ankara State Theatre of Opera and Ballet Director and soloist Metin Turan and international contest laureate Gennady Kabka (Ukraine). Eleven classical music concerts will be held during the competition involving musicians from Armenia, Germany, Hungary, South Korea, Norway, Russia and the host country.

"I wish all participants steady professional growth and creative victories! I am sure that the festival will be held at a high level and each one of you will gain an unforgettable experience. Get an invaluable professional experience, new friends, and the tradition of this festival will grow and develop for the benefit of our art!" said Mussakhajayeva.

The Astana State Academic Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra headed by Armenia State Youth Orchestra chief conductor Sergey Smbatyan will perform at the opening and closing ceremonies.

The audience will enjoy works of Alexey Shor, Pyotr Tchaikovsky, Sergei Rachmaninoff and Aram Khachaturian.

Pierre Cardin to present his new collection in Astana

Staff Report

ASTANA – World-famous designer Pierre Cardin will arrive in Astana Sept. 1 to present his new collection designed specifically for Kazakhstan. The show will last three days and feature 120 outfits with more than 300 accessories.

Kazakh fashion lovers have a chance to enjoy a fashion show, but there is more to it than that. Another creation of Cardin, a musical adaptation of Oscar Wilde's famous "The Portrait of Dorian Gray" called "Dorian Gray: The Beauty Has No Mercy," will premiere during the evening show.

"Pierre Cardin is coming to Astana for the first time. The collection is new; therefore, the details are not disclosed. This is a professional secret. We know only the number of outfits and accessories and that the collection was prepared specifically for Kazakhstan," Gulnar Zhunussova, a Kazakh designer and head of the show's partner Inkar Sezim studio, said during a press conference.



Pierre Cardin's full collection was presented in Astana in November, but this time the French designer of Italian origin is going to personally visit the Kazakh capital.

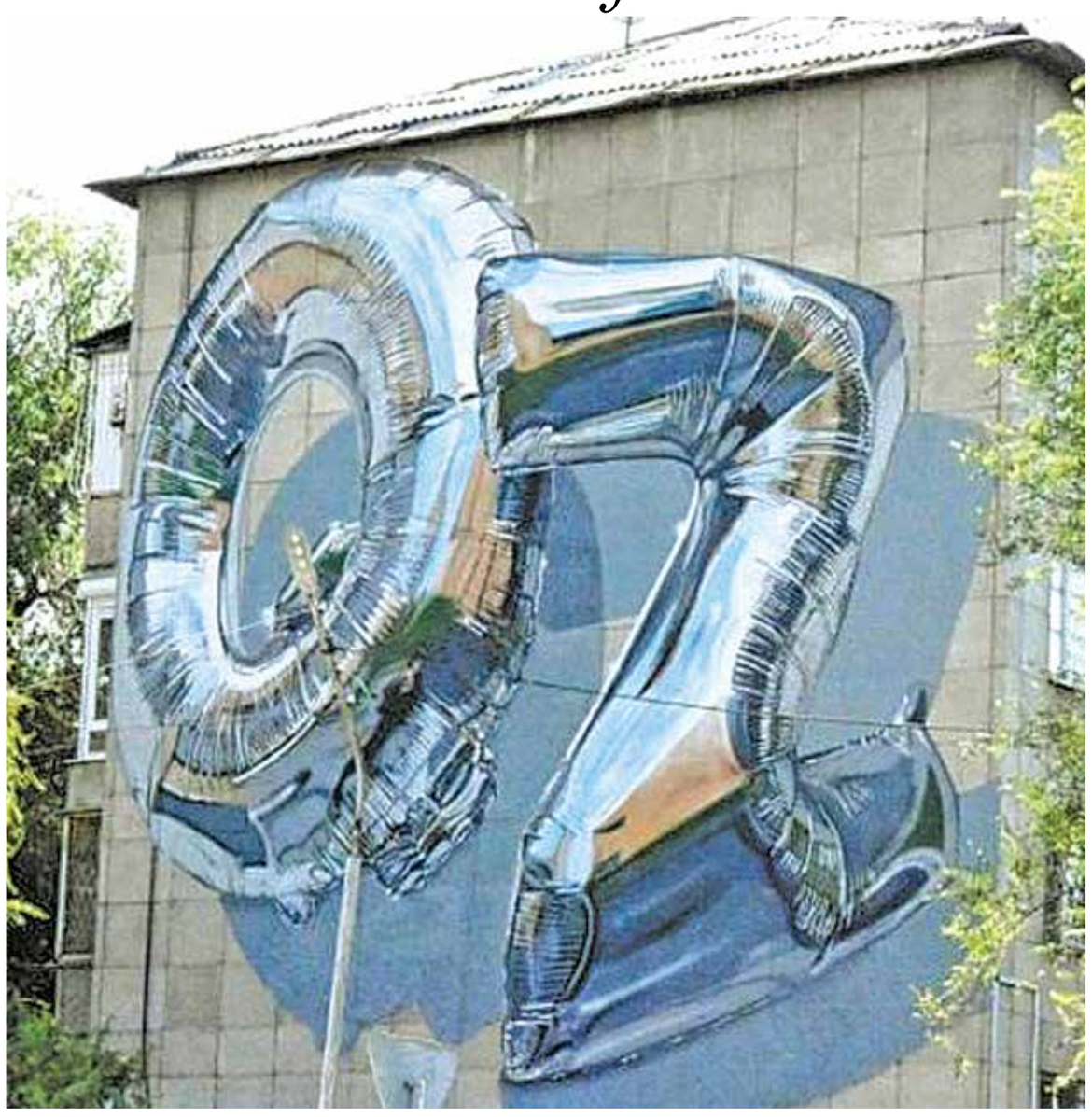
Cardin's team will bring five models, three Italians and two Russians, while other models will be selected in Kazakhstan, according to Zhunussova.

The 95-year-old designer would like to see tall models with Asian features in his show. "One of them is Zhanna Zhumaliyeva, Miss Kazakhstan 2011 who made it to the top ten at the Miss Universe. A big casting will take place in the end of August, where the team will select 25-28 models, including male models," added the Kazakh designer.

Tickets are available and cost 5,000 tenge (US$15.02) to 20,000 tenge (US$60.08).

The show is organised as part of the EXPO 2017 cultural programme along with fashion festivals and contests that are scheduled to take place within three days, in which Pierre Cardin will sit in the jury panel.

Foreign mural artists make Almaty buildings bright and colourful



By Dmitry Lee

ASTANA – Five artists from the United Kingdom, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Ukraine are creating monumental and decorative art in Almaty as part of International Mural Fest, giving them the chance to splash their inner colours out.

Britain's Fanakapan, known for his works in large cities such as New York, Los Angeles, Miami, Berlin, London and Paris, was the first to display his talents, reported tengrinews.kz. He decorated a house in the Medeu district with the gigantic letters Q and Z shaped like helium balls after learning Kazakhstan could soon switch to the Latin alphabet.

Andrei Palval, a Ukrainian street artist, painted one of the apartment complexes in the Bostandyk district. He devoted his work to the berkutchi, the Kazakh national falcon hunters, noting the art demonstrates his passion for painting people and birds.

"In his work, Palval managed to combine these two images while retaining the Asian flavour," wrote the media.

Russian artist Georgiy Kurinov, also known as GOOZE, was assigned to Almaty's Alatau district. He said he enjoys when his works are thoroughly scrutinised and suggest new ideas, making the onlookers reflect. Each individual can visualise something for him or herself.

Kurinov, who defends protecting nature and wildlife, portrayed a sea turtle, which he said is an ancient symbol of the universe. He enciphered the phrase "Energy of the Earth" in Russian on the reptile's shell and fin and portrayed an eco-house of the future with solar batteries and wind generators on the tree above it. A small hydroelectric power station is pictured in the middle.

Sergey Keller and Dmitry Petrovsky, the DOXA team from Kyrgyzstan, are participating in their second festival. They were assigned to the Turksib district.

The Kyrgyz duo depicted a swallow on one of the houses near the airport and their work has become the locals' special favourite. The apricot growing in front of the building is a reminder of spring, new life and dreams.

The work of young Kazakh artist Ali Zakir, a member of the Tigrohaud Crew team, appears on a residential building in the Auezov district near Sputnik shopping mall and entertainment centre.

"The idea came to me when I was working on the theme of the Aral Sea and I drew boats and ships. This work is not only about the ecological problem of the Aral Sea, but also about the transience of time; these ships sail not just in water, but in air, our thoughts and fantasies," the artist said.

In the Almalinsky district at the intersection of Zheltoksan Street and Zhibek Zholy Avenue, one can see the work of another Kazakh artist, Mukhit Dulu. He showcased the image of a Kazakh girl in a saukele, the national wedding headgear, and the work is rich in details and national ornaments.

The last piece will be completed on a 500-square metre wall in the Nauryzbai district, which will be painted by 100 children and teachers of the Kasteyev School of Fine Arts. The project will be carried out as part of the "Favourite children to the beloved city" campaign held annually in Almaty. In the future, Mural Fest is planned for other cities throughout Kazakhstan, according to the organisers.

Chinese Kung Fu masters dazzle EXPO crowds

By Dmitry Lee

ASTANA – EXPO 2017 management has spoiled Kazakh crowds with multiple concerts with the likes of Limp Bizkit and David Guetta, shows such as Cirque du Soleil and numerous other performances during the international exhibition.

Hence, the capital audience, which has the choice to attend any or every show, is particularly difficult to please. The Aug. 11-13 Kung Fu Revelations show "9 Scrolls," however, absolutely astonished and inspired them.

"There were real masters in the show and all their moves had such well-worked-out touches," city resident and show guest Ilyas Avdeyev told The Astana Times."[The show] has submerged me back to my childhood – to those kind times when we were dreaming to grow up and become as quick and fierce as Bruce Lee or Jackie Chan."

The colourful 50-minute performance comprises elements of martial arts, philosophy and religion, manager Yang Hui told the press in the capital.

"It's not just a sporting discipline, but an imitation. This is philosophy, religion. Don't think that this is just a fight or amusement – this is pure philosophy. Kung Fu is a traditional Chinese sport; we wanted to show the revelations of Kung Fu, we wanted to express Chinese philosophy and traditional thought," he said.

"For me personally, Kung Fu is not just a sport that is good for health, but a practice for the soul that helps people find a way in life from which people can improve themselves. Simply put – to find the meaning of life," he added.

Thirty-five Chinese warriors showcased their prowess and agility with bright props such as trees and a large screen and projector with various multihued backgrounds to give the show a more realistic feel and thematic.

"It is no doubt that the best fighter of all of them, no offense to anyone, was the little boy," said Avdeyev. "He is very skilful and was just loving every second and every move and the stage. He was the centrepiece of the show. I also liked the ending when the numerous masters, in sync, were dancing together. This was more than Kung Fu; this was more like ballet."

The youngest performer was 8 years old; the eldest, 30, according to sputnik.kz

The nine scrolls stand for the nine parts of the performance, each with its own name: purification – motivation for meditation; sutra – mercy; industriousness – understanding that everything is achieved through daily and continuous work on oneself; spirit – tempering of the spirit; obedience – expression of gratitude; form – understanding the essence of meditation; penetration – meditation without barriers; balance – the ability to remain unshakable in the heart, and bliss – withdrawal from bitterness and gaining joy.



Experts gather at Nazarbayev University, discuss economic diversification and good governance

By Assel Satubaldina



Photo credit: Nazarbayev University Graduate School of Public Policy

ASTANA – Nazarbayev University hosted the Good Governance and Economic Diversification in Resource-Rich Economies conference Aug. 17-19, bringing approximately 40 participants and eminent academics and speakers to the Kazakh capital.

The Graduate School of Public Policy (GSPP), one of the eight schools of the nation's young, but progressive Western-style university, organised the conference for the first time to bring the focus to the most salient issues for Central Asia and beyond.

The speakers represented various universities and institutions, such as the University of Toronto, Tashkent Financial Institution, Asia Research Centre, University of Groningen, University of Central Asia, Free University of Brussels, Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy and Nazarbayev University.

The conference speakers and participants discussed economic diversification, public management, the political economy of natural resources, civil society and public sphere, security and international relations and public policy education in Central Asia.

"For Kazakhstan, which is heavily dependent on oil and gas, the ideas and issues discussed in this conference on Good Governance and Economic Diversification are therefore very pertinent and vital for its future economic development and progress amidst the increasingly complex, volatile and uncertain global economic and political environment," GSPP Dean Dr. Weng Tat Hui told The Astana Times.

Good governance in natural resources management is a key factor to economic diversification, he added.

University of Warwick Professor Franklyn Lisk, who is currently involved with the Centre for the Study of Globalisation and Regionalisation, delivered the keynote speech. In his opening remarks, he noted Kazakhstan's progress in preventing its economy from falling victim to the "resource curse," a phrase used to describe the inability of recourse-rich economies to use their ample resources in a proper way to ensure sustained economic growth.

"On the basis of my examination of the situation in Kazakhstan, I am content to note that this country in the course of its development path since independence in 1991 has so far not tumbled into the resource curse trap," said Lisk.

He went on to point out three components of national regulatory framework necessary for effective good governance. The environment should be such that it attracts private sector investors and international development partners to invest in the country, and the government and people should be able to witness the benefits of the use of natural resources through taxation and royalties.

Lisk noted the system through which the government reinvests its vast revenues should also be transparent to foster economic diversification and human and physical development.

"On the basis of each of these three conditions, available evidence of performance and outcome suggests that Kazakhstan's achievements as a resource-rich economy are notable," he said.

The country's leadership wisely uses the resources and reinvests them, with Nazarbayev University serving as a successful example, he added. Apart from its rich resources, Kazakhstan occupies a special position in the Central Asian region and a unique geographical location between Asia and Europe.

While the conference was taking place, GSPP was already planning to organise it again next year.

"This is our modest inaugural conference. Nevertheless, we have been able to attract good quality research papers on work done in Kazakhstan and the region," said Hui.

"We are encouraged by the response and it is our goal to continue hosting this conference on an annual or biennial basis and grow the research network that we have established," he added.

Family support institute, scientific social work training centre to open in 2018

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova



Vice Minister of Labour and Social Protection Svetlana Zhakupova.

ASTANA – The Kazakh Ministry of Labour and Social Protection plans to establish the Family Support Institute in 2018, said Vice Minister Svetlana Zhakupova at an Aug. 7 Central Communications Service briefing in the capital.

Local executive bodies will identify families living below the poverty line and help them find jobs and increase their income.

"We are currently working to create an institution for family support. For example, people independently apply for social benefits and prove the level of income of their family now. Next year, local executive bodies have to identify families in a risk zone whose income is below the poverty line," she said.

A set of measures will be provided to support the families and find solutions to cut poverty. Special assistants and consultants at the institute will work with the families, focusing on low-income ones and those with members with disabilities. Assistants will interview each person and develop a set of measures to ensure the families are able to reverse a difficult life situation.

More than 628 physically challenged children attended the day rehabilitation centre and their mothers found jobs as part of the pilot project.

With the participation of international organisations, the Scientific Social Work Training Centre is also expected to open next year.

The approach to social work's professional and educational standards will be changed. Universities will offer programmes in demanding areas promoted by the volunteer institute.

"The idea of volunteering is important for job seekers in the social sphere. Graduates should have volunteer experience if they apply for a social work programme. They must necessarily work in medical and social institutions and have experience working with people who have disabilities," said Zhakupova.

Human resource management providing training and retraining of personnel is an important issue of the social security modernisation concept.

Measures are provided to ensure early retirement for citizens involved in harmful and dangerous working conditions. The amount of compulsory pension contributions deducted by the employee since 1998, employer contributions since 2014 and voluntary pension contributions should be enough to buy an annuity, allowing the individual to retire at age 50. The amount is approximately 7 million tenge (US$21,035) for men and 10 million tenge (US$ 30,050) for women.

ZHAKUPOVA: "The idea of volunteering is important for job seekers in the social sphere. Graduates should have volunteer experience if they apply for a social work programme."

UNICEF hosts hackathon, talks at EXPO

By Zhazira Dyussembekova

ASTANA – Team Insaai from Kokshetau, which developed an ethno-style mobile gaming app in three languages, took first place at the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) "Innovating for Children in the Urban World" hackathon. The Aug. 18 announcement was followed the next day with the organisation hosting UNICEF Talks, a platform bringing together tech experts, civil society leaders, policymakers and academics to discuss the topic "Advancing the Rights of Children through Innovation."

"We are overwhelmed with emotions. When we heard 'Insaai,' we could not believe it. We looked at each other and then realised that it was us," said team member Aigerim Sagyndykova.

The top three apps also include Flash team with the QamCare app and the 3D Alippe app.

Hackathon, which serves to promote children's rights through innovation, was dedicated to the theme of urban solutions. The event, the third organised by UNICEF and International IT



University, joined experts from the world of technological innovation and the science, private, non-governmental and public sectors in Kazakhstan and other countries.

The participants had to offer innovative prototype solutions to the multiple, evolving challenges of urban children – ranging from tackling air pollution and improving safety to ensuring accessible transportation. The main ideas proposed were apps and games that aim to help children in disaster situations and tips on living in big cities.

"We plan to continue to work with all the teams, not only with the finalists and winners. We welcome everyone in the UNICEF Innovation Laboratory, which is located in IT University. The laboratory is open to all; we provide opportunities that enable us to translate ideas into finished products," said jury member and IT University Professor Beibut Amirgaliyev.

"Around the world, innovations are making a difference in the lives of many, yet their potential to help the most vulnerable children and their families has yet to be realised. This hackathon encourages young people to use their skills for good, beyond just designing and creating innovations. As a result, we have some great prototype solutions benefiting children. We now also have a pool of young programmers willing to make a difference," said UNICEF Deputy Representative in Kazakhstan Fiachra McAsey.

UNICEF earlier announced it would consider investing and developing in the best and most inventive prototypes either through UNICEF Innovation Lab in Almaty or the UNICEF Global Innovation Fund. UNICEF in Kazakhstan established the lab, hosted by International IT University in Almaty, in 2016.

Innovation has always been at the heart of UNICEF's work both globally and in Kazakhstan, according to UNICEF Representative in Kazakhstan Yuri Oksamitnyi.

"Being innovative is not simply about using new technologies, but about working with new partners and trying new approaches to solving everyday problems. This is what we look forward to hearing at this unique meeting," he added.

New rules seek to improve emergency medical response

Staff Report

ASTANA – New rules for emergency medical care will provide high-quality emergency medical assistance, according to Vice Minister of Healthcare Lyazzat Aktayeva.

"Now there are four categories for emergency calls, three of them have potential and immediate threats to life and health, ambulances will immediately go out for such calls. The fourth category is calls of chronic patients, which will be redirected to emergency medical care centres in polyclinics that will take on calls 24 hours a day without days off. This will allow the ambulance to focus on first three categories of calls," Aktayeva informed.

The analysis showed that when ambulances leave for patients with chronic diseases, they may be late for patients with a life-threatening case. Also, Aktayeva noted that the rules prescribed compulsory training for ambulance attendants.

"Further, the rules stipulate training of emergency doctors in accordance with the international standards of emergency medical care. In addition, the regulation describes that the ambulance services of district hospitals are integrated with the regional ambulance. Accordingly, there will be a single service, equipped with GPS navigators," she informed.

According to Aktayeva, this will enable monitoring and quick delivery of ambulances to patients.

"The Ministry of Healthcare is introducing a new specialty – a doctor of emergency medical care. Previously, it was enough to undergo training for such specialists, but from now on it is necessary to study. They will work at the hospital admissions and carry out the so-called sorting of calls. We believe new rules will ensure the provision of high-quality emergency medical assistance," Aktayeva concluded.

Kazakh oil export revenues have increased 53 percent in 2017

Continued from Page B1

About 73 percent of all exported oil is delivered to five European countries: Italy $4.3 billion (growth of 45 percent), the Netherlands $1.9 billion (growth of 58 percent), France $1.5 billion (growth of 83 percent), Switzerland $1.2 billion (growth of 31 percent) and Spain $0.6 billion (growth of 10 percent).

The growth of oil exports positively affected the budget balance. The budget deficit for the six months decreased to 98.1 billion tenge (US$295 million). It was 457.5 billion tenge (US$1.4 billion) in the same period last year.

The budget revenue from oil exports increased 53 percent in the first half of 2016, reaching 477.2 billion tenge (US$1.4 billion). Fees for export customs duty on crude oil increased 33 percent (379.2 billion tenge or US$1.1 billion). Rent tax on exports, going to the National Fund, increased almost 3.5 times (98.1 billion tenge or US$295 million). The share of the country's revenues from oil exports increased from 11 percent to 15 percent this year.

African countries celebrate National Day with energetic dances, coffee and tea tastings

By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – The African countries participating in EXPO 2017 celebrated the continent's National Day Aug. 15 by featuring dance and musical performances as well as extensive discussions between young people from Kazakhstan and Africa.

The African Plaza stretches across 2,700 square metres representing 25 countries and their approaches to green energy development.

National Day was marked by individuals talking about tourism, renewable energy and the role of youth in global processes. It also included energetic African dancers performing Kara Zhorga, the Kazakh national dance, and singers presenting their original songs in Kazakh. Famous for its coffee beans and tea, the African Plaza also offered tastings.

In his welcoming speech, Kazakhstan's expo national commissioner Rapil Zhoshybayev highlighted Africa's increasingly important role for the country and in the international arena.



"Kazakhstan pays special attention to African countries. We have established diplomatic relations with 45 countries. In 2016, the trade volume between Kazakhstan and African countries reached $250 million and $145 million between January and May of this year. Thanks to the active support of the African states, Kazakhstan has become a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council and won the right to host the expo," he said.

Zhoshybayev noted the African Plaza is one of the most visited pavilions, as its "rich cultural programme, rich cuisine and interesting exhibits" attract visitors.

"I believe the participation of African countries will give an impetus to the development of relations and scientific and technological exchange between Kazakhstan and Africa," he noted.

Kazakh Minister of Foreign Affairs Kairat Abdrakhmanov joined the celebration later in the day, asserting the new prospects which the expo unveiled for Kazakh-African cooperation.

"This opens new opportunities to expand cooperation between Kazakhstan and Africa in various fields. African countries can access advanced technologies in green economy development," he said.

Joining Zhoshybayev in delivering the opening remarks, Sierra Leone General Commissioner Phillip Conteh thanked Kazakhstan for providing a platform and bringing countries together to seek sustainable energy solutions.

"On behalf of all the African states participating in this truly global event, let me congratulate Kazakhstan and Astana in particular for hosting such a memorable event, EXPO 2017, with its theme Future Energy that means so much for us in the African continent," he said.

Africa is the next investment frontier growth, he added, with last year's average 2.5-percent GDP growth expected to reach 3.4 percent in 2017 and 4.4 percent in 2018.

"Africa is ready and willing to do business with the world as a reliable, equal partner in a dynamic and globalised world," he said.

Thirteen African countries already celebrated their national days and more are yet to come. The events turn into a vibrant celebration for the entire plaza, according to South African pavilion Deputy Commissioner Mirranda Mohapi, who believes the expo will eventually result in fruitful cooperation.

"African and Kazakhstan people as well as people from other pavilions gathered today to talk about Africa as a continent to invest in. There were very good discussions and it seems that very good cooperation might come out of it in areas of technical exchange, scholarships and student-to-student exchange, so something big will come out of this expo for Africa and for Kazakhstan," she noted.

Mohapi's time in the Kazakh capital is coming to an end and she recalled the time spent there with warmth.

"It was fabulous. I had a good time. Warm people, very beautiful culture. I think the warmth of the people is not very far from our people. For me it was a very eye opening experience, because I did not know much about Kazakhstan," she said.

EXPO 2017 receives 2.5 million visitors, boosts national economy, executive says

By Aigerim Seisembayeva

ASTANA – EXPO 2017 recently reached 2.5 million visitors one month ahead of its closing, according to a report presented by Astana EXPO 2017 national company Chairman Akhmetzhan Yessimov to Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev.

"The number of exhibition visitors was expected to reach two million in three months. To date, this number hit 2.5 million. We also anticipated five million visits to international pavilions; now the indicator has already reached 20 million. Kazakhstan's pavilion, the Nur Alem Sphere, is the most popular pavilion among visitors. As of today, it has been visited by 831,000 tourists. The figure is expected to reach the one million mark by the end of the expo," Yessimov said during an Aug. 15 meeting with Nazarbayev.

The expo has also hosted 68 national days and 106 high-ranking guests, including 19 heads of state, 16 prime ministers and their deputies, 11 heads of parliaments and their deputies and 60 ministers and their deputies, according to Yessimov's report He also noted that countries spent about $100 million preparing their national pavilions.

The number of hotels and hostels in Astana has grown 27 percent due to the expo and their occupancy has increased 60 percent, he reported.

"The expo has positively affected almost all the sectors of the economy. There are more tourists in hotels and public catering places. This resulted in additional funds flowing into Astana's budget. New jobs have been created. The exhibition complex's construction involved 196 Kazakh companies, which is approximately 200,000 people. Now there are about 21,000 people contributing to the expo's operation," said Nazarbayev.

Yessimov also said that expo's 452 billion tenge ($1.4 billion) construction costs were well below the 816 billion tenge ($2.5 billion) projected earlier.

He also voiced proposals for the post-exhibition use of the expo's facilities, including the location of the Astana International Financial Centre (AIFC) and an IT startup park as well as the preservation of some exhibition pavilions as a legacy to the event.

EXPO 2017 numbers show economic, promotional impact

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – EXPO 2017 has had a significant economic and promotional impact, including increased product sales, restaurant visits and thousands of social media and news organisation mentions.

So far, EXPO 2017 cafés and restaurants have served approximately 558,700 people and 84,495 licensed products have been sold worth 131.8 million tenge (US$396,300). The total amount of trade has reached 905.7 million tenge (US$2.7 million).

The expo's logistics centre has also delivered 5,298 tonnes of cargo to international pavilions and more than 537 tonnes of products have been delivered.

The expo has also hosted more than 160 thematic events including congresses, conferences, forums and master classes, including 66 national days and four specialised days.

More than 5,000 people are staying on the expo site and more than 15,000 have stayed on the site in total.

All of this activity has resulted in the exposition being mentioned 687,209 times in social media and 15,410 times in the mass media from June 9 to Aug. 10.

This volume of activity has also required significant logistical management.

From June 10 till Aug. 14, the expo centre received 26,261 calls and the information centres accepted 17,016 calls. Approximately 4,860 visitors have applied for medical assistance, 49 of them were hospitalised. The main causes were allergy, high temperature and diseases of the circulatory system.

Within two months, 867 lost items were found, 273 of which were returned. Approximately 1,789 incidents have been registered at the expo's security centre, 26 of which were crimes, relating primarily to petty thefts. The event is being monitored through security cameras and 250 suspects have been identified.

> The expo has hosted more than 160 thematic events including congresses, conferences, forums and master classes, including 66 national days and four specialised days.

In total, more than 70 million people have visited the exposition, including 22 heads of states and governments and 78 foreign ministers. The Plaza Africa, representing 22 countries, is the most visited pavilion at the exhibition. It was visited by 659,452 people. The Egyptian pavilion is in second place with 608,733 visitors. Turkey is third at 596,462 visitors.

Sword of Kenessary Khan to be delivered to EXPO 2017



Photo credit: inform.kz.

By Dana Omirgazy

ASTANA – The Days of the South Kazakhstan region are coming Aug. 29-Sept. 3 to EXPO 2017. Artists from the southern part of the country will offer a colourful concert and programme, demonstrate historical and cultural heritage and present rare exhibits such as the sword of Kenessary Khan.

Hundreds of unique exhibits will be delivered to the capital from the South Kazakhstan Regional Museum of Local History. Among the exhibits are weapons and carpets, natural minerals and rare photographs, ancient books and even a besik, a national cradle dating to the 18th century. The cradle, in which young women lulled their babies more than 200 years ago, was made without a single nail. The display will also include jewellery, household items and samples of clothing worn by men and women during the period.

"Kazakh national dress differs in cut, shape and design in each region of Kazakhstan. We show the clothes of young men and women at the end of the 19th century. In addition, we will present the complete decoration of the yurt exactly in the way it was in our southern region," said museum excursions and information department head Bibi Koshanova.

One of the museum's most valuable exhibits is the sable of Kenessary Khan, an iron sword with a handle made from bone and skin. The weapon measures 70 centimetres, the handle is 15 centimetres and the blade is about 3-4 centimetres wide. Together with the scabbard, it was donated to the museum by Kenessary – Azimkhan's grandson in 1931.

Expo visitors will also witness photos and short films detailing the patriotism of famous Kazakh wrestler Kazhymukan Munaitpasov. The display will include his personal belongings, including 48 gold and silver medals won at world championships, sports equipment and heavy stones used in training. He was 74 when he participated in an event in 1945 dedicated to the 100th anniversary of great poet Abai Kunanbayev and the clothing he wore will also be presented.

"The museum of Kazhymukan Munaitpasov is our pride. We want expo guests to see what the legendary Kazakh wrestler was famous for," said regional culture department head Nurbolat Akhmetzhanov.

Munaitpasov's personal belongings will be delivered to the capital from the regional museum of sports named for him in the village of Temirlan, Ordabasy district.

Hungary celebrates National Day at EXPO 2017, highlights shared cultural traditions

Continued from Page B1

"I believe it is important to get to know our joint and intertwined history, but I shall leave the more profound historical analysis to historians. The Tree of Life erected in the Hungarian pavilion represents the past with its roots, the future with its crown and the trunk is the present, the bridge holding it all together. This symbolic triad is also of particular importance, as it can be found in both Kazakh and Hungarian cultural heritage," he said.

The Tree of Life reflects the country's main concept. The design with electronic devices and solar panels tells what steps Hungary is taking to move to green energy.

The pavilion's theme is based on the geographically cost-effective particularities of its available energy sources. The exhibit demonstrates the latest paradigms in electricity and city planning underlying Hungarian principles, a country of water, sun and wind.

The nation's scientists are working to create enterprises that would work on the principle of photosynthesis. The plants would collect solar energy and through chemical reactions convert it into oxygen, electricity and heat.

"Our relationship goes further than our shared cultural traditions and friendship. This is also reflected in the acceleration of Kazakh-Hungarian external trade relations, as bilateral agricultural trade activities doubled between 2014 and 2015. Kazakhstan is a strategically important country for Hungary's export and we continue to have a vested interest in further increasing food trade," added Fazekas.



Bayanaul – land of legend and nature

By Dmitry Lee

ASTANA – With its numerous lakes and mountains, Bayanaul has a reputation of mesmerizing and absolutely stunning scenery. The area is also famous, however, for many the legends surrounding it.

What to do in Bayanaul

Bayanaul National Park is located in the small village of the same name about 450 kilometres from Astana. It is a picture-perfect collection of shimmering lakes, natural springs, forest-filled mountains and unique caves.

Local guides recommend starting tours at Zhayau Musa Monument near Zhasybai Lake. The statue hails the Kazakh poet and composer who lived at the turn of the 20th century. The trails can be steep and even dangerous. Hikers must be cautious to check the rocks before stepping on them and make sure to hold branches that will not hit anyone walking behind them. The walk continues along fire roads cut into the forest where black alder woods, which are among Kazakhstan's protected tree species, are visible. Trekking upward, climbers follow clear streams with sparkling yellow creek beds which make people think they have discovered gold. It is actually copper pyrites common to the area. The streams' waters are considered healthy and many bring empty bottles to fill and take home.

The Witches Gorge

The Witches Gorge is a series of twisted trees, whose waters are thought to have a curative effect. It is the pass where Kazakh batyrs (warriors) led by Zhasybai fought the Dzhungars. Struck down in battle, the brave, dying warrior asked to be buried at the pass so visitors could simultaneously see Lake Zhasybai and Lake Sabyndykol and enjoy the beautiful scenery.

The hike along the gorge takes walkers to the black alder woods and a meadow from which they can scramble up a final climb for a view of Akbet Mountain. At 1,026 metres, it is the tallest peak in Bayanaul National Park. The hike then descends along a trail via Echo Valley for a glimpse of the tops of the black alder forests. The 3.5-kilometre hike takes about an hour and a-half.

While in Bayanaul National Park, visitors may also want to explore Aulietas Cave, which is believed to hold sacred rocks. Autlietas means "Sacred Rock" in Kazakh and legend has it that if one makes a wish, touches the cave's rocks and walks away without looking back, the wish will come true.

Those in great shape can challenge the three and a-half hour climb to the top of Akbet Mountain, where hikers can see the region's three main lakes – Zhasybai, Sabyndykol, and Toraigyr, the latter where its namesake, the famous Kazakh poet, is buried. The view overlooks three unique rock outcroppings – Saimantas, Naizatas and Kempirtas.

Bayanaul is also the place for those who enjoy swimming and hiking. About 450 kilometres south-east of Astana, Bayanaul boasts a number of scenic lakes, breathtaking natural springs and forest-filled mountains for trekking and exploring nature.

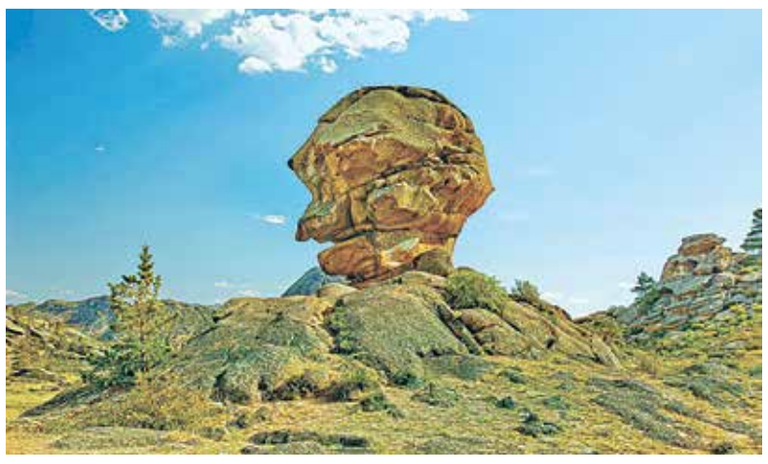
Legends about Bayanaul

Legend has it that the word Bayanaul is of Mongol-Turkic origin; in Mongolian, Bayan-ola means "prosperous hill," a place of rich and blessed grazing mountains. Other legends indicate the indigenous population that once lived there, the name of the mountain and the idea the village are connected with the name of Bayan-Sulu (sulu in Kazakh means "beauty"), the heroine of the popular epic poem Kozy-Korpesh and Bayan-Sulu.

According to the legend, Bayan-Sulu's father, Karabai, wandered each year from Aiaguz to Tyumen, making long stops in Karkaraly, Bayanaul, Dombraly and the Monshakty Mountains.

Bayan was especially fond of the Kazylyk Mountains, where there were many karkars, birds with beautiful plumage. She made a lovely headdress with its feathers decorated by a sultan (karkara); therefore, the mountains were named Karkaraly (black heron mountains).

In the Kokshetau Mountains, she found a tree that emitted a melodious sound. Bayan-Sulu ordered a dombra (a traditional Kazakh lute-like stringed musical instrument) made from it; thus, one of the mountains was named Dombraly. The area had many precious stones which she used to make gorgeous beads (monshak) and the mountains were named Monshakty (beaded).



Kempirtas

The rich Karabai family repeatedly stopped in the Bayanaul Mountain valleys, a fact noted in variations of numerous legends.

After Bayan-Sulu's tragic death, people from nearby places grieved for a long time and told stories about her life. They recalled the day she dropped soap into the lake, turning the water very soft and ultimately changing its name to Sabyndykol (soapy lake).

According to various versions of different legends, the mountains were once called Bayantau (mountains of Bayan). People also named one peak Tarak (comb), where she allegedly dropped a comb.

Eloquent storytellers named the highest mountain Akbet (white faced), while others were called Naizatas (stone spear) and Atbasy (horsehead) and a rock was named Kempirtas (the old woman stone), as it is remarkably similar to an old woman's head. Some other rock names include such words as hat, loaf of bread, fish and dove.

Kazakh TV takes viewers on a tour of modern Kazakhstan

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Like many Australians, most of Boyd's awareness of Kazakhstan came from the infamous movie "Borat," he said. But he set out to find out more and was immediately intrigued.

"The blend of nationalities and cultures makes [Kazakhstan] very interesting. One moment I see Asia, one moment I see Europe and in a blink I see something new I haven't seen before. Each region has had a different feeling and different climate," Boyd said.

"In some ways Kazakhstan and Australia have a lot in common. Both countries are multicultural, both are very big with a small population density, both have the challenge of providing services across large distances. Both have mining, oil, and agriculture, although Kazakhstan is lucky to have a lot more oil riches," he mused.

He ticked off other similarities: both cultures eat a lot of meat, including some dishes other countries find strange (horse for Kazakhs, kangaroo for Australians). Both societies love sports. And while Australia's climate has some swings, they're nothing compared to Kazakhstan's -40 C to 40 C range. "For me Kazakhstan people are like the flowers in Almaty: when it's winter people are grey and serious, but in spring and summer they come to life with so many festivals," he commented.

Boyd thinks the new programme has the potential to spark new interest in tourism between Kazakhstan and Australia.

"I am from Cairns, Australia. It is very popular for tourism and here in Kazakhstan I see a lot of potential. I think the people who can take that potential and make it all work will be well rewarded. In the meantime, I hope that people from many places can share my journey and experiences by watching this show," he said.



Robert Boyd

Kazakh Tourism set to be single operator to develop Shchuchinsk-Burabai resort zone

By Dana Omirgazy

ASTANA – Prime Minister Bakytzhan Sagintayev visited the Akmola region Aug. 10 to assess the pace of tourism development, reported the prime minister's press service.

While touring the skiing base in the Burabai resort area, Sagintayev examined construction progress and learned about the current situation at the site. The facility, located on 140.5 hectares, is expected to host international competitions and training for cross-country skiing, biathlon and roller skiing.

Sagintayev was also acquainted with the sanatorium resort facilities and sights of Burabai National Park.

"The main document of the Shchuchinsk-Burabai resort zone development is the plan for the Burabai resort area development designed through 2020 and developed with the participation of international experts. The plan provides for the development of five major zones favourable for investment, including a promising zone for mass recreation on Chebachye Lake, a zone for premium-class tourism on Shchuchye Lake and a centre for equestrian sports and children's health tourism on Katarkol Lake. The list also includes an eco-village in the Sarybulak area, as well as camping on Zhukey Lake," according to the press service.

At a meeting devoted to the resort area's expansion, Minister of Culture and Sports Arystanbek Mukhamediuly noted successfully developing and promoting tourism as a key branch of the national economy depends on active business involvement.

"The government adopted a new concept for tourism industry development in Kazakhstan through 2023. The concept provides for a cluster approach to tourism development through six major clusters, one of which is the Unity of Nature and Nomadic Culture cluster, which includes the Akmola, Karaganda and Pavlodar regions. It is a centre of nomadic culture and diversity of the steppe, while the Shchuchinsk-Burabai resort zone is the core of this cluster," according to his report.

Authorities forecast tourist flow from Russia, China, Turkey, Iran, India and other developed countries. Work is underway to liberalise the visa and migration regime, as the visa-free regime currently applies to citizens of more than 60 countries, said Mukhamediuly.

"Kazakh Tourism National Company was established to promote domestic tourism to international markets and form the tourist image of the country and the national brand. This company will also attract direct investors for the implementation of tourism projects. Given the functions assigned to it, Kazakh Tourism will be a single operator for the development and promotion of the Shchuchinsk-Burabai resort zone," he added.

Kazakh tourism industry poised for major expansion

By Mainura Murzamadiyeva

Over several decades, tourism has been developing continuously and has become one of the fastest growing sectors of the world economy. The sphere of tourism equalised and even surpassed oil exports, food trade and the automobile industry in terms of business operations.

According to the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO), the tourism share constituted 10 percent of the global GDP and 7 percent ($1.5 billion) of global exports. The number of international tourists grew by 4.6 percent and reached 1.2 billion visitors. The average annual increase in tourists in the world is 3-4 percent. The demand of China and India for tourism products is growing.

Such trends reveal new opportunities for the development of the world tourism industry, including in Kazakhstan (ranked 81st in the Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index of the 2017 World Economic Forum).

The world entered the era of new discoveries and innovative, scientific and technical solutions that change the nature of economic growth and the habitual way of life. In this regard, Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev announced two modernisations:

– Modernisation 3.0 aimed at diversifying the national economy, one of the main drivers of which is tourism;

– Modernisation of national identity aimed at strengthening Kazakhstan's identity and adapting it to the modern world.

Both modernisations directly affected the tourism development sector in Kazakhstan. On the instructions of the Prime Minister, tourism entered the so-called Olympic track of six industries that are the drivers of diversification of the national economy. The industry faces the task of increasing its share in the GDP structure to eight percent by 2025 and ensuring a percentage growth in inbound tourism to the country.

Such indicators require bold political decisions to remove administrative barriers to the development of the tourist business and facilitate the visa and immigration regime for foreign tourists, as well as develop the tourism infrastructure, diversify tourism offer and develop Kazakhstan's tourism culture. Those were the tasks set by the President for tourism in his decree of Nov. 24, 2016 on elaborating a new concept for the development of the tourism industry until 2023.

The concept was adopted by the Kazakh Government June 27, 2017 and opened a new stage in the development of the tourism industry. The concept identifies six clusters reflecting the geographical diversity and ethno-cultural identity of Kazakhstan's tourism offer:

* "Astana – the heart of Eurasia" is a cluster, geographically located in the city of Astana, is a symbiosis of architectural thought. With the existing high-tech infrastructure, it is ready for the development of cultural, medical and business tourism.



* "Almaty – Kazakhstan's free cultural zone"– includes Almaty and part of the Almaty region with an infrastructure of alpine, scientific and educational tourism that is in accordance with international standards.

* "Pearl of Altai"– includes the territories of the East Kazakhstan region and is the centre of ecological tourism in Kazakhstan.

* "Revival of the Great Silk Road"– is located at the crossroads of the Great Silk Road in Kyzylorda, South Kazakhstan and Zhambyl region. It has a well-known world history of architecture, such as the monuments of Khoja Ahmed Yasawi, the towns of Taraz, Turkestan and Otrar.

* "The Caspian Gates"– are located in Mangistau, West Kazakhstan and Atyrau regions and have the potential to develop the infrastructure of coastal and resort-sanatorium tourism.

* "Unity of nature and nomadic culture" is a cluster that includes Akmola, Karaganda and Pavlodar regions and is the centre of nomadic culture and diversity of the steppe.

Considering Kazakhstan's rich tourism and recreational potential, the concept envisages the diversification of promising types of tourism – cultural-cognitive, ecological and ethnographic, event, children's, youth, medical, camping, caravanning, trophy hunting , sacral and sport (trekking).

Within the modernisation of national identity, the President paid special attention to the issues of preserving Kazakhstan's cultural identity and its own national code, which should make the country recognisable on the global tourism market.

In this regard, Kazakhstan will have a new tourism product –Kazakhstan's Sacred Belt – a map of macro- and micro-sacral objects comprised of 600 sacred monuments, some of which we plan to include in the list of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) World Cultural Heritage.

One of the elements of ethnographic tourism is ethno-auls (ethnic villages) created throughout Kazakhstan. They are seasonal in nature and work annually from May-September, which will enable Kazakhstan's guests to touch the ancient traditions of Kazakhs – our music, craft, cuisine, sports games and rituals.

World practice has confirmed that trophy hunting tourism is an effective mechanism for attracting funds for wildlife conservation. It radically changes the attitude of the local population and local governmental bodies to the issues of preserving wild animals and their habitats.

Kazakhstan is exceptionally rich in wildlife for hunting. All of our efforts in trophy hunting tourism will be directed to its growth, preservation and development, from which the country will receive investments for the conservation of nature and development of the regions.

We assume that potential markets of foreign tourists to Kazakhstan will be Russia, China, Turkey, Iran, India and the developed world. In this regard, we are consistently moving towards the liberalisation of the visa and migration regime, a visa-free regime for foreign citizens applies to more than 60 countries and ADS memorandums were signed with China and Iran. In June, we launched a pilot regime until the end of the expo (Sept. 12), according to which 72 hours of visa-free transit is provided to Chinese citizens who transit via Kazakh airlines through international airports of Astana and Almaty to third countries.

Kazakhstan is thoroughly preparing to host foreign and domestic guests, strengthening existing institutions, developing tourism infrastructure and raising the quality standards of tourism services. One of the important steps is the creation of the Kazakh Tourism national tourist office to promote the country's tourism industry in the national and international markets.

Welcome to Kazakhstan!

The author is the chairperson of the Tourism Industry Committee at Kazakh Ministry of Culture and Sports.

Charity Tour de Burabay marks fifth anniversary, raises $481,000



By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – Charity Tour de Burabay, an annual cycling ride for charity, gathered 1,500 people Aug. 19, including 718 participants along with professional cyclists, sports and government representatives, to experience a 30-kilometre journey through Burabay scenery, one of the most popular resort areas in Kazakhstan.

Celebrating its fifth anniversary, the event raised 160 million tenge (US$481,000), including 102.9 million tenge (US$309,000) generated from auction sales, 684,000 tenge (US$2,056) from the sales of children paintings, and 56.4 million tenge (US$170,000) from corporate and individual contributions.

Opening the event was Kazakhstan's Minister of Culture and Sports Arystanbek Mukhamediuly. He said the event has helped increase the popularity of cycling in Kazakhstan and noted the event's contribution to providing medical care to children.

Among the 12 items sold at the auction were boxing gloves of Gennadiy Golovkin, Kazakhstan's boxing superstar and unified middleweight World Champion, which sold for nine million tenge (US$27,054) and the bicycle that once belonged to veteran Italian cyclist and Astana ProTeam member Michelle Scarponi who died in a road accident in April sold for 20.5 million tenge (US$61,623).

The annual charity cycling ride allocates all proceeds to purchase medical equipment for regional children and rehabilitation centres and this year the funds will go to Children's regional Hospital in Petropavlovsk, regional Perinatal Center in Taldykorgan, regional Children's General Hospital in Uralsk, regional Children's Clinical Hospital in Aktobe, and West-Kazakhstan Baiterek regional NGO for children with disabilities in Uralsk.

Within five years, total proceeds have grown 14 times and made 463.5 million tenge (US$1.4 million) with a seven-fold increase in the number of participants.

Kazakhstan's prominent cyclist and Astana ProTeam general manager Alexander Vinokurov led the event.

Participants enjoyed a picnic soon after the finish at the Rixos Borovoe resort.

The common goal encouraged the participants, said Akbota, 24, an amateur cyclist taking part in the event for the first time who preferred to be referred by her first name only.

"The idea behind the event is good and I was happy to see so many people gathering together and willing to contribute for a good cause," Akbota told The Astana Times.

"It was a challenge for me to drive 30 kilometres, because I have never covered such a big distance within a day. I liked the spirit of people and not only sports people, but representatives of various companies and just bike lovers as me," she added.

Their enthusiasm and support during the event made her feel a part of something bigger, she noted.

Madina, 24, also participating in the event for the first time, agreed that the atmosphere urged participants to ride for the common goal.

"It would be great if the event participants continue helping people in need, children and other vulnerable segments of population rather than confining these activities to one day. I believe this will help us achieve more united society and higher level of development," she said.

Kazakh boxer claims WBC Youth World Light Heavyweight Title

By Anuar Abdrakhmanov

ASTANA – Kazakh boxer Ali Akhmedov recently became the WBC Youth World Light Heavyweight champion by beating previously undefeated 23-year-old American Curtis Hill Jr. in Austin, Texas. Hill had won his previous 10 bouts, including five by knockouts. Akhmedov is undefeated with seven wins.

The Kazakh boxer knocked out his opponent in the fourth round.

"It all paid off. Everything that we prepared worked out well. I am incredibly happy that another champion belt comes to Kazakhstan. Most importantly, I am happy because I managed to make all those people worrying about me happy and to bring this champion belt home. I am flying home soon. I will be preparing for our Sept. 9 show in Astana to make our fans feel good and happy," said Akhmedov.



Photo credit: Mario Rojas

Astana will host an evening of professional boxing Sept. 9 as part of an EXPO 2017 cultural programme.

During the evening, Akhmedov will face Justin Thomas from Louisiana. Other prominent Kazakh boxers, including Zhankosh Turarov, Zhanibek Alimkhanuly, Meiyrim Nursultanov, Ruslan Myrsatayev, Aidos Yerbosynuly, Dimash Niyazov and Nursultan Zhanabayev, will also participate in the event at the Saryarka cycling track stadium.

The main event of the night will be a fight between two undefeated boxers – Kanat Islam of Kazakhstan and Brandon Cook of Canada. Islam 24-0-0 (19 KOs) is the holder of WBA Inter-Continental and WBO-NABO titles in the light middleweight category.

Barys begins 10th KHL season with roster of fresh faces

By Ilyas Omarov

ASTANA – Barys Astana will begin the regular season of the Continental Hockey League (KHL) on Aug. 24 without some of its key players: the snow leopards will play without longtime leader Brandon Bochenski, who has ended his storied KHL career; as well as leading centre Dustin Boyd, who moved to Dynamo Moscow.

Only Nigel Dawes remains of the former menacing attack line of Bochensky, Boyd and Dawes. Dawes, however, remains a very productive presence for Astana, scoring more than 30 goals in each of the past few seasons. He has quite rightly become the captain of the team.

Last season, Barys finished fifth in the Eastern Conference and defeated HC Traktor Chelyabinsk in the playoffs before losing to HC Metallurg Magnitogorsk.

The coaching staff of Barys headed by Belarusian specialist Eduard Zankovets goes hand-in-hand with taking charge of Kazakhstan's national team. There, however, he fell short of his targets, missing out on promotion to the Elite Pool for 2018 when his team was overtaken by Korea, so his deal was not extended beyond the end of the season.

The team has a new coach: Yevgeny Koreshkov, 47, once a student from Kazakhstan's own hockey school. He has overseen a busy summer of trading. Ten new faces give Barys' roster a youthful look compared with past seasons, although there are experienced players among them, including Dawes and veteran Kevin Dallman, the KHL's longest-serving defender from overseas. Those two, now naturalised Kazakh citizens and members of the national team, enjoy legendary status in Astana and will shoulder more responsibility than ever in the coming campaign.

Most of the new arrivals have been playing in the Supreme Hockey League (VHL), the league below the KHL in the post-Soviet area, or learning their trade in the Kazakh Championship.

However, there are two new imports, both from the American Hockey League (AHL). Linden Vey, 26, is a creative forward who arrives from Stockton Heat, the Calgary Flames' farm-club. He has 138 NHL appearances under his belt, having made his big-league debut in Los Angeles before two seasons with Vancouver. He is joined by defenceman Darren Dietz. Now 24, Dietz showed potential as a powerful two-way defensive force in his youth, but has struggled to settle into a team since then. A somewhat nomadic spell in the AHL – punctuated by 13 NHL games for Montreal Canadiens – came to an end when he signed up for a move to Astana and a new challenge. Astana is also due to host the KHL's All-Star Week of Hockey next January. In previous seasons, Barys' attacking line played a big part in that event, but now it may be time for new candidates to play on home ice. Marty St. Pierre, a 33-year-old forward, could be the man to step up and assume some of the scoring responsibilities left by Bochenski and Boyd.

"In the pre-season tour, we looked at the young players who came to the team. In principle, we are pleased with all the newcomers," said Koreshkov before the start of the season.

It is precisely such young talents that Kazakh hockey needs to develop, both for Barys and for the national team, as the country hopes for a memorable season, not just a week of glory in January.



Celtic FC crushes Astana 5-0, nearly eliminates its chances to advance in champions league

By Anuar Abdrakhmanov

ASTANA – FC Astana suffered a major 0-5 defeat from Celtic FC in the first match of the UEFA Champions League playoffs on Aug. 16.

It was the second time the teams met in the Champions League. In 2016, FC Astana suffered a 1-2 defeat in Glasgow, following a 1-1 draw in Kazakhstan, and the Celts went through to the group stage of Europe's main club tournament.

Astana faced some difficulties with its lineup before the most recent match. Defender Marin Anicic and forward Djordje Despotovic had to miss the match because of injuries.

Many in the world know that the Celtic Park is one of the noisiest stadiums in Europe, and the home team usually play very well at home. Celtic demonstrated it very well in the first match.



Photo credit: FC Astana press service

During the starting 30 minutes, Astana played head-to-head with the hosts. Then, however, following a cross by Celtic's Tom Rogic, the ball ricocheted off Astana defender Yevgeny Postnikov and got into the goal. Astana soon had their own scoring chances but Junior Kabananga, Patrick Twumasi and Postnikov squandered them. In the first two cases, the Celtic's goalkeeper Craig Gordon caught the ball, and the third shot, from Postnikov, following a corner pass, went above the gate. Celtic, on the contrary, used their scoring chances very well. At the end of the first half, Scott Sinclair outplayed Astana goalkeeper Alexander Mokin and scored the second goal.

In the second half, Astana FC again tried to counter-attack. Twumasi made another shot towards the target but missed. Kabananga passed by the opponent and went inside the penalty area but the ball ricocheted off the second defender's foot and fell on the hosts' goal from above. While the Kazakhs' attacking attempts brought no fruit, Celtic scored three more goals – the second one for Scott Sinclair and another goal came from James Forrest, while the final one went in following another cross and ricochet – this time from the visiting team's Igor Shitov.

With the final 5-0 score for Celtic, the chances of FC Astana advancing to the next stage are virtually non-existent.

"I think we made a lot of individual mistakes tonight, and the quality [of Celtic's performance] played a decisive role. Almost every shot into our goal changed the score. I said many times there is a big difference between the championship of Kazakhstan and the European Cup tournaments. To be honest, I think my players did a [big] job before this match. Yes, the outcome of this match is very hard to accept. However, we need to improve the level of the national championship in order to play better in Europe. We will try not to lose in the home match. If possible, a win would also be a good result. We have excellent support from the fans. The team plays much better at home," commented FC Astana manager Stanimir Stoilov.

The teams met for the second match of the playoffs in Astana on Aug. 22 (just after this issue went to print). The winning team will advance into the group stage of UEFA Champions League. The losing team will move into the group stage of UEFA Europa League.

Kazakh craft fair offers handmade souvenirs

By Dana Omirgazy



ASTANA – This summer, the capital is welcoming more tourists than ever. As EXPO 2017 nears its end, guests are seeking mementoes to take a piece of Kazakhstan home with them. The Sheberler Ayuly (Village of Crafts People) offers a variety of handmade products in national style. The exhibit, located near Baiterek monument, will be open until the end of the expo.

"Foreign tourists and guests of our capital necessarily want to get some souvenir or gift that is connected not only with the city of Astana and the expo, but in general with the symbols of our country. Here, everyone is able to find such original products made by local crafts people," said Sheberler Ayuly organiser Aigul Zhanserikova, according to the city akimat (local administration) press service.

The exhibition features products of crafters from different regions of Kazakhstan – Almaty, Astana, South Kazakhstan, Petropavlovsk, Atyrau, Kostanai and Semei. Anyone can buy souvenirs with Kazakh symbols at affordable prices.

Exclusive products made of leather, ceramics, wood and clay, various jewellery, traditional Kazakh embroidery, wallets and bags, children's slippers and other handmade souvenirs are especially popular among tourists.

"The whole world is now moving in the direction of eco and ethno. This is becoming a big trend; therefore, all the products produced by artisans reflect this style. Prices here are acceptable and affordable for many," said Zhanserikova.

Similar products can be found near the Yessil River embankment, where craft shops and artist's workshops are located in 14 half-yurts.

"Every city in the world has its own Arbat," said Astana's Saryarka district Akim (Mayor) Arman Turlubek referring to a famous walk-only street in Moscow. "This is the place where folk craft people, musicians and artists gather. They are representatives of a unique subculture that is always open for each person and pleasing with their works and talents. Their style forms a special look of districts and cities. As you can see, the most skillful masters of applied art are gathered here. The atmosphere of the Yessil River embankment makes this place truly beloved and popular."

Fans of handmade items can purchase bead and stone jewellery, knitted and ceramic products and interior and play dolls, as well as soap. Masters engaged in pottery, leatherwork and embroidery demonstrate their best products to fair visitors.

"I have been engaged in art for seven years. At this exhibition, we offer albums, postcards, decoupage boxes, paintings, handmade soaps and so on. Both foreign tourists and local residents visit the site, looking for some unusual souvenirs associated with Astana," fair participant Evelina Andrakhanova told the paper.

Astana's promenade was created on the initiative of city Akim (Mayor) Asset Issekeshev. The facility is designed to awaken an interest in the history and traditions of the Kazakh people among the younger generation.

"This is my second visit to Kazakhstan. I am from the Czech Republic. I live with my friends near the embankment and almost every week I come here to pick up some gifts for my family members. I like the atmosphere here, I really enjoy it. People come here not only to buy something, but look at these amasing handmade items, play chess, sing karaoke or just relax," said tourist James Kral.

Astana Zhastary youth centre takes active part in city life

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – Astana Zhastary Youth Centre takes an active role and provides real assistance to capital youth ages 14-29. Established Feb. 3, 2014, the centre is completely supported by the city administration.

"The centre has four major departments. The first one is the employment and career guidance department. It aims at the employment of young people. Its employees receive résumés and find the right jobs for young people, conducting different trainings on the development of professional and personal skills and entrepreneurship with the participation of such professional trainers as Emin Askerov, Danil Faizullayev and Chingiz Lepsibayev. Trainings are constantly held for young people and absolutely free of charge," said Head of the centre's department Aigerim Beisembayeva in an exclusive interview with The Astana Times.

"The second organisational department is responsible for the creation and organisation of projects and activities. Dozens of successful projects have been created for the three years of the centre's existence, some of which are held to this day," she said.

The centre offers projects for a variety of interests, such as book dating to popularise reading, Astana Ideas, a platform to present concepts for urban studies, and the Saryarka Short Film Festival.

"The third is the department for the development of domestic clubs. At the moment, there are 18 community clubs in our centre where children can participate in boxing, karate, choreography, modelling, fine arts and CrossFit," said Beisembayeva.

"And the last one, the fourth, is the legal assistance department. The centre provides free legal consultations for young people," she added.

Beisembayeva noted the club was founded and operates to give any young person the opportunity to come to the centre, use it as a resource and receive assistance.

"We are striving to become a second home for all teenagers, children and young people," she said.

Although local authorities finance all the centre's activities, it is always seeking help from volunteers.

"Everybody can become a volunteer at our centre. It is enough to come to our office and fill out a volunteer questionnaire and after that we will train such persons in our volunteer school. The activities of our volunteers are very extensive and different. They take part in the most interesting events of the city such as Yarkokross, Astana Art Fest, matches of the Astana Football Club, Astana Marathon, Delphic Games, BI Group Triathlon, Inter-Syrian negotiations and Astana Economic Forum," she said.

Volunteers are also visible at EXPO 2017, as they continue to participate in the three months of the international specialised exhibition.

Information about the centre can be found on its Instagram pages: @astana_zhastary and @job_astana_zhastary.

Italian stunt person creates breathtaking bicycle videos

By Frol Leandoer

ASTANA – Italian stunt person Vittorio Brumotti, known for his road bike cycling tricks, was in the capital this month to shoot several exciting new videos. A computer science teacher by profession, he became famous by making videos and posting them on YouTube.

While in the city for a few days, Brumotti's plans included not only shooting the videos, but also arranging a race show held Aug. 12 as part of EXPO 2017.

"I plan to arrange a small show at the expo, but the main goal of my visit is to shoot some videos for social media, for my YouTube channel, and to popularise the colours of Astana," he said prior to the event.

Brumotti rode the walls of the Khan Shatyr shopping and entertainment centre last week, gathering many enthusiastic spectators.

"I wanted to make a video in this beautiful city, in this beautiful country. I was here at the presentation of the Astana cycling team last winter. I noted some beautiful places and wanted to start with Khan Shatyr," he added.

He also posted an exciting video on his Instagram account taken on one of the capital's bridges. The well-known cycler, the brand-ambassador of Astana Pro Team, is shown wearing its uniform.

Astana Pro Team press service head Dina Ibrayeva spoke about the planning for the Aug. 10 event.

"Initially, we prepared for Vittorio to do the tricks on the M-1 Bridge on Saraishyk, but our guest liked the one that was on the video, so we got permission from the Astana administration. The trick was very dangerous, because it was so steep to climb there. He was literally crawling to get up there. He took off his shirt, tied it on to his waist and tied the bicycle on the other end of the shirt. You cannot see on the video, but there was a cameraman with him up there. We were all worried that nothing bad would happen. Thankfully, everything turned out without any accident," she said.

The Italian also did tricks on the square near the Pyramid, in front of Baiterek Tower, on Nurzhol Boulevard, in MEGA Silk Way and on the expo grounds.

The 2006 world cycling champion, Brumotti has set several world records and is in the Guinness Book of Records. He has become known for his dizzying stunts and was invited to participate in the EXPO 2017 international race.



Photo credit: Turar Kazangapov

