

Nazarbayev's visits to Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan strengthen Central Asian ties



Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev and Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev had very productive meetings in Tashkent on Sept. 16.

By Aigerim Seisembayeva

ASTANA – President Nursultan Nazarbayev's Sept. 16 state visit to Uzbekistan resulted in ten bilateral documents inked by Kazakh and Uzbek governmental bodies and state-owned companies. The following day, he travelled to Ashgabat to meet with Turkmen President Gurbanguly Berdimukhamedov and attend the opening ceremony of the fifth Asian Indoor and Martial Arts Games (AIMAG).

The Kazakh-Uzbek documents are meant to enhance cooperation in trade, economy, investment, water and agricultural issues, customs legislation, transit and transport, as well as military and culture. Agreements, roadmaps and memoranda of understanding were signed between the ministries, neighbouring regional administrations and railway companies.

"This year can be called truly historical for the relations between our two countries. There has been a considerable breakthrough in all the spheres of the economy. This is our sixth meeting, which is a testimony of friendly intentions between the two brotherly countries," said Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev to open the meeting.

Nazarbayev highlighted Uzbekistan's special role in the region and stressed Mirziyoyev's merits in boosting business cooperation between the states.

"Over a short period of time, you have done a lot for the successful development of bilateral relations. Our meetings helped us solve many urgent issues. We have much in common – our languages, culture, religion – and therefore we have no other way but to cooperate closely. For effective interaction, we need concrete action and real mutual support," he said.

During a media briefing, Nazarbayev spoke about the results achieved in strengthening transport sector cooperation.

"We are already witnessing the results of our agreements. For instance, a Tulpark-Talga high-speed train travels between Almaty and Tashkent twice a week. Our national air carriers have launched additional flights between our capitals and soon flights will be launched between other cities. There are regular bus routes. Reconstruction of a large interstate road is underway. Two checkpoints were opened on the M-39 motorway. A car assembly project has been launched as well," he noted.



President Nursultan Nazarbayev and Turkmen President Gurbanguly Berdimukhamedov discussed expanding relations in Ashgabat on Sept. 17.

He added Uzbekistan's decision to reduce excise taxes on certain types of imported goods was a positive step towards enhancing trade cooperation, resulting in a 35-percent increase in bilateral trade in the first seven months of this year. The task, according to Nazarbayev, is to increase trade turnover to \$5 billion by 2020. That would represent a growth of almost three times compared to last year's figures.

The sides also agreed to implement up to three major joint investment projects, instructing their governments to work out new gas projects that would benefit both countries.

Nazarbayev noted the importance of holding an interregional cooperation forum on a regular basis and jointly developing the space industry. The leaders also had a thorough discussion of water issues.

"This issue is extremely important for the entire Central Asian region. Central Asia's trans-boundary water resources are a common property and a blessing of all the peoples of the region," he said.

The Kazakh head of state then spoke about the results of the Aral Sea discussion.

"Next year is the 25th anniversary of the International Fund for the Aral

Sea (IFAS). Today, it is the only interstate mechanism for solving the Aral problem. In this regard, we agreed on the need to revive the fund. In particular, we intend to hold a summit in 2018 to discuss the solution of our common problem," he said.

The two leaders also addressed multilateral cooperation, including within Kazakhstan's membership in the UN Security Council.

"We have exchanged views on security issues in the region due to the situation in Afghanistan. We've discussed the results of the Astana Summit of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) on science and technology, as well as Uzbekistan's initiative to host the second OIC summit of this kind," said the Kazakh President.

Nazarbayev also pointed to the importance of developing cultural and humanitarian connections.

"Our close cultural and humanitarian ties are an important factor of friendly relations. We agreed to hold the Year of Uzbekistan in Kazakhstan in 2018. The Year of Kazakhstan in Uzbekistan is also on the agenda. Various events will be held to promote an even closer rapprochement of our fraternal peoples," he said.

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First OIC Summit on Science and Technology takes place in Astana

By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – Sept. 10 in the capital featured not only the spectacular closing of EXPO 2017, a major event in Kazakh history, but also the first Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Summit on Science and Technology, another important opportunity for the nation and the organisation's 57 members.

The summit adopted the Astana Declaration affirming the commitment of the member states to alleviate poverty, increase the budget for education and join efforts to accomplish the goals

envisioned in the OIC 2025 Plan of Action and the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals.

Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev, who opened the summit and welcomed 15 national and governmental leaders, including Azerbaijan, Iran, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Uzbekistan, advanced the idea to organise the conference during the 2016 OIC summit in Istanbul. A year later, more than 80 foreign delegations visited the city to discuss the organisation's priorities and goals in science, technology and innovation.

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Draft Latin-based Kazakh alphabet provokes heated public debate

By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – Kazakh State Secretary Gulshara Adybalikova, deputies, representatives of state bodies and the alphabet developers attended discussions in the Mazhilis (lower house of Parliament) Sept. 11 about the draft of the Latin alphabet scheduled to enter in force by 2025.

The idea of switching from Cyrillic script to Latin script was first voiced by Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev in his 2012 state-of-the-nation address. Earlier this year, he instructed the government to develop and endorse a single Latin-based version of the Kazakh alphabet by the end of 2017. The Kazakh language used Arabic script until 1929, when it trans-

sitioned to Latin script. The latter was in place until 1940, when Soviet authorities introduced Cyrillic script. Transitioning back to Latin script is a historic milestone in the nation's cultural and spiritual development, said Mazhilis chair Nurlan Nigmatulin.

"Language has always been an important foundation of every nation along with its history, culture and territory. That is why President Nursultan Nazarbayev has paid very special attention to the development of the Kazakh language since our independence. He made the transition of the Kazakh language to Latin script one of the key priorities in his recent article 'Course towards the future: modernisation of Kazakhstan's identity,'" he noted.

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Final de-escalation zone set up in Syria

By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – The sixth round of the international meetings on Syria ended Sept. 15 in Astana with the participants agreeing on a final de-escalation zone in Syria's north-western Idlib province. It will be the fourth zone where no military activity would be allowed as envisioned in the May 4 agreement signed by Iran, Russia and Turkey, guarantor states to the ceasefire regime, during the fourth round of talks in the Kazakh capital.

The so-called Astana process that has been going on since January supplement the UN-brokered Geneva talks meant to find the political resolution of the six-year conflict.

Delegations of the three guarantor states, the Syrian government and Syrian armed opposition factions took part in the sixth round, while the UN special envoy on Syria Staffan de Mistura and delegates from Jordan and the U.S. attended the talks as observers.

"Few believed in the success of the Astana process launched in January this year, however, thanks to the determination of the participants of Astana talks, there is now hope to resolve this acute crisis through peaceful means. Today, the participants can go further as they managed to overcome many challenges and achieve considerable results in restoring stability and peace in Syria. They reached what seemed to be impossible and efforts in this direction led to the creation of de-escalation zones



Kazakh Foreign Minister Kairat Abdrakhmanov (C) delivers the joint statement by Iran, Russia and Turkey following the two-day talks in Astana on Sept. 15.

in different parts of Syria," noted Kazakh Foreign Minister Kairat Abdrakhmanov during a plenary session wrapping up the two-day closed-door negotiations.

In a joint statement read by Abdrakhmanov, Iran, Russia and Turkey announced the creation of the de-escalation zones in eastern Ghouta, in certain parts in the northern Homs province, in Idlib province and in certain parts of the neighbouring provinces, including Latakia, Hama and Aleppo, as well as southern Syria. The measure will be in force for six months and will be extended if necessary with the guarantors' consensus.

Iran, Russia and Turkey will have control over the de-escalation zones and would deploy the forces in accordance with the maps endorsed Sept. 8 in Ankara. The guarantor states also agreed to set up a joint coordination centre to coordinate activities in de-escalation areas.

The creation of de-escalation zones does not in no way undermine the sovereignty, independ-

ence, unity and territorial integrity of Syria, said the minister as he read the statement.

"We believe that the process launched in Astana will strengthen the regime of cessation of hostilities and have a positive impact on upcoming Geneva talks under the auspices of the United Nations," said Abdrakhmanov on his own behalf.

Head of the Syrian government delegation Bashar al-Jaafari called the Astana talks the "only successful platform in the Syrian process," which provokes interest among other countries to join the negotiations.

"However, the issue of other countries joining the process is not on the agenda. Probably, we will take that into consideration in the future," said al-Jaafari.

Yet, Idlib province was not the only topic discussed during the sixth round of talks, according to High Negotiations Committee (HNC) advisor Yahya al-Aridi, as the issue of tens of thousands of Syrians locked in prisons was also on the agenda.

"Another matter is detainees, whom some people call buried alive. Tens of thousands of people are there. Thousands of them were tortured and killed. None of the parties raised this issue to the regime," noted al-Aridi.

Russian President Vladimir Putin's Special Representative for Syrian settlement Alexander Lavrentiev, however, committed to bringing the issue to the table in an attempt to build a dialogue with the opposition group, a critical factor in the fight against terrorist groups that are recently becoming more active in Syria.

"We need to involve armed opposition in the fight against terrorism. The unity of all Syrians in the fight will not only foster positive changes, but will also build dialogue and trust between them," noted the head of the Russian delegation.

Similar to his colleagues, Lavrentiev commended the outcomes of the two-day negotiations and the potential of the Astana talks.

"I must say that the creation of de-escalation zones makes it possible to stop bloodshed and achieve the stabilisation in Syria. The outcomes of today's meeting affirmed the right choice the guarantor states made earlier about the promotion of de-escalation zones and fight against terrorism," said Lavrentiev.

The participants of the meeting also thanked Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev for his commitment to the Syrian process and the Kazakh government for hosting the meeting.

The next round of talks is scheduled for the end of October.

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NATION

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 20, 2017

PM discusses Digital Kazakhstan with int’l experts

Staff Report

ASTANA – Kazakh Prime Minister Bakytzhan Sagintayev discussed with international experts Sept. 13 in Astana the development of the Digital Kazakhstan programme, according to prime minister’s press service.

Development of the programme involves sending its main concepts to experts in vari-

ous countries for review and has involved working with such large international companies as IBM, General Electric and Microsoft in pilot mode, said the statement.

“Now we are witnessing a digital transformation. It means social transformation. We move from capital, as the basis of wealth, to data, information. In America, there are such large companies as Google, Apple, WAIS, Airbnb and Uber. They create wealth from informa-

tion. The government needs to recognise and stimulate this process. Digital transformation requires more than data collection. It is necessary to transform the government. It is necessary not only to adopt block chain and other digital technologies, we need to act differently, quickly, in the context of people. If you can do this, you will succeed in this matter,” said expert in the field of new technologies Christopher Surdak during the meeting.

The meeting brought together CEO of the IDC Country Office Andrei Beklemishev, Vice Minister of Internal Affairs and Security of Korea Shim Bo-Kyung, Senior Programme Coordinator Oleg Petrov, Director of Singapore Cooperation Enterprise for Asia Kevin Chong, Chairman of the Board of the Eurasian Economic Commission Tigran Sarkisian and others.

Experts shared their countries’ experience in attracting the public

to work on the implementation of such programmes, spoke about the impact of large data on the construction of the digital economy and the digital state and on the role of information technology and digitalisation in the development of business, the state and society.

Participants also discussed safe processing and provision of data, training of personnel for the IT field, the economic effect of digitisation and improvement of public services.

NATIONAL NEWS IN BRIEF

The sulphur granulation plant with a capacity of 4,500 tonnes per day will be commissioned in November in the Atyrau region. This was announced during the official visit of Kazakh Prime Minister Bakytzhan Sagintayev to the region Sept. 15. “The enterprise includes a sulphur recovery unit, a tail gas purification plant, a storage facility for liquid sulphur and storage facilities for sulphur blocks. The railway complex provides storage and shipment of granulated sulphur up to 7,000 tonnes per day,” primeminister.kz reports. Sagintayev also visited the Bolashak oil and gas processing plant, located 40 kilometres north-west of Atyrau, the offshore fields and D artificial island, all part of the giant Kashagan field developed by an international consortium.

Small industrial zones for start-up entrepreneurs will be created in the country, the press service of the Ministry of Investment and Development reports. “Industrial lands are land plots with all needed infrastructure. An entrepreneur or an investor can get a plot of land and start construction on the same day. This significantly reduces the cost of the project by 20-30 percent,” said Investment Committee Chairman Saparbek Tuyakbayev. The draft of a new law on special economic and industrial zones will be adopted by the end of the year. Simplifying the procedure for issuing land plots for business is one of its main innovations. They will be distributed not by the akimats (local executive bodies), but by the steering committees under the one-window principle.

Chinese entrepreneurs will invest in the construction of a solar power plant with a capacity of 100 megawatts in the South Kazakhstan region. The project worth \$200 million to produce electric panels will be located in the Otyrar district. “The project is important because the climate of our region is suitable for the production of solar electricity. The parties need to implement this project as soon as possible. We are ready to allocate land and provide the necessary support,” said South Kazakhstan Region Akim (Governor) Zhanseit Tuimebayev. Construction will start in October.

More than 12,000 tourists used free audio guides during the EXPO 2017, according to Astana.gov.kz. “The social project aimed at promoting the city attractions was in demand by visitors from 13 countries. Information about the sights was developed by historians and ethnographers,” said Astana Convention Bureau Chief Manager Ainur Zhanabilova. The audio guide web app was also launched. The information about the service is available on welcometoastana.kz and at information kiosks located in the airport buildings, railway stations, shopping and entertainment centres.

The Ethnic Folklore Jazz Festival initiated by the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan was held in the capital Sept. 14. The mission of the event is to preserve the cultural heritage of all ethnic groups living in Kazakhstan through promotion of popular musical directions. “This festival is important because it has a new style, which is now developing not only in Kazakhstan, but all over the world. Our ethno cultural association and other ensembles show their art and creativity, so that our people become acquainted with this style,” said Uzbek Ethno-cultural Centre Chairperson Sherzod Pulatov. The Ethnic Fashion Festival was also held with the participation of 10 designers and craftsmen from all regions of the country.

The Contemporary Japanese Design 100, a mobile exhibition, has opened in Astana, Kazinform reports. The exhibition is organised by the Embassy of Japan in cooperation with the Japan Foundation and the Kazakh National Museum. “This traveling exhibition operates since 2003. This year marks the 25 years of close diplomatic relations between Kazakhstan and Japan. I want to express confidence that bilateral relations will continue to strengthen and multiply,” said Japanese Ambassador to Kazakhstan Ichiro Kawabata at the opening ceremony. The exhibition features 100 items – household and interior items used by people in everyday life including furniture, household appliances, stationery, clothing, medical supplies, vehicles and others. The main part of the exhibition consists of 89 exhibits, developed after 2010, and 11 exhibits represent post-war modern design, which became the basis of Japanese design art.

Feasibility study necessary to determine if planned nuclear power plant is built, says Kazakh minister

Staff Report

ASTANA – The Kazatomprom national atomic company will complete a feasibility study by the end of this year before deciding whether to move forward with a planned nuclear power plant, announced Energy Minister Kanat

Bozumbayev at the Sept. 7-8 Kazenergy Eurasian Forum in Astana. “Once we have the report, we will be able to make a final decision... I am not declaring anything right now, however, I am telling you that there will be a feasibility study, which will show us whether Kazakhstan will get a nuclear power plant,” said Bozumbayev.

Kazatomprom and Rosatom signed the agreement to construct a power plant with a preliminary capacity of up to 1,200 megawatts in September 2014.

The project envisions the construction in Kurchatov in eastern Kazakhstan, where in the 1950s a group of Soviet scientists produced the first tokamaks and where

recently Kazakh scientists conducted the first stage of the physical launch of Kazakh Tokamak for Material Testing (KTM). The other possible location is near Balkhash Lake.

According to Kazakh officials, the International Atomic Energy Agency will also assist Kazakhstan in equipping the plant and

monitor the construction process.

The idea to construct the nation’s first nuclear power plant dates to 2014, when President Nursultan Nazarbayev first spoke about the need for a nuclear power plant in his regular state-of-nation address.

Existing school schedule to remain, but schools given option to shift to five-day weeks

By Zhazira Dyussembekova

ASTANA – Despite lengthy, ongoing talks on introducing a five-day academic week, the Kazakh Ministry of Education and Science has decided to stick with the existing schedule for the time being, Tengrinews.kz reports. School began as usual in September and will end May 25.

In June, the ministry issued a decree “On the definition of the beginning, duration and vacation periods of the 2017-2018 academic year in organisations of secondary education.” According to the document, the duration of the school year is 32 weeks for preschool classes, 33 weeks for first grade and 34 weeks for other grades, as it was before. There have been no changes to vacation periods.

However, new regulations will allow schools to introduce a five-day week themselves, the statement reveals. In all educational organisations, training loads may be divided over five days. It will be more difficult to introduce the schedule in gymnasiums and lyceums, since the load there is much higher, and it is clear that schools

with three shifts cannot shift to a five-day week.

At the moment, the maximum load varies from 24 hours to 39 hours in general education schools. The daily training load – how many lessons there should be in a day, and on how many days – is determined independently by each school, while agreeing on a schedule of lessons with a board of trustees or a parent committee, based on the conditions and capacities of the school. From year to year, the authority and responsibility of the trustees’ councils – and, therefore, the public – is increasing.

The ministry says it is working to reduce the study load on children.

“We have approved the methodological recommendations for doing homework, and thus the amount of time for its preparation should be reduced by about a third compared to the way it was. The assigned homework should not exceed 50 minutes in the second grade, 70 minutes in the third or fourth grade classes, 90 minutes in

the fifth and sixth grades, 110 minutes in the seventh to ninth grades, 130 minutes in the 10th to 11th grades,” its statement read.

The duration of lessons will be 40 minutes, including in Nazarbayev Intellectual Schools. The curricula and the number of hours devoted to the study of each academic subject were not changed.

Chinese entrepreneurs will invest in the construction of a solar power plant with a capacity of 100 megawatts in the South Kazakhstan region. The project worth \$200 million to produce electric panels will be located in the Otyrar district. “The project is important because the climate of our region is suitable for the production of solar electricity. The parties need to implement this project as soon as possible. We are ready to allocate land and provide the necessary support,” said South Kazakhstan Region Akim (Governor) Zhanseit Tuimebayev. Construction will start in October.



Draft Latin-based Kazakh alphabet...

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Nigmatulin highlighted several objective factors underpinning the transition process, including historical meaning, need for language modernisation and consistent language policy.

“The alphabet reform has historic roots and it also seeks to enhance the global competitiveness of Kazakhstan and promote accelerated integration in global scientific, educational, technological and communication space,” he added.

The modernisation will allow tapping into the language’s full potential not only as a tool of communication, but also as a strong factor of spiritual revival and strengthening national identity, said Nigmatulin, adding the reforms would not influence the national language policy.

“The alphabet reform affects solely the Kazakh language. The transition to the Latin script primarily intends to reform the Kazakh alphabet and spelling rules allowing for conformity between its phonetics and graphics. The President’s firm position on this issue should make people aware of the fact that the Russian language, as a global language with strong

cultural and historical roots, will continue playing an important role in Kazakh society,” he noted.

Active public involvement in the process may ensure the success of the upcoming reform, he added.

The government is preparing a comprehensive set of measures to familiarise people with the new alphabet, including publishing education and methodology materials and developing mobile apps and information programmes.

Latin script is a global and prac-

ing that the Latin script will enable us to adopt international scientific and technical lexicon in the national vocabulary,” he said.

Mazhilis deputy Pavel Kazantsev also spoke about the current favourable conditions that would allow for a smooth transition.

“The Kazakh society should understand that the transition from Cyrillic to Latin script will eventually make the nation more united and will push it closer to scientific and technological progress leading

using diphthongs that make recognising and reading text more complicated. Citizens also emphasised the use of the consonant “w” to convey the vowel “u.”

“People are concerned about ‘w.’ English has such a sound. You perceive everything normally when articulating, but you cannot perceive identical sounds in the Kazakh language. This is a psychological aspect. There is no such sound in the Russian language; therefore, many people spell Kokshetau as Kokshetav and this is one of the most frequent sounds in the Kazakh language,” said philological science professor and PhD Alimkhan Zhunisbek.

Diphthongs are necessary to preserve the nature of the language and express specific Kazakh sounds, said National Coordination and Methodological Centre for the Development of Languages head Yerbol Tleshev.

“If we adopt various sounds in the classic alphabet used by many countries around the world, then we will not be able to achieve our goal. Using diphthongs allows us to preserve our specific sounds, but using diacritical signs that some of our colleagues advise only allows us to distinguish similar sounds

in spelling, but loses the nature of the sound. If digraphs convey one sound with two signs, diacritical ones are created artificially,” he said.

While Azerbaijani Parliament member and philological science PhD Nizami Dzhafarov also believes the issue is controversial, he commended the draft alphabet overall.

“I think the project will be discussed. The main signs are fine, but of course, the work is yet to be done. In general, 99 percent of the project is fine, yet there are some controversial aspects. For instance, Turkic nations usually tend to express one sound with one letter. Our languages have a phonetical principle, which means one letter conveys one sound, but English, German and French languages use diphthongs, which goes back to their history,” he noted.

The working group added the project is a draft, conveying the group’s openness to public suggestions and comments.

“I do not know whether we can say that the alphabet will be welcomed or not, because it is not an apartment or a car. There may be some questions about words or sounds and in this case, we will go back to some sounds and letters. In general, we will use this alphabet version as the foundation,” added Tleshev.

“The Kazakh society should understand that the transition from Cyrillic to Latin script will eventually make the nation more united and will push it closer to scientific and technological progress leading to Kazakhstan’s further integration in global communication processes.”

tical tool, according to Eurasian Integration Centre Deputy Director Sergey Seliverstov.

“This is the instrument that does not separate, but, conversely, serves as a tool of communication that is well familiar to people in Kazakhstan. It is also worth not-

to Kazakhstan’s further integration in global communication processes,” he noted.

Once the draft alphabet was made available to the public, however, it provoked heated discussions, particularly concerning the spelling of specific Kazakh sounds

EURASIA&WORLD

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 20, 2017

EXTERNAL NEWS IN BRIEF

Kazakhstan was invited as a special member of the China-ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) Expo held Sept. 13 in Nanning, China, an event usually limited to Southeast Asian countries. First Deputy Prime Minister Askar Mamin opened the national pavilion. He and China's State Council First Vice Premier Zhang Gaoli discussed prospects of cooperation, including the Kostanai car plant and new noodle manufacturing company. The two delegations discussed approximately 10 different projects worth more than \$1 billion.

France is Kazakhstan's fifth largest trading partner and turnover is increasing between the nations. The turnover reached \$1.7 billion in the first six months of the year, 46 percent higher than the same period in 2016. The volume of French investments in the last 12 years is more than \$13.5 billion and 140 French companies operate in Kazakhstan, including Total, the world's fourth largest oil producer, Ariston and Danone. On a visit to Astana in September, Secretary of State at the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs Jean-Baptiste Lemoyne noted French companies have all the necessary conditions to develop in Kazakhstan and intend to expand their presence. He added Kazakhstan provides a favourable investment and tax climate for foreign business.

The 25th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Kazakhstan and Belgium was marked with an unforgettable symphony concert in Astana. World-famous Belgian conductor and composer Dirk Brosse led the performance, which included Kazakh and European classical masterpieces as well as his own compositions. Brosse noted every new experience is a challenge and that he learns quite a bit when he meets musicians and artists from different cultures and with different backgrounds, reported Kazakh TV.

Foreign investors are planning to implement 32 projects in Kazakhstan in the next two years valued at approximately \$8.5 billion, reported the Kazakh Invest press service. The company received nearly 500 applications from the regions and selected 130 that might be interesting to potential investors. All projects will be implemented in the most prioritised sectors of the economy. Business people from more than 60 nations can stay in Kazakhstan 14-90 days using investors' visas and Kazakhstan's favourable investment conditions have already attracted the world's leading companies. The U.S. firm Grace plans to launch a joint project with Kazakhstan's United Chemical Company; Air Liquide from France is constructing a plant to produce technical gases and Germany's The Linde Group is implementing a similar project worth nearly \$140 million. European pharmaceutical companies such as Hikma Pharmaceuticals and Pfizer intend to open production sites in the country.

EXPO 2017 boosted cooperation between Kazakhstan and Israel, as the country considers Kazakhstan its main partner in the Central Asian region. Knesset (Israeli Parliament) member Ksenia Svetlova said Kazakhstan, with its own dynamically developing market, attracts many business people from the country. Both sides are interested in the agricultural field, and Israel plans to share its advanced technologies and invest in Kazakhstan. Cooperation between the countries is also actively developing in education and culture.

Abai's "Words of Edification" has been translated into Latvian, offering citizens of the Baltic nation an opportunity to learn more about Kazakh literature and traditions. The work consists of 45 fragments – short philosophical stories which give answers to many questions. Abai had a critical approach and wrote mainly for the Kazakh people and the criticism shows his love for them and their culture. The book is a true ethnic heritage for many generations of Kazakhs, offering readers insight into the way the national mentality was formed.

Kazakh, Polish leaders witness signing of Green Bridge partnership, attend business forum in Astana

By Aigerim Seisembayeva

ASTANA – Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev and Polish President Andrzej Duda held talks here during the Polish leader's state visit to Kazakhstan Sept. 6 and witnessed the signing of the charter to the Green Bridge Partnership Programme and a ministerial agreement on economic cooperation. The two leaders also addressed a Kazakh-Polish business forum which saw numerous memoranda signed.

Nazarbayev thanked his counterpart for visiting during EXPO 2017 and noted that last year's Kazakh-Polish business forum in Warsaw produced 15 agreements totalling \$1 billion and a plan to launch direct flights between Kazakhstan and Poland, since then implemented by LOT Polish Airlines.

The Kazakh President also mentioned efforts to create a more favourable investment climate and emphasised the importance of expanding trade and economic cooperation. "The investment climate in Kazakhstan is recognised by international organisations as very favourable. At present, we have established Kazakh Invest, a company that works with foreign investors. In addition, when the expo is over, the Astana International Financial Centre will begin operating based on English common law. Almost all the world's leading



financial institutions have agreed to work in the AIFC," he said.

Nazarbayev also highlighted that Kazakhstan is a key regional trading partner for Poland and a base to enter the Central Asian and Eurasian Economic Union markets. In turn, Duda said Nazarbayev's last year's visit to Poland boosted bilateral trade and economic relations.

"I am confident that we will be able to achieve a high level of turnover through our joint efforts. I would also like to thank you for the opportunity to visit the EXPO 2017 and see both the Polish and the Kazakh pavilions. This exhibition is a good demonstration of modern technologies of renewable energy sources and a safe use of traditional sources," said the Polish President as the two leaders addressed the press briefing following their talks in the Akorda.

At the press briefing, Nazarbayev said that 115 enterprises backed with Polish capital operate Kazakhstan and Polish businesses have invested more than \$200 million in Kazakhstan. He also said opportunities are emerging in machine building, agriculture, energy, chemistry, transport and construction. He said Kazakhstan wishes to work jointly with Poland to develop a modern transport infrastructure to speed cargo delivery between Asia and Europe.

Nazarbayev thanked Duda for ratifying an enhanced partnership and cooperation agreement between Kazakhstan and the European Union and noted the importance of working together on international issues during Poland's UN Security Council 2018-2019 membership. Kazakhstan already is a member of the UN Security Council for 2017-2018.

The Polish President said he believes the two countries are on a path toward stronger relations.

"We are following the path that is aimed at improving Kazakh-Polish relations. I thank the President of Kazakhstan for supporting Poland's bid for a non-permanent membership in the UN Security Council. We will apply Kazakhstan's experience in our work within this organisation. Kazakhstan's role in the UN Security Council is very important, especially I would like to note the effective mission implemented by your country for the peaceful settlement of the conflict in Syria," Duda said.

He also said he hopes the positive trends in bilateral trade observed since the beginning of this year will continue and it will eventually reach at least \$3 billion. According to Duda, Polish exports to Kazakhstan grew 50 percent this year so far, while imports from Kazakhstan increased by 80 percent.

After the meeting in Akorda, the two presidents attended the Kazakh-Polish business forum that gathered more than 450 business representatives, including the leaders of top Kazakh and Polish companies. The forum attracted its highest number of Polish business representatives, according to Polish participants.

Addressing the forum, Nazarbayev named successful Kazakh-Polish projects.

"Polpharma pharmaceutical com-

pany is an example of a successful partnership. Selena Group Company implemented a project on the production of building materials on the territory of the Astana New City special economic zone. KazTechMash plant launched agricultural machinery production in Petropavlovsk using the technologies of a Polish Pro-nar Company," he said.

Nazarbayev also said the countries can increase cooperation through Polish businesses participating in Kazakhstan's privatisation and agricultural sector. Kazakhstan's accelerated modernisation is another area for cooperation, he said.

The forum was divided into thematic sessions: financing joint economic enterprises, energy and mining, regional cooperation and infrastructure development. Cooperation documents between Kazakh and Polish companies were also signed, including in inter-regional cooperation. The forum was organised by the Kazakh Ministry of Investment and Development, the Atameken National Chamber of Entrepreneurs and the subsidiary organisation of Kazakhstan's Foreign Trade Chamber. Forty Polish media outlets covered the event.

Poland is one of Kazakhstan's leading economic partners in Central and Eastern Europe. Trade turnover with Kazakhstan constitutes more than 80 percent of Poland's total trade with Central Asian countries.

Erdogan, Nazarbayev advance economic agreements worth \$1 billion during Astana meeting

By Aigerim Seisembayeva

ASTANA – Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev oversaw the signing Sept. 9 in Astana of protocols to the New Synergy Joint Economic Programme for 2017 through 2020, which includes 26 projects totalling \$1 billion.

Turkish business leaders accompanying Erdogan also signed nine investment agreements with the Kazakh Invest national company totalling \$590 million. The agreements involved Turkish companies, such as Calik Holding, Yildirim Holding, Yildizlar SSS Holding and Agrobrest Group.

During the presidents' meeting, Nazarbayev said work continues on economic agreements signed during Erdogan's previous visit.

"Many projects have been implemented, some of them are at the



stage of completion. Regional issues rise both in Kazakhstan and in Turkey, and today's meeting is a good opportunity to discuss them," said Nazarbayev. The Kazakh President added that close Turkish-Kazakh relations have developed over the last 25 years.

Erdogan said he believes there is

potential to increase economic cooperation.

"The trade turnover between Turkey and Kazakhstan has reached \$2 billion, and I think it is not the limit. According to our agreements, the goal is to increase the turnover to \$5 billion. I believe that the two countries' potential will allow them reach

that level," said Erdogan, adding he would also like to see increased political, cultural and military-industrial cooperation.

The heads of state also discussed the Sept. 14-15 sixth round of Astana Process meetings on Syria in Astana.

Erdogan thanked Nazarbayev for his regional peacekeeping efforts and said he hopes the Astana Process meetings contribute to the upcoming Geneva talks.

At a press briefing following the bilateral meeting, the presidents noted their countries' economic and political similarities and cooperation efforts.

Nazarbayev noted that more than 1,600 enterprises with Turkish capital operate in Kazakhstan and said Kazakhstan plants utilise Turkey's experience in developing transit.

"We all know that Turkey is a transit state with developed infrastructure. Bearing this in mind, we

proposed to develop Kazakhstan's transport and transit potential jointly with the Turkish side," said the Kazakh President.

Nazarbayev also thanked Turkey for participating in EXPO 2017.

Erdogan thanked Nazarbayev for supporting Turkish businesses in Kazakhstan and invited Nazarbayev to visit Turkey next year.

"I am convinced that our cooperation will keep strengthening. I would like to once again congratulate Kazakhstan on the successful organisation of major international events. Your country occupies one of the leading positions in the Central Asian region. We are pleased to witness your country's successes," said Erdogan, adding Turkey will support the implementation of the Nurly Zhol (Bright Path) programme.

Erdogan also participated in the Sept. 10-11 first Summit of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) on science and technology.

First OIC Summit...

Continued from Page A1

Nazarbayev noted Islam has deep historical roots in the nation's history.

"Islam came to our land more than 1,000 years ago. We served as a link in the friendly dialogue between the Islamic and Western civilisation," he said.

The Kazakh head of state pointed out several acute issues that the international community, including the OIC, needs to address.

"First is extremist and terrorist activity. Primarily, citizens of Muslim [and Muslim majority] countries suffer from their subversive activities. Second is the problem of the spreading of Islamophobia sentiments. Crimes against Muslims are on the rise every year in the Western countries," he noted.

The lack of unity in the 1.5-billion Islamic world is yet another issue requiring attention, said Nazarbayev, who called for establishing a science and technology fund to foster development of both areas in the Islamic world that, in the past, was making tremendous progress in surpassing the West.

Scientists, including five individuals honoured by the special OIC Science and Technology Achievement Award, also agreed that the lack of funding explains why the Islamic world is lagging.

Nazarbayev also suggested setting up the forum by bringing 15 OIC member states to boost cooperation.

"I believe we need to establish the

forum similar to the G20, an informal group to develop science and economy in the Islamic world. Fifteen leading OIC states can form the OIC-15, because the development of science and technology is very important for us. In this regard, we should establish fruitful cooperation with the Western world and this will foster the development of the Islamic world," he added.

The President also expressed concern about the recent escalation of the conflict in Myanmar and urged the states to join efforts to settle the issue peacefully through the UN.

OIC Secretary-General Dr. Yousif

Bin Ahmed Al-Othaimen noted the summit was a "historic event," as it brought representatives of 57 OIC member states to discuss the salient issues pertaining to science and technology. He thanked Nazarbayev for the conference's excellent coordination.

"Kazakhstan has great respect in the Islamic world. On behalf of all delegations participating in the summit, I would like to express gratitude personally to you and all the Kazakh people for the warm welcome and high level of organisation of the event," he said.

Nazarbayev's visits...

Continued from Page A1

The President praised the results of his visit, noting they would serve to further strengthen ties and partnership based on traditional good-neighbourliness, friendship and trust.

"We adopted a joint statement of the heads of state of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. The governments signed a number of bilateral documents aimed to further develop Kazakh-Uzbek relations and cooperation," he said.

Mirziyoyev noted Nazarbayev's role in resolving interethnic and in-

ter-regional conflicts and awarded him the El Yurt Hurmaty (Respect of the People and the State) Order "for the great merits in deepening and expanding traditional relations of friendship and strategic partnership between the two states, as well as strengthening international cooperation in the name of peace and progress."

Nazarbayev thanked Mirziyoyev and all the Uzbek people for such a significant award, adding it is a great honour for him.

The two leaders also participated in the ceremony to lay flowers to the monument of independence

and humanism, visited the Tole bi Mausoleum and the "Uzbekistan-Kazakhstan: a new stage of cooperation" industrial exhibition, where they became acquainted with products from more than 50 Kazakh manufacturers. They also laid flowers at the monument to former Uzbek President Islam Karimov.

Nazarbayev's Sept. 17 visit to Turkmenistan to open AIMAG marked a regional event.

"It is our common holiday – a holiday of all Central Asian countries. It is an indicator of our solidarity and cohesion. Representatives of 64 countries are taking part in the games. At the request of the United Nations, the games include a team consisting of refu-

gees that is participating as a 65th country," said Berdymukhamedov.

He also congratulated his colleague on EXPO 2017's excellent organisation.

Nazarbayev noted the importance of hosting events like AIMAG.

"I congratulate you on the holding of these Asian games. Many sports facilities have been built here, which in the future will serve your people well. Such events make it possible for Turkmenistan to become more recognisable in the world. This year, Kazakhstan also held a large-scale sports competition – the 28th World Winter Universiade. Holding major international events in our region is of great importance," he said.

The President also stressed the significance of fraternal relations with the neighbouring nation and the need to further develop bilateral cooperation.

"A lot has been done since your visit to Kazakhstan; an interstate commission is now functioning. I think we have good prospects in the economic sphere. I came to you from Uzbekistan, where I was on a state visit. We have resolved many issues: cross-border cooperation, excises, taxes and transportation tariffs. We have witnessed an increase in trade between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan; this year it grew 35 percent. I hope for such an extension of relations between our countries as well," he said.

ECONOMY

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 20, 2017



Kazakhstan to issue Sukuk worth \$300 million next year

Staff Report

ASTANA – Kazakhstan will issue Islamic independent bonds, or Sukuk, worth \$300 million next year, according to the announcement of Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev during the recent ceremony of Global Islamic Finance Awards in Astana. According to the President, a number of Islamic financial institutions operate in Kazakhstan in the sphere of bank insurance and leasing. “Upon my initiative, the first

Islamic bank Al Hilal was established in Kazakhstan. In 2012, the Development Bank of Kazakhstan issued Sukuk Islamic bonds for the first time; currently it has successfully sold bonds in the amount of 240 million Malaysian ringgits (US\$57 million). In 2018, it is planned to issue state Islamic independent bonds Sukuk worth up to \$300 million,” said Nazarbayev. He also said Kazakhstan cooperates with the Islamic Development Bank. “It is our main and strategic part-

ner in the development of Islamic financing and banking. Today, 23 projects worth \$500 million have been implemented from Kazakhstan’s bank loans, and another 12 new projects worth \$900 million are planned to be implemented,” added Nazarbayev. “Today’s award ceremony will identify the leaders of different areas of Islamic finance, which will contribute to the further development of financial services. I express gratitude to the founder of the global award for the decision to hold a ceremony in our country,” he stated.

ECONOMY NEWS IN BRIEF

Plans to construct a feedlot for 30,000 sheep in the West Kazakhstan region were announced during the interregional cooperation forum in Nanning, China, reported khabar.kz. According to the agreement between the Kazakh enterprise and Chinese company, 1,000 tonnes of chilled and frozen meat are expected to be produced next year, all of which will be exported to China. The cost of the project is \$47 million.

EXPO 2017 affected the growth of entrepreneurship in Astana, reported khabar.kz. A noticeable revival was observed not only in the tourism industry, which saw a 78-percent increase, but nearly 1,500 small and medium-sized enterprises received 640 billion tenge (US\$1.88 billion) in orders for goods and services. “The number of small and medium-sized business entities increased 10 percent. The production volume grew 55.8 percent and reached 797 billion tenge (US\$2.3 billion). Approximately 300,000 people are involved in small and medium-sized businesses. The figure increased 8 percent,” said Astana’s entrepreneurship and industry department head Rysgul Kaugabayeva.

Individual fixed-term and conditional deposits increased 1.9 percent in July and growth for the year is up 8 percent to 7.19 trillion tenge (US\$21.14 billion), reported ranking.kz. The population holds more than half of its savings in foreign currency – 52.8 percent or 4.18 trillion tenge (US\$12.29 billion). Last month, the share of deposits in foreign currency was 58.1 percent, compared to 71.7 percent in 2016. Deposits in national currency are also showing steady growth, increasing 1.9 percent in July to 3.01 trillion tenge (US\$8.87 billion). Year to date, tenge deposits have increased 59.4 percent.

Kazakh farmers will soon be able to purchase agricultural machinery on favourable terms through credit partnerships and leasing companies, reported khabar.kz. The preferential loan interest rate will not exceed 5.5 percent, compared to the bank’s current rate exceeding 16 percent. Under the new loan terms, repayment terms are also preferential – up to 60 months with a deferral of principal debt and interest up to one year. The corresponding agreement was signed at the Ministry of Agriculture. “This is the cornerstone aid for our farmers and our agricultural machinery manufacturers. More than 10,000 units of machinery in Kazakhstan are produced domestically. They are not worse than Western analogues, while it is at times cheaper. We provide repair and spare parts on site,” said Kazagromash Association board chairperson Serikbai Chegeyev.

According to ranking.kz, the loan portfolio for housing purchases increased 24 billion tenge (US\$71 million) to more than 1 trillion tenge (US\$2.96 billion) during the first two months of the summer. The market reacted to a new instrument – subsidising commercial banks’ mortgage loans under the Nurly Zher programme. The final rate for the borrower is 10 percent; the balance is paid by the mortgage company. Up to 10 billion tenge (US\$29.61 million) will be allocated annually for these purposes. Since the beginning of summer, 283 loan applications worth 3 billion tenge (US\$8.88 million) have been received under the programme, 247 of which have been approved.

Kazakhstan and Russia should strengthen joint work in digitalisation, namely, research and development, said Russian Minister of Communications and Mass Media Nikolai Nikiforov, reported 24.kz. He noted there is a need to develop key technologies, particularly those working with large data, artificial intelligence, augmented reality, robotics and sensors. Kazakh Minister of Information and Communications Dauren Abayev agreed with his counterpart, as the nation is on the verge of significant changes. “Today, there was a preliminary presentation of the Digital Kazakhstan programme. It has not yet been adopted. The head of state gave instructions to improve it, taking into account all the comments he made and the opinions of experts. This will help the state to concentrate, help private business and strengthen the digitalisation that will bring transparency, optimisation of all costs, acceleration and security,” he said.

Energy intensity drops 28 percent

By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – The energy intensity of Kazakhstan’s economy has decreased by 28 percent since 2008, Kazakhstan’s First Vice Minister of Investment and Development Alik Aidarbayev said during a Sept. 5 press conference on the nation’s energy saving policies.

Energy intensity is measured as the quantity of energy per unit of gross domestic product (GDP); as countries move away from economic dependence on energy-intensive industries, their energy intensity drops.

In line with Kazakhstan’s plan, the Ministry of Investment and Development seeks to reduce energy intensity by 25 percent by 2020 and 50 percent by 2050.

“Energy intensity of GDP is down 28 percent [since 2008],” Aidarbayev noted in his remarks. “In general, this work is done consistently. All required laws were adopted and signed. The national energy register was also approved, which includes more than 5,000 companies that are obliged by law to conduct an energy audit, develop a plan and work towards decreasing energy intensity.”

Having studied the experience of Japan in energy saving policies, the ministry launched the register in 2013. It includes companies and state bodies consuming energy equivalent to more than 1,500 tonnes of fuel per year.

Aidarbayev noted that last year, those companies consumed 49 million tonnes of fuel accounting for 38 percent of the nation’s total energy consumption. At the same time, they invested more than 178 billion tenge (US\$522 million) in energy saving measures.

The government has also embarked on cutting bureaucracy and improving the efficiency of the register system, the official



Alik Aidarbayev

said, as the ministry switched to an automated system for controlling energy consumption.

“Earlier, all this work was done through paper reports and checks, but we introduced an automated system that allows all companies in the register to submit reports and update them automatically. It became easier for our ministry and energy audit companies to monitor [energy consumption] and address various issues,” he explained.

Yet, despite all the government measures underway, energy intensity remains high, Aidarbayev said. He emphasised several factors underpinning the current situation.

“First, the economic structure and Kazakhstan’s economy depends predominantly on commodity-based and extractive industries. All companies working in these sectors consume huge amount of energy. Next are climate conditions in Kazakhstan: compared to other countries, we are located in a zone where there is a greater heating load,” noted Aidarbayev.

Kazakhstan is undergoing a process of modernisation, he said, which means many companies still use outdated equipment and technologies. The measures undertaken by the ministry are also meant to address this issue.

Energy sector investments to total \$57 billion in 2017-2025

By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – Investments in Kazakhstan’s energy sector will total 19 trillion tenge (US\$57 billion) in 2017-2025 and 97 percent will be private investments, Kazakh Minister of Energy Kanat Bozumbayev told the Sept. 7-8 11th Kazenergy Eurasian Forum in Astana.

The forum’s theme this year was Securing the Future of Energy. Highlighting the event was the presentation of the national energy report prepared by the KazEnergy Association together with the British analytical firm IHS Markit that incorporates the general description of the development of the country’s primary sectors of economy.

The two-day event brought global energy companies to the Kazakh capital city to address issues related to the efficient management of sustainable energy sources, controlling production, storage and



Kanat Bozumbayev

usage of energy sources and ensuring access to them, climate change and reducing CO2 emissions, as well as innovative development of uranium and nuclear industries.

The minister also spoke about the current energy projects.

“In oil and gas industry, four oil and gas plants with a total annual capacity of 2.3 million tonnes are now being constructed. In nuclear industry, we are planning to launch the construction of the plant producing fuel assemblies,

incorporating IT technologies in uranium mining ventures as well as intensifying the search for replenishment of the uranium mineral resource base,” added Bozumbayev.

In his remarks, Bozumbayev noted that 11 non-members of the Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), including Kazakhstan, are fulfilling their obligations, adding that Kazakhstan, Russia and Mexico are accomplishing more than 90 percent of their obligations envisioned in their agreements with OPEC.

“The OPEC member states are doing less than non-members, first and foremost Libya and Nigeria. We are more keen to live up to our obligations,” said Bozumbayev.

In August, Kazakhstan’s goal was producing 1.68 million barrels, and it made 1.643 barrels. “Somewhere it is lower and somewhere it is higher, but Kazakhstan will keep fulfilling its obligations,” Bozumbayev said.

Banking sector revenues drop 40 percent in 2017

By Zhazira Dyussebekova

ASTANA – Total Kazakh banking sector revenues decreased almost 40 percent compared to last year, however, banks also reduced expenses and increased revenues from core activities, according to ranking.kz.

In January to July, the revenues of the country’s banking sector decreased to 17.8 trillion tenge (US\$52.7 billion) compared to the same period of last year, when the revenues of banks increased almost fivefold, amounting to 29.6 trillion tenge (US\$87.6 billion).

Expenses for the first six months of this year were 17.9 trillion tenge (US\$52.9 billion), which is 38.9

percent less than in January-July of 2016, when the number was 29.4 trillion tenge (US\$87 billion).

As a result, as of July 2017, taking into account the income tax expenses, the loss of the second-tier banks of Kazakhstan was 203.9 billion tenge (US\$603.7 million), while in July 2016 the banks showed a profit of 243.8 billion (US\$721.8 million), says the source.

Non-remunerated incomes accounted for 91.7 percent of the gross income of the second-tier banks, which is 42.6 percent less than in January-July 2016. Non-remunerated expenses are 95.5 percent of total expenses.

After the increase in expenses in the first six months of 2015-2016

for almost five times, this year they decreased 40.2 percent. Analysts explain that such fluctuations in income and expenses from a sharp increase the previous year to a decrease this year were entirely caused by the revaluation of assets and liabilities.

Revenue from revaluation is 81.9 percent of total revenue, or 14.6 trillion tenge (US\$43.2 billion), a year earlier it was 86.5 percent, or 25.6 trillion tenge (US\$75.8 billion). Revenues from the recovery of reserves are 576.9 billion tenge (US\$1.7 billion) for January-July of this year, which is 27.1 percent less than in the previous year. Thus, the share of total revenues increased from 2.8 percent to 3.5 percent for the year.

S&P upgrades Kazakhstan’s outlook to stable

Continued from Page A1

S&P has assigned a stable outlook to reflect the agency’s assessment that Kazakhstan’s monetary policy flexibility has become less constrained due to the sharp decline in resident deposit. The share of foreign currency deposits to total deposits was 48.7 percent as of Aug. 1, 2017, having peaked at almost 70 percent in January 2016. S&P views balance-of-payments pressures as contained.

“Given the steady inflow of foreign direct investment (FDI) into the economy, largely into the oil and gas sector punctuated by a surge in 2016, we no longer view this sizable external liability as a potential capital flight risk,” reads the report.

The economic growth forecasts were also improved to show an expansion averaging 3 percent over 2017-2020, compared with the

previous 2.5 percent. The agency says the growth will be supported by government investment spending and stronger exports as “the oil price outlook marginally im-

S&P expects a new tax code, which is currently under development, to increase revenues by about 3 percent of GDP, “indicative of a greater level of fiscal flexibility than many of Kazakhstan’s peers,” it said.

proves and oil production from the Kashagan field accelerates,” it notes.

Inflation has fallen to 6-8 percent, which was the National Bank’s target band, noted experts.

“In our view, the National Bank could be subject to political influence, as exemplified by some activities in which it has participated

in recent years that we believe fall outside the usual remit of a central bank. These have included becoming a shareholder of KazMunayGas, the state-owned oil and

gas company, and compensating tenge-denominated depositors after the 2015 currency depreciation,” said the outlook.

S&P expects a new tax code, which is currently under development, to increase revenues by about 3 percent of GDP, “indicative of a greater level of fiscal flexibility than many of Kazakh-

stan’s peers,” it said. According to analysts, the tax code update presents an opportunity to reduce distortions and raise revenues by rationalising exemptions and preferential treatments, thus broadening tax bases and supporting fiscal consolidation. Changes include increases in excise taxes, expansion of the value-added tax system and amendments to natural resource taxation.

S&P expects Kazakhstan’s external position to improve gradually, partly due to the lagged effects of the sharp tenge depreciation in 2015.

“We expect the current account to strengthen, mostly supported by rising oil production. In our view, Kazakhstan’s strong narrow net external debt position and modest gross external financing needs to support the ratings. We note that the outstanding amount of

inward FDI of a debt-like nature was about \$91 billion at year-end 2016 (63 percent of the total stock of inbound FDI), which is close to 60 percent of GDP or 191 percent of current account receipts. They constitute a foreign liability of the economy and could exert balance of payments pressures in case of accelerated repatriation of profits and equity. However, we do not expect such an event to take place over the forecast horizon. This is supported by our observations that FDI tends to be much stickier than portfolio flows; this debt-type FDI is principally concentrated in the strategic oil and mining sectors of Kazakhstan. A large share of the income from the stock of FDI in Kazakhstan is re-invested in the sector, providing further evidence of the long-term commitment of investors to their projects,” reads the statement.

BUSINESS

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 20, 2017

BUSINESS NEWS IN BRIEF

Turkish investors will implement two projects in the South Kazakhstan region, according to the agreement reached during the visit of the Turkish delegation to Astana, according to the press service of the region's akimat. During the meeting, the managing company of the industrial zone Ontustik and Turkish business people signed two investment documents worth \$12 million. This year Merkez Asia Madencilik plans to begin construction of a plant for the production of lead concentrate worth \$2 million on the territory of the Kazakh-Turkish industrial zone. At the same time, Petronet Otomosyon will begin construction of a \$10 million fuel dispenser factory. To date, eight projects are being implemented on the territory of the industrial zone with the total value \$37.5 million. About 900 jobs will be created, the akimat said in the statement.

The volume of cargo transportation of Kazakhstan Temir Zholy (KTZ), nation's state-owned railway and logistics operator, increased by 12 percent over the eight months of the current year in comparison with the same period in 2016, according to the press service of the company. Since the beginning of the year, the growth of loading of all the main nomenclature cargoes amounted to 14.4 percent, including grain and flour – 17 percent. Grain and flour are sent mainly to the countries of Central Asia, Afghanistan, Russia and Iran. In general, export shipments increased 14 percent compared to last year. In particular, cargo shipments increased to Kyrgyzstan (29 percent), China (24 percent) and Russia (15 percent). The transportation of goods in containers through Kazakhstan in the direction of China-Europe increased more than 1.5 times, while in the opposite direction it grew more than two times.

Entrepreneur from Kostanai Kanat Aubakirov intends to breed Dorper sheep, according to the press service of the regional chamber of entrepreneurs. The business project is considered by the regional commission. He plans to breed giant sheep in the Auliekol district and expects to receive a loan from the microfinance organisation. Aubakirov is a participant of Bastau business programme and has already found grazing land, where he plans to personally breed the domestic animals and agreed with suppliers on purchasing a livestock for breeding. "This breed is good because it gives a lot of offspring. It is highly valued as a meat product. The largest pedigree individuals reach a weight of about 140 kilogrammes. Dorpers are considered the most unpretentious breed, able to endure equally hot sultry summer weather, and thirty-degree frost," said Aubakirov.

Italian company Eni intends to build a windmill park with a capacity of 100 megawatts in Kazakhstan, according to Khabar TV channel. The total volume of Italian investments in Kazakhstan has exceeded \$6 billion. "The state is launching large-scale projects with the support of international financial institutions, but we need to create conditions for small private investors. So, it should be not giant projects, but small solar stations or hybrid ones for remote villages in Kazakhstan," said General Director of Kazakh Association of Renewable Energy Arman Kashkinbekov.

The British company Jaguar Land Rover plans to increase its presence in the Kazakh automobile market from the current 6 percent to 16 percent, said General Director of Jaguar Land Rover Russia, Armenia, Belarus, and Kazakhstan Vyacheslav Kuzyakov at a press conference in Almaty, according to Kapital.kz. "Speaking about Kazakhstan, our main task for today is to regain market share. As you know, a few years ago the share of Land Rover in Kazakh market was about 16 percent. Due to some events, it fell to 6 percent at the moment. A lot of work is ahead," he said. Earlier this year, Jaguar Land Rover and Astana Motors signed a dealership agreement. They agreed that in the shortest time, Astana Motors will open a temporary dealer centre in Almaty, but by the end of next year will build a new dealer centre by all Jaguar Land Rover standards. Executive director of Astana Motors Anton Afonin said that the company's global goal is to bring sales of Land Rover and Jaguar cars to a level of 30 cars per month within a year.

KAZENERGY holds 11th Eurasian Forum



By Zhandos Beisenov

ASTANA – KAZENERGY's 11th Eurasian Forum, considered to be one of the key events of EXPO 2017 and its theme "Future Energy," was held Sept. 7-8 at the capital's Palace of Peace and Reconciliation. For more than a decade, the association has played an important role in industrial development, building a better business climate and generating constructive dialogue among governments and energy companies.

The forum followed the dialogue regarding ensuring energy sustainable development initiated during the G20 energy ministers meeting.

This year's programme included a discussion of the issues related to the efficient management of sustainable energy sources; control over sustainable energy resources production, storage and exploitation; providing access to energy resources; climate change and carbon dioxide emission abatement; fostering alternative energy sources exploitation and implementing energy performance programmes.

Nationally and internationally-

known speakers who presented addresses and reports for forum audiences included Prime Minister of Kazakhstan Bakhytzhan Sagintayev, Minister of Energy of Kazakhstan Kanat Bozumbayev, Arctic Circle Chairperson and former Iceland President (1996-2016) Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson, United Arab Emirates Minister of Energy Suhail Mohamed Faraj Al Mazrouei, Finnish Minister for

Housing, Energy and the Environment Kimmo Tiilikainen, Georgian Minister of Energy Ilia Eloshvili, Czech Republic Deputy Minister of Industry and Trade Jiri Koliba, Polish Secretary of State, Ministry of Energy Gregory Tobiszowski and CEOs and top managers of international and Kazakh energy companies, leading experts and the media.

The forum comprised plenary and individual programme sessions, research and practical conferences, roundtable discussions and women and youth energy meetings. One of the more significant events was the press conference highlighting the main achievements of China National Petroleum Corporation's (CNPC) 20th anniversary in Kazakhstan.

"Over the past 20 years, the leaders of the states have paid special understanding to the oil and gas industry relationship between China and Kazakhstan. At present, the concept of the Silk Road Economic Belt is being realised in China,



which links with the Kazakhstani Nurly Zhol economic development programme. It creates a bigger impulse to the development of business relations and mutual understanding between China and Kazakhstan," said CNPC First Vice President Wang Dongjin.

PetroKazakhstan and its joint venture Kazgermunai were named among the most successful projects through years of cooperation in the

oil and gas sphere. On this occasion PetroKazakhstan President Fang Jiazhong received a letter of gratitude from KazMunayGas Exploration & Production General Director Kurmangazy Iskaziyeu for the joint achievements between the companies. Kashagan, another long-anticipated project, was also of mutual interest. CNPC Kazakhstan B.V. General Manager Wei Yuxiang, who is in charge of the project, presented a report at the plenary session on the opportunities and challenges of the fossil energy system transition.

The list of high-level guests representing government and energy business, including KAZENERGY Chairperson Timur Kulibayev, Vice Minister of Energy of Kazakhstan Makhambet Dosmukhambetov, China's chargé d'affaires a.i. in Kazakhstan Lyu Jianpi and KazMunayGas Chairperson of the Board Sauat Mynbayev, expressed appreciation to the Chinese government and CNPC for its contributions and expressed belief in the future towards strengthening business relationships between the countries' energy sectors.



Samruk Kazyna hosts int'l forum of sovereign wealth funds

By Dmitry Lee

ASTANA – Multiple agreements were signed during the ninth International Forum of Sovereign Wealth Funds (IFSFWF). The event, with the theme Exploring New Frontiers, was hosted by the Samruk Kazyna Sovereign Wealth Fund Sept. 5-7 in the capital's new St. Regis Hotel.

Kazakh Prime Minister Bakytzhan Sagintayev, who spoke during the introduction, noted the country's openness towards foreign investments.

"Our policy was highly appreciated by the international community," he said. "In the World Bank rating of favourable conditions for doing business, Kazakhstan took first place in the region and 35th in the world. We welcome investors and strategic partners and invite them to further exchange experience and mutually-beneficial cooperation. I hope that we all will have fruitful work on the way to defining new markets and horizons," he said.

IFSFWF, a voluntary organisation established in 2009, brings together 32 sovereign wealth funds from 31 countries with total assets of approximately \$3.5 trillion. Samruk Kazyna has been an official member since 2014.

In an interview with The Astana Times, Samruk-Kazyna Public Relations Director Aidar Makhmetov noted the significance of the meeting by emphasising the key international guests and media in attendance.

"I would like to highlight – among our international information partners are CNN and Euronews and editor and host of Emerging Markets John Deferios is the moderator of the forum, who has especially arrived to interview representatives of Samruk Kazyna and other guests of the forum. All these interviews will be broadcast by the media; we didn't pay a penny for this. It means that these processes under the management of our fund are interesting to foreign investors and this is a good factor for us, as this is a view from abroad," he said.

International experts noted the importance of the forum prior to its start and Kazakhstan's role as host, he added.

"We should be proud of this opportunity that has been entrusted to our country. This means our fund is moving in the right direction," he said.

As a result, the nation's fund concluded agreements with CDP Equity, Italy's sovereign wealth fund, GE Digital and the World Bank.

"CDP Equity, a holding company with a share capital of \$3.5 billion, is aiming to boost the Italian economy by investing equity capital in companies of major national interest. CDP Equity's majority shareholder is Cassa di Risparmio di Padova e Rovigo S.p.A. (CDP Group), which is controlled by the Italian Ministry of Economy and Finance," noted the press release.

"The agreement establishes cooperation between the fund's and the holding's portfolio companies and leading Italian companies for creating new production facilities in manufacturing and agricultural industries in Kazakhstan. CDP Group owns shares of large Italian companies across various industries, including the manufacturing and agricultural fields. Under the first stage of the agreement, the Italian and Kazakh companies will look at the possibility of localising new productions using Italian technologies," the statement added.

The agreement between Samruk Kazyna and GE Digital will jointly develop a road map "to execute a digitalisation strategy for Samruk Kazyna's subsidiaries."

"Deploying GE digital technologies would enable Samruk Kazyna's businesses to forecast equipment health, minimising the risk of unplanned downtime by predicting and addressing potential issues in advance. The companies also agreed to evaluate possible localisation of Predix-based digital solutions – from edge to cloud – which would help nurture the developer community in Kazakhstan in partnership with the region's leading universities," said the press release.

The World Bank and Samruk Kazyna intend to collaborate by researching "key green projects in Kazakhstan and the Central Asia region. In addition, the sides plan to jointly engage in research work on Islamic finance to explore opportunities and challenges of this niche market segment in Kazakhstan and CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States) region," read the statement.

Event organisers noted this year's IFSWF annual meeting brought together more than 200 participants

and sovereign wealth funds from more than 30 countries, including

multilateral development and financial institutions and delegates from

the international investment community.

FROM THE HEART OF EURASIA

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EDITORIAL&OPINION

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 20, 2017

Kazakhstan's experience shapes its actions on UNSC

As world leaders and foreign ministers prepare to fly to New York for United Nations General Assembly next week at a time of real challenge for the global community, we must hope the chance for formal and informal discussions can play its part in reducing tensions and divisions.

There is no shortage of issues to discuss. North Korea's nuclear and ballistic missile tests have sent shockwaves around the world. They are a severe test to global non-proliferation and the crisis they have sparked has again raised fears of how misjudgements or misunderstandings could spark nuclear catastrophe.

Conflicts in the Middle East and the threat from violent extremism continue to destabilise not only the region but the wider world. Out of the headlines, fighting in Africa – both within countries and across borders – brings misery to millions and remains a major challenge to development. Almost two-thirds of the agenda of the UN's Security Council is devoted to trying to bring peace to areas of that continent.

It would be hard enough to find solutions to these and many other challenges if there was agreement on the way forward. But too often there are acute differences of opinion along with suspicions of motives.

This is the worrying global background, which has faced Kazakhstan in its first several months as a member of the Security Council. But it is also a time when the country's commitment to promoting cooperation, dialogue, the rule of international law and disarmament have never been more important.

It is a responsibility which the record shows Kazakhstan has taken with the utmost seriousness. In the first six months of the year, Kazakhstan participated in more than 120 formal Security Council meetings and made meaningful contributions to more than 20 resolutions.

The country has been entrusted with chairing committees on Afghanistan, enforcing sanctions against ISIL and Al-Qaida and on the Horn of Africa. As is always the case when member states take on such added responsibilities, there have been increased pressures on the nation's diplomats. But the experience will serve them and Kazakhstan well in the years ahead.

Kazakhstan promised would be a focus for its time on the Security Council. The future of Afghanistan was singled out as a major priority – a recognition of the importance of Afghanistan's stability for the region and the need to support its long-term economic and social development in the battle against extremism.

Within the UN, Kazakhstan has been working hard to step up international efforts to help Afghanistan's elected government combat extremism and spread prosperity and opportunity to its long-suffering citizens. The arguments being made are all the more persuasive coming from a country within the region and show the importance of Central Asia having a voice at the global table.

It is also a voice which carries more weight because of the active role Kazakhstan continues to take, wherever it can, to promote dialogue and end conflict. The Astana Process, for example, still holds out hope of progress towards ending the tragedy in Syria despite many obstacles. At a practical level, too, Kazakh military observers have joined the international peace-keeping operation in Western Sahara with plans to help support a second UN mission next year.

It is in January 2018, too, that Kazakhstan will take on the task of presiding over the Security Council. It is a role which will further enhance the country's stature and influence within the international community which will have an impact beyond the next two years.

Among plans being considered for their presidency are, Foreign Minister Kairat Abdrakhmanov said last week, a debate at the highest level on how to improve international peace and security as well as ministerial level discussions on Central Asia and Afghanistan and regular formal discussions on the Middle East – both among the priorities for action Kazakhstan set out when it took its seat on the UNSC.

But it is the priority Kazakhstan gave to nuclear disarmament – which President Nazarbayev called the cause of our time – which strikes the loudest chord at this difficult time. Kazakhstan's experience and commitment to a world without nuclear weapons has never been more relevant nor more important and it is important its message is heard loud and clear on the Security Council.

Enhanced Kazakh-Uzbek relations offer opportunity for Central Asian regional cooperation

By Yerlan Karin

Against the backdrop of Kazakh boxer Gennady Golovkin's fight and just because it happened over the weekend, President Nursultan Nazarbayev's visit to Tashkent and its outcomes did not, perhaps, receive sufficient coverage. Of no small importance is the fact that the visit had the status of an official state visit.

Both sides called the meeting ground-breaking and historic. And such a characterisation is not a cliché politesse but a reflection of the actual situation. The two countries have signed a large package of documents, expanded cooperation horizons and indicators, and laid new traditions of bilateral visits at the highest level.

The Uzbek side was scrupulous about Nazarbayev's visit, which included, for instance, a visit to the Tole bi mausoleum and a launch of an Uzbek translation of Nazarbayev's book. These would seem simply subtle details, but in Central Asia they are very significant. They confirm the existing warm relationship between the two presidents and, in particular, the Uzbek leader's special respect for the President of Kazakhstan. Therefore, this visit has definitively taken this bilateral relationship to a qualitatively new level.



ing of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation summit. He came back to Astana in early September to lead the Uzbek delegation to the first ever Organisation of Islamic Cooperation Summit on Science and Technology. Apart from that, Nazarbayev and Mirziyoyev held bilateral talks in May on the fringes of other multilateral fora, including the Arab-Islamic-American Summit in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia and the Belt and Road Initiative Forum in Beijing, China.

In Tashkent, both Presidents emphasised in their remarks that this was their sixth meeting over a short period of time.

The leaders of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan have given an impetus to economic cooperation, which reflected in concrete indicators. Since the beginning of the year, bilateral trade has grown 35 percent, communication between the two countries has intensified, and border collaboration issues are being solved on a systematic basis.

The most important is that both leaders are trying to give a boost to the overall process of regional co-operation. With the strengthening of the Kazakh-Uzbek ties, there is indeed a chance to restart regional cooperation in Central Asia.

The author is a political analyst and the head of the Kazakhstan Council on Foreign Affairs.



OPINIONS

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 20, 2017

Decisive step towards modernisation of Kazakhstan’s identity

By Dr. Darkhan Kydyrali

The International Turkic Academy team has conducted comprehensive research on adopting a Latin script, studied what it took for several Turkic speaking nations to switch their alphabets to Latin-based ones, and published a monograph on the issue.

Our studies showed that a Latin-based alphabet is the common alphabet of turkology. For instance, turkologists rely on the Latin transcription while studying ancient Turkic writings. So did “The Soviet Turkology” led by Baskakov. Turkologists in today’s Russia are still using this method. As New York University Professor Larissa Bonfante writes, the Latin alphabet derives from ancient Etruscan. “Codex Cumanicus”, which is considered as an encyclopedia on the Middle Age Turkic people, is also written using the Latin alphabet. In the 1926 Baku Assembly, our intellectuals chose the Latin script.

In the 1990s, intellectual communities of the Turkic nations made to the same decision.

These facts show that the Lat-



in-based alphabet is the most appropriate alphabet taking into account our phonetics. A Latin-based alphabet not only serves as the symbol of the Kazakh statehood revival, but it revives the public memory and conscience. The alphabet boosts the usage of the Kazakh language, promotes cultural unity in the Kazakh community, and liberates the Kazakh information space. An alphabet symbolizes culture, nationality, statehood, sovereignty and unity.

Thus, choosing an alphabet means choosing a way towards prosperity. We believe that by choosing the Latin-based Kazakh alphabet we have decided to move towards realisation of the aspirations of Mangilik El (Eternal Nation).

Switching to the Latin-based Kazakh alphabet, we will solve some issues in spelling the Kazakh words in Latin. Our nation’s name, for example, is written in three different ways. Through the Latin-based Kazakh alphabet, we would be spelling Kazakhstan as Qazaqstan since the latter meets

sible to standardise spelling of foreign words comprising the Kazakh vocabulary. Integrity in Kazakh orthography and orthoepy leads to integrity in a language. Thus, many non-Kazakh ethnic groups will have a unique opportunity to master their knowledge of Kazakh and

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uniqueness of the Kazakh language.

Furthermore, the new alphabet would allow us to adapt foreign words in accordance with the Kazakh language rules. The Latin-based Kazakh alphabet would make it pos-

sible to standardise spelling of foreign words comprising the Kazakh vocabulary. Integrity in Kazakh orthography and orthoepy leads to integrity in a language. Thus, many non-Kazakh ethnic groups will have a unique opportunity to master their knowledge of Kazakh and

lic conscience and promote national cohesion.

The Latin script has been widely used in many online media outlets so far. There is a large number of people on Internet and social media, who use the Latin script to express their views in Kazakh. But there is no standardised version of the Latin-based Kazakh alphabet. Therefore, the adoption of the new common alphabet facilitates resolving this issue.

In the age of globalisation, English skills and the Latin alphabet give journalists an opportunity to effectively navigate in the global information space. Since beginning of this year the updated Egemen Kazakhstan newspaper website has been telling stories in Russian. In the past, the Latin-based version of the site has been disseminating information for Kazakhs overseas. The site materials are automatically converted into the Latin-based alphabet. From September 2017, we started telling stories of the Kazakh people to the world in English. Foreign citizens and embassies representing foreign governments in Kazakhstan will be kept posted on Kazakhstan

through the Egemen Kazakhstan stories.

Most of us are well aware of the fact that from 1929 to 1940 the Egemen Kazakhstan newspaper, then named as “The Enbekshi Kazakh” and “The Socialist Kazakhstan newspaper”, used the Latin-based Kazakh alphabet. Therefore, switching to the new alphabet would be a natural transition for the leading Kazakh newspaper.

Undoubtedly, changing an alphabet script cannot be done overnight or even in a year. As the recommended Latin script will be used/implemented as a pilot project, the public will eventually become comfortable writing on it. Most importantly, through having a hearing on the Latin script in the Kazakh Parliament the government took the decisive step towards modernisation of public conscience. May this step herald further steps towards modernisation of public conscience.

The author is President of the International Turkic Academy. The article was originally published by the Egemen Kazakhstan newspaper.

TCO partnership key to Tengiz reaching 3 bln barrels milestone

By Ted Etchison

Significant and often untapped oil and gas reserves can still be found in abundance and in places where the business climate is conducive and attractive to energy investors.

Kazakhstan is such a place. Its growing importance as a key energy supplier is impressive. According to a recent Foresight-2050 report, oil production from Kazakhstan in the 2030s will increase by up to 102 million tonnes (<http://wsec.kz/wp-content/uploads/file/19/Kanat%20Bozumbayev.pdf>).

Tengizchevroil has worked in this vast and dynamic nation for over two decades, in an exceptional relationship with the government of Kazakhstan, to develop the country’s vast energy potential and advance its economy.

June 9, 2017, was a major milestone in the history of Tengizchevroil (TCO), the Chevron-led joint venture that operates two world-class oil fields deep beneath the western Kazakhstan steppe along the northeast shores of the Caspian Sea. It was on this day that TCO produced its three billionth barrel of crude oil since its creation in 1993.

The unique TCO partnership was vital to getting to this in-

credible three billion barrels achievement. Together, this partnership has unlocked one of the world’s richest resources and also empowered thousands of people in Kazakhstan in the process.

Much of the success in enabling this world-class asset to achieve this massive record is simply down to the commitment of our workforce – past and present – many of which are local



people. And, of course, the trust and support from the Republic of Kazakhstan.

It all started in April 1993 when TCO was formed between the Republic of Kazakhstan and Chevron Corporation to explore, produce and market crude oil, gas and sulphur. The joint venture participants, today, alongside

Chevron (50 percent interest) who leads the partnership, include ExxonMobil (25 percent), KazMunayGas (20 percent) and LukArco (5 percent).

Beneath the country’s western steppe and energy low lands, lies the joint venture’s largest asset, Tengiz. Discovered in 1979, the oil column of the reservoir measures an incredible 1 mile (1.6 km). The reservoir area is so large that one would have to run nearly two marathons to cover the entire distance around it. All of this means Tengiz ranks as the world’s deepest producing supergiant oil field. The nearby Korolev field is another giant reservoir, also under TCO’s development arm.

Covering an area of more than 594 square miles (1,538 sq km), TCO requires facilities of an equally impressive scale to operate the fields. Yet, when the reservoir was first discovered there was little in the way of logistics or even roads to support what today has been ranked as possibly the world’s largest oil field, outside of the Middle East.

Three billion barrels of crude is enough to meet the petroleum consumption needs of Kazakhstan for more than 30 years. A remarkable achievement, but the exciting part is that there are many more barrels to come. The field’s year-

ly output alone right now could satisfy the annual oil demand of entire nations both within neighbouring central Asia and further afield.

So what’s next for this super giant? Well, the next stage of expansion, the Future Growth Project-Wellhead Pressure Management Project (FGP-WPMP), is designed to further increase TCO’s production (by approximately 260,000 barrels per day) and max-

So what’s next for this super giant? Well, the next stage of expansion, the Future Growth Project-Wellhead Pressure Management Project (FGP-WPMP), is designed to further increase TCO’s production (by approximately 260,000 barrels per day) and maximize the ultimate recovery of its resources.

imize the ultimate recovery of its resources. The final investment decision was given for this expansion in July 2016. In parallel, work is underway to help extend the field’s production plateau and keep the existing plants producing at full capacity.

Expansion isn’t only about boosting production; it will also help drive the development of

local skills. Extending the life of TCO’s assets will rely on new cutting edge technology too. And around 20,000 jobs will be created at peak construction.

One constant over the years has been our commitment to investing in the social infrastructure, capacity and capability of both local business and our local workforce – whose hard work and creativity are the foundation of our success. TCO has been consistently in-

committed to partner with the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) to strengthen small and medium sized business in Kazakhstan and enable them to grow into more successful businesses. TCO also provided co-financing to support the EBRD’s on-going Kazakhstan Small Business Support Programme over an initial period of two years (2015-2017). On May 2017, this programme won the European Business Association of Kazakhstan (EUROBAK) Corporate Social Responsibility Award for best programme in the “Entrepreneurship Development” category.

Today, 84 percent of TCO jobs are held by Kazakhstan citizens.

As I mentioned, the TCO partnership was fundamental in reaching three billion barrels. To bring on board our next phase of production, this relationship will be even more crucial.

To date, TCO has contributed over \$121 billion to the local Kazakh economy and people. This asset continues to be of vital importance to the people of Kazakhstan and we are excited and also confident that we will safely and successfully celebrate the next three billion barrels.

The author is General Director of Tengizchevroil LLP.

Implementing public strategies in Kazakhstan

By Colin Knox

The President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev, has devised at least three important strategic documents, the purpose of which is to build on the country’s existing success and ensure Kazakhstan is among the top 30 developed nations by 2050.

The three documents – Kazakhstan 2050, Plan of the Nation (100 Concrete Steps), and the Third Modernisation of Kazakhstan – propose a route map for the future in a turbulent and uncertain global environment.

These documents offer foresight and leadership consistent with a strong President who has a clear vision for where he wants to take Kazakhstan.

Despite the pledges in these strategic documents, the recent review by the OECD of governance in Kazakhstan found key deficiencies in terms of the implementation process: “The country’s governance model suffers from excessively hierarchical structures in its strategic orientations and policy design, together



with inadequate focus on policy implementation, in particular in terms of evaluation of policy effectiveness and accountability... Insufficient focus on implementation also hinders understanding of the actual outcomes of policy.”

There is, however, a body of international research that might offer some insights into why public policies within Kazakhstan’s strategy documents fail to get fully implemented as intended. These are discussed in no order of importance.

First, Kazakhstan has a very complex system of governance. There are 15 government ministries and one central executive body (i.e. the Agency for Civil Service Affairs and Anti-Corruption); 6,269 state enterprises

which operate in sectors where the direct provision of a public service is deemed necessary; 679 joint stock companies and limited liability partnerships established by the government and the National Bank to both engage in the production of market goods and services in a competitive environment; and 18,902 state institutions which are non-commercial entities created by the President, the government or local executive bodies for carrying out socio-cultural or administrative functions.

With such a complex system of governance comes the likelihood of poor horizontal and vertical coordination and duplication across executive bodies.

Second, there can be a problem of reform overload where civil servants are unable to absorb the volume of changes coming from the top-down without a sense of prioritisation. This can lead to officials using their own discretion to make sense of the roll-out of reforms in ways which were not intended at the stage of policy formulation (public policy research refers to this as ‘street level bureaucracy’).

Third, because of this issue of reform overload, officials can lack accountability to deliver, sometimes described as circumstances ‘where everything is important and nothing is important’. Lack of accountability can also encourage inaccurate monitoring and reporting of changes intended to happen through the three strategies, a kind of ‘tick-box’ exercise where tasks are fulfilled in a perfunctory way to meet the demands of process rather than produce good policy outcomes. Lack of accountability also risks the potential of corruption and civil servants putting their own self-interests in front of the country’s needs.

Finally, high staff turnover can result in a lack of consistency in policy implementation. Officials and politicians do not remain in their positions long enough to see through the full impact of policy change.

This, combined with a hugely complex governance structure, means that leadership of the reforms becomes diffuse, ownership amongst officials and politicians is shifting, and there is no time/space to undertake proper policy evaluation of those strate-

gic changes which are successful or failing.

The end result is that even though there is a clear route map of the strategic direction for Kazakhstan until 2050, the imple-

We cannot assume that good strategic plans will be faithfully implemented, not through negligence, but rather the bureaucratic mosaic through which they pass and lack of attention to the suc-

Kazakhstan has a very complex system of governance. There are 15 government ministries and one central executive body (i.e. the Agency for Civil Service Affairs and Anti-Corruption); 6,269 state enterprises which operate in sectors where the direct provision of a public service is deemed necessary; 679 joint stock companies and limited liability partnerships established by the government and the National Bank to both engage in the production of market goods and services in a competitive environment.

mentation of the operational plans can prove difficult to deliver in practice. International research tells us that the ‘implementation deficit’ is a neglected issue in public policy.

cessful achievement of policy outcomes and their evaluation.

The author is a professor at Nazarbayev University’s Graduate School of Public Policy.

EURASIA&WORLD

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 20, 2017

Conference considers updating 10-year-old European Union Central Asia strategy

By Almasbek Zhumadilov and Asset Burnashev

BRUSSELS – The Estonian Presidency of the Council of the European Union and the German Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs hosted Sept. 12 in Brussels an international conference “10 years of the EU Strategy for Central Asia: way forward.”

EU officials who spoke at the conference said cooperation with the region is important for the Global Strategy of the European Union’s foreign and security policy and that the EU strategy for a long-term partnership has strengthened relations between the union and the five Central Asian states.

“Over the years of implementing the strategy, the EU has been able to accumulate substantial experience and made significant progress in many priority areas,” said EU Special Representative for Central Asia Peter Burian, adding the EU will work on updating the document taking into account the experience gained.



L-R: Kazakh Deputy Foreign Minister Roman Vassilenko, EU Special Representative for Central Asia Peter Burian and Kazakh Ambassador to Belgium Almaz Khamzayev.

Kazakh Deputy Foreign Minister Roman Vassilenko, who also spoke at the event, echoed Burian, calling the strategy “an effective and integrated tool for inter-regional interaction” and arguing that projects implemented as part of the strategy contributed to the development of the region. “A key component of a new strategy, in

old EU-Central Asia strategy to current conditions resulting from improved relations between the countries’ governments and businesses over the last year.

Another impetus for a new strategy is an elevated status since 2015 of Brussels’ relations with Astana that came with the signing of an enhanced partnership and co-operation agreement. The accord is enforced provisionally and must be ratified by all 28 EU member states and by the European Parliament before coming into force. Sixteen states have so far ratified the agreement which is implemented partially now.

The EU Council is expected to approve a new Central Asian strategy by the end of 2019 in accordance with its global strategy. The new document is expected to reflect the European Union’s interest in strengthening interaction with Central Asians in the fight against terrorism, countering smuggling and illegal migration, as well as expanding transport, trade and energy interconnection.

Citi expert talks OBOR, Kazakhstan’s opportunities for growth

By Zhazira Dyussebekova

ASTANA – The One Belt, One Road (OBOR) initiative will improve not only economic integration, but cultural and religious understanding, said Citi Research’s Chief Economist and Managing Director for China Li-Gang Liu in a Sept. 6 interview for this story. Kazakhstan plays an important role in the project and will benefit from China’s further growth.

“Obviously from the geographic point of view, Kazakhstan is very important in the One Belt, One Road programme. The old Silk Road went through China, Central Asia and eventually to Europe. I think that Kazakhstan is an integral part of this OBOR programme,” said Li-Gang, adding Chinese President Xi Jinping mentioned OBOR for the first time during a speech in Kazakhstan.

Li-Gang talked about the main aspects of the programme, beginning with economic integration.



Li-Gang Liu

“In terms of the comparative advantage, we know that for the last 30 years China has become very efficient in building infrastructure and it is very easy for China to somehow leverage its expertise to help regional economic development. That’s one important element,” he said.

The second part is cultural issues.

“If we look at the ancient Silk Road, there are a lot of interactions of different religions and cultures between China and Europe, including the Central Asian region. This is something that is going to get more important in addition to economic linkages. If people don’t understand and appreciate each other’s culture or religion, there could be a lot of misunderstanding with a lot of unpleasant events leading to crashes of civilisations. Even we do not share the same religion and culture, but we need to understand each other,” he added.

China’s economy is the second largest in the world in terms of GDP, which was nearly \$11 trillion last year. As a result, the country affects the regional economy.

Increasing per capita income leads to greater energy consumption, said Li-Gang.

“If you look at China’s per capita energy consumption, it is still below the mature economies’ level in terms of oil and gas and other energy consumption. This could be a huge potential for a resource-rich country like Kazakhstan. In the future, in gas-oil exports China will remain very steady. This can be important in Kazakhstan’s economic growth,” he noted.

Kazakhstan has a variety of natural assets and the resource curse is not always a jinx, said Li-Gang, citing examples like Australia and New Zealand.

“These economies were the richest in terms of per capita income,” he said. “There are also unsuccessful stories in Argentina, Venezuela and others who were unable to do so.”

He thinks Kazakhstan has utilised its resources well.

“Astana’s development is a concrete example. This place used to be a steppe in Central Asia; now, it’s a brand-new metropolis in the region. That means good economic policy can help the country’s economic development. The country can catch up rather quickly from a middle-income economy to high-income economy. I think the potential is huge,” he said.

Resource money can be transformed into human capital accumulation, a situation on which Kazakhstan can rely in the future.

“I think to some extent Kazakhstan has applied the right policy to achieve what it has achieved,” said Li-Gang. “Going forward, I think there are more opportunities for the country’s future developments. One of them is that the global economic centre is shifting from the west to the east, if you include not only China, but also South Korea, Japan and other ASEAN economies. It is an important region. Kazakhstan has a geographic advantage to be affiliated with a fast-growing economic area. Within the next five-10 years, the potential for growth will be huge.”

He indicated Kazakh growth will continue if the country utilises the external environment well.

“After a modest recession in Russia last year, its economy is growing again, according to Citi’s forecasts. This is also an important source of growth in the region. India will probably grow faster this year than China,” he said.

Based in Hong Kong, Li-Gang has two decades of professional experience in both public and private financial institutions. Prior to Citi, a global bank operating in 58 countries of the 65 along the Belt and Road, the most of any bank, he served for more than six years as Chief Economist for Greater China at ANZ Bank in Hong Kong. His earlier roles include positions at the Hong Kong Monetary Authority, Asian Development Bank Institute in Tokyo and the World Bank and Peterson Institute for International Economics, both in Washington, D.C. Li-Gang was named economist of the year by China Business News in 2012 and 2014, awarded as one of the most accurate macro forecasters by China Securities Weekly in 2013 and has also earned top rankings in Asian research in Australia-based research polls. He holds a Ph.D. from Johns Hopkins University from the USA.

Kazakh-Russian trade turnover to grow up to 40 percent this year, says Russian official

By Frol Leandroer

ASTANA – Over the past eight months, commodity turnover between Kazakhstan and Russia grew 34 percent, and according to forecasts, by the end of the year will grow 35-40 percent, according to comments by Russian Trade Representative in Kazakhstan Alexander Yakovlev at a forum of the business ombudsmen, Inter-

fax-Kazakhstan reports. According to Yakovlev, Russia ranks first in trade turnover with Kazakhstan. Russia’s share in the trade turnover is 20 percent.

“Today, Kazakhstan occupies the second place in the trade turnover of Russia among the CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States) countries and among the countries of the world it is in the top ten,” he noted.

Investment cooperation today

is also dynamically developing, stressed the Russian trade representative.

“The Russian Federation invests more than \$1 billion annually in Kazakhstan’s economy, and we are pleased that in 2016 Russia invested more than \$1 billion in the Kazakh economy, and Kazakhstan invested about \$700 million in the Russian Federation and the growth was 70 percent,” Yakovlev informed.

According to him, all major Russian business operates on the Kazakh market.

“Forty-one thousand joint foreign companies are registered in Kazakhstan, 13,000 of which are Russian, which makes one third coming from the Russian Federation. It means that there is a pleasant investment climate in Kazakhstan, Russian companies come here and are actively working,” said Yakovlev.

Joint development proposed to digitalise Kazakh and Russian economies

Staff Report

ASTANA – Russian Minister of Communications and Mass Media Nikolai Nikiforov, who has proposed strengthening Kazakhstan’s and Russia’s joint digitalisation work, spoke about the initiative during the Set. 13 meeting on the topic here. The session was attended by government representatives, who also served as presenters, and President Nursultan Nazarbayev

The two countries need to conduct cooperative research to develop the field, said Nikiforov.

“We need to work together to develop the key technologies that digitise our economies, which can



be technologies for working with large distributed registry data, often called block chain, artificial intelligence, augmented reality, robotics and sensors. It is important to join forces to make these technologies together,” he added.

He noted the need of creating unique technologies to digitalise the nations’ economies rather than copying foreign developments.

“At the beginning of this road the most important thing is political will, which we saw today in Kazakhstan. The President, the Prime Minister and the relevant ministries, practically the whole system of executive power was present at the meeting, which means that there is a solution which is already being implemented,” said Nikiforov.

He noted the importance of creating an infrastructure, which may be one of the main difficulties faced in the digitalisation process.

“We have many settlements

where few people live, which requires serious infrastructure costs to ensure a normal modern communication. Of course, a lot will have to be invested for human capital; there is a need to change the school and university education system, as we must admit that education does not end after getting a diploma at a university. You will have to study throughout your whole career path. Indeed, digitalisation is an economy based on data and knowledge. This is an economy about people. A lot is needed to invest in human capital,” said Nikiforov.

Nazarbayev has asked for revisions to the Digital Kazakhstan programme by the end of this year.

US military doctors train Kazakh peacekeepers

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – The U.S. Defence Institute for Medical Operations (DIMO) organised a three-day training for 35 Kazakh soldiers from the country’s United Nations peacekeeping battalion. The training, held at the Kazakh Ministry of Defence Centre for Military Medicine, was supported by the defence departments of both nations. U.S. experts noted the Kazakh military members met the challenges.

The training occurred in two stages, starting with American colleagues training 12 instructors. The second phase involved them working together to begin training peacekeepers who lack medical education, according to the Kazakhstan Assault Troops press service.

Kazakhstan’s future “blue helmets”, as UN peacekeepers are known due to their distinctive

headgear, studied the theoretical part of the training and practiced

their skills using special simulation equipment. The aim is to im-

prove the fighters’ skills in providing first aid for mass wounds.



The peacekeepers acted in conditions as close as possible to an emergency situation. According to the details of the mini-exercises, 12 people were seriously injured as the result of a head-to-head collision between a minibus and an off-road vehicle. Arriving at the site of the incident, peacekeepers needed to assess the situation and provide first aid to the victims before the arrival of professional medical experts.

The peacekeepers must act according to international standards, using internationally-accepted designations. The wounded are divided into four categories, with all victims marked using a specially-coloured card pinned to their clothes. A green card means light injury; yellow, that medical help may not be urgent. A wounded person with a red card needs medical attention immediately, while black indicates the person is dead.

Training manikins are equipped with sensors. If the service person acts correctly, two green bulbs light; if the medical manipulations

are not performed correctly, they burn red. The simulation equipment has figures of men, women and even babies, since everyone needs first aid in such situations.

The DIMO experts controlled all actions of the Kazakh peacekeepers. U.S. Air Force Medical Cooperation Department chief Alexander Parker said Kazakh service people coped with their tasks.

Service people, trained at the Centre for Military Medicine, will join the Kazakh peacekeeping battalion. The facility will become a regional centre by 2022, where military personnel from Central Asia can upgrade their medical skills.

DIMO is a dual-service agency comprised of U.S. Air Force and Navy personnel committed to providing globally-focused healthcare education and training to partners around the world. It is a small facilitating organisation that offers courses and trainings to bring people of various countries together to help build a common base of understanding among dedicated healthcare professionals.

PEOPLE

American student finds family in Kazakhstan

B2

CULTURE

Astana opera lovers give thunderous applause to La Scala

B3

SPORTS

Kazakhstan beats current champ Argentina to return to Davis Cup World Group

B7

Life after EXPO: What awaits buildings and infrastructure?



By Aigerim Bulambayeva

ASTANA – Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev shared the future plans for the EXPO 2017 site during the event’s Sept. 10 closing ceremony. “Nur Alem and a number of other pavilions will be preserved as expo heritage. The completion of the exhibition will be the foundation for launching several new large-scale projects,” said Nazarbayev. The Astana International Finance Centre (AIFC) is the first in line for development. The centre, which will launch Jan. 1, is expected to become a financial hub for Central Asia, the Caucasus, Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU),

Middle East, West China, Mongolia and Europe. “It must become a financial hub, a centre of attraction for investments and occupy a decent niche in the international financial system,” added Nazarbayev. It will be a centre for the development of Islamic finance and green financing and it will have its own stock exchange. The second largest project to be developed on the expo site is the World Mining Congress (WMC) & Expo 2018. WMC is a unified international platform where achievements will be presented and experiences shared, as well as discussing and adopting innovative technological solutions in the mining and metallurgical industry.

Kazakhstan has been preparing to host WMC since 2013. The nation’s high expectations associated with the event are primarily due to attracting investments, especially within the Mines & Money investment summit, a successful European format platform for B2B meetings. WMC and Mines & Money are expected to attract approximately 300 investors. The industry is capital-intensive, and to date, the prospective area for sub-soil investment purposes is more than 1.1 million square kilometres. The high hopes for the WMC congress, with the theme “Innovational excellence – a step forward to mining growth,” are also related to the Industry 4.0 and technology transfer. Exhibitors will present

the latest developments in mineral extracting automation and processing as well as industry digitalisation. Acquiring scientific developments for practical use is part of the WMC plan. “Thus, the whole EXPO exhibition complex will further serve for innovative and sustainable development purposes. I invite everyone for active cooperation in the work of the new centres,” said Nazarbayev. Other projects planned for the expo site are the Future Energy International Centre for the transfer of green technologies and a Kazakh “Silicon Valley” for IT companies and startups, formally known as the International IT-startup hub.

Nazarbayev, top surgeon discuss development of cardio surgery

Staff Report

President Nursultan Nazarbayev recently discussed the development of cardio surgery in Kazakhstan in a meeting with Chairman of the Board of the National Scientific Cardio-Surgical Centre Yuri Pya. The head of state noted the sig-

nificance of the 27th Congress of the World Association of Cardiovascular and Thoracic Surgeons, where the best cardio surgeons from 50 countries gathered in the capital. Leading specialists conducted master classes using the latest technologies. “The congress of cardiac surgeons from all over the world

gathered for the first time in Kazakhstan. This shows the world recognition of domestic surgery,” the President said. In turn, Pya reported to Nazarbayev about the results of the work of the congress, which was attended by more than a thousand foreign delegates. Pya said the congress has been rec-

ognised as one of the best, according to the assessment of the Executive Committee of the World Association. In conclusion, the head of state wished Yuri Pya success and new achievements in his work. The Densaulyk (Health) programme has made a great impact on the development of Kazakhstan’s cardiac surgical service. In comparison with the early 1990s, when there were only about 500 open-heart operations per year in the country, in 2016 that number has grown to over 12,000. Kazakhstan is on the list of the 30 best countries in terms of the level of cardio surgery.

EXPO 2017 best pavilions awarded as exhibition closes, legacy lives on

By Dmitry Lee

ASTANA – EXPO 2017, Kazakhstan’s biggest and probably most ambitious event, ended Sept. 10. While the average was 22,840 guests daily, slightly more than 100,000 visited on the last day, according to officials. Its legacy and impact will last for years. Nearly 140 scientific inventions in the renewable energy field received exposure thanks to the exhibition. Expo also served as a stimulus for local scientific projects, said Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev in his closing ceremony remarks, addressing 15 heads of state who participated as guests of honour and an audience of 2,200. “More than 1,400 small and medium-sized enterprises received orders for services and goods for \$1.9 billion, while tens of thousands of people got new jobs with worthy wages. The tourism sector of Kazakhstan saw a revitalisation. The demand for tour operators’ services almost doubled during the three months,” he noted.

Continued on Page B6



Much anticipated Golovkin-Alvarez bout ends in controversial draw



Photo credit: Timur Kazangapov

By Anuar Abdrakhmanov

ASTANA – Kazakh boxer Gennady “GGG” Golovkin (37-0, 33 KO) fought Mexican fighter Saul “Canelo” Alvarez (49-1-1, 34 KO) to a controversial draw Sept. 16 at the T-Mobile arena in Las Vegas. The draw is considered controversial by many pundits and fans who have stated publicly that they believe 35-year-old Golovkin won the fight and that the draw resulted from a flawed scoring by one of the ringside judges. The fight was one of the most anticipated of the year and GGG’s WBC, WBA, IBF and IBO championship belts were at stake. Even before the fight, experts called Alvarez the toughest opponent in Golovkin’s career. As the bout showed, the Mexican boxer put up a fight Golovkin had never seen before. As it was expected, the boxers started the fight with probing. By the middle, Golovkin started to reduce the distance. However, the Mexican showed excellent defence skills and made some very dangerous counterattacks. In general, Golovkin had good tactics and tried to dominate the ending of each round. Alvarez showed decent boxing too but kept a lower profile and did not look like a favourite to win. After 12 rounds, the judges declared a draw – 110-118 (for Alvarez), 114-114, and 115-113 (for Golovkin). After the fight, Golovkin voiced his bitter disagreement with the decision and told the media he was ready to consider a rematch. “First of all, I want to thank all my fans, all the Kazakhs who came to America to support me and all

those who watched the fight on TV in Kazakhstan. But... I wanted a “big drama show” tonight, I pressed him in every round, and I controlled the ground. I believe I won. Maybe he took three, maximum four, rounds. I think all the fans understand who is the real champion... The judging tonight was terrible. [118-110?] For what? I saw the computer, all total punches, I saw people’s reaction. This is not correct. This is terrible for sport, for boxing,” said Golovkin. Among many others, the legendary British boxer, former world heavyweight champion Lennox Lewis called the referees’ ruling unfair. “Both fighters can hold their heads high tonight but this fight wasn’t close to a draw! I have GGG as clear winner. These scorecards were ridiculous!” Lewis wrote on Twitter. The pundits, however, quickly began discussing a potential rematch between the boxers to get an answer to the question left unanswered by judges in Las Vegas. “Of course, I want a rematch. I am ready, I want to fight,” Golovkin’s response was to such questions posed to him immediately after the match on the ring. “I think Gennady won the bout. However, I would note that he did not have the mood for a hard blow. Canelo showed that he does not want to intensify it, tried to tire out our boxer. Now the Mexican team can get the best of the situation with the rematch. I think it will definitely take place,” said Vice President of the Kazakhstan Federation of Professional Boxing Viktor Demyanenko.

THINGS TO WATCH & PLACES TO GO

ASTANA OPERA

September 24 at 6 p.m. Russian Classical Music Concert
September 29 at 7 p.m. Chamber Concert

BARYS ARENA

September 25 at 7.30 p.m. HC Barys - SKA Saint Petersburg
September 27 at 7.30 p.m. HC Barys - Lokomotiv Yaroslavl

ASTANA ARENA

September 28 at 9 p.m. FC Astana - SK Slavia Prague

NATIONAL MUSEUM

September 8 – Contemporary Arts and Crafts
November 20 of Kazakhstan, Exhibition
September 15 – October 3 Japanese Design Today, Exhibition

Kazakh girls win Technovation Challenge in Silicon Valley, say will go on inventing

By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – A team of Kazakh girls won the grand prize at the 2017 Technovation World Pitch Summit organised by Google Aug. 10. Girls aged 10-18 from more than 30 countries around the globe competed in 102 teams over the five-day event in Silicon Valley. Only six, including two teams from Kazakhstan, made it to the final.

The teams presented mobile applications they’d developed to address salient issues in fields such as peace, poverty, environment, equality, education and health.

The winning Kazakh team consisted of four girls: Aruzhan Koshkarova, Azhar Sultansikh, Dianna Zhanakbayeva and Diyara Beisenbekova, all from Almaty, who called themselves /flash.

They presented an app called



Photo credit: U.S. Consulate Library

Qamcare, a tracking app addressing the question of safety, a problem relevant to many communities around the world.

“Qamcare comes from the Kazakh word ‘qamqor,’ which means ‘care’ in Kazakh. We developed the app to protect our loved ones,” the girls told The Astana Times.

The young developers started working on the app in December. “We created the app for Technovation Challenge and the main goal was to address a problem in our society. We made an analysis and researched problems such as poverty, suicide, gender inequality, but we decided to stick to

the safety theme,” the girls explained.

Qamcare poster

The problems of disappearance and kidnapping are acute in Kazakhstan, the girls said. In Almaty alone, 3,000 people go missing every year. “Our mentors, Aziza and Aigerim, were telling us about different cases of disappearances, mostly of children, and we were shocked,” the girls said.

Their app requires a registration, after which users add contacts to a list called their Family Circle. An SOS feature is intended to help users walk safely, knowing that with a push of a single button, their close contacts will be immediately notified of their location and that they are in distress.

However, not everyone has a smartphone. The girls tried to address this problem as well.

safe, the girls asserted, highlighting the uniqueness of the app in Kazakhstan. “We conducted a market analysis. There are similar apps, but they are either not offered fully or require an Americal number or card payment. And we wanted safety to be accessible to everyone. Therefore, our app is free of charge,” they said.

The girls say they can see for themselves that women are under-represented in the tech industry, but they believe women will continue to gain ground.

“There are a lot of men in tech, which can be seen from the competitions we take part in. We got third place in one contest, and we were behind two male teams. We believe that the proportion of men and women [in tech] is going to equal soon,” they noted.

In the meantime, Aruzhan, Azhara, Diyara and Diana are looking to the future with ambitious plans. Azhara and Diana graduated from high school this year and are now busy preparing for university.

Diyara has two years left at the Nazarbayev Intellectual School, but she already knows she wants to study chemistry, while Aruzhan is interested in math and physics.

UN Rapporteur praises Kazakh commitment to persons with disabilities, notes areas for improvement

By Almasbek Zhumadilov

ASTANA – Kazakhstan has demonstrated a commitment to advancing the rights of persons with disabilities, but has not yet reached international standards in some areas, said UN Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities Catalina Devandas at the conclusion of a recent visit to Kazakhstan.

Devandas said Kazakhstan’s steps to reform the social pro-



Catalina Devandas

tection system, ensure universal healthcare and improve accessibility for persons with disabilities demonstrates its commitment to those with disabilities.

Devandas also said more efforts are needed to fully integrate people with disabilities into society, including in such areas as education, legal capacity and political participation.

Devandas also urged the government to bring the national legislation in compliance with international human rights standards,

particularly in the field of legal capacity.

“Today, people deprived of the status of legal capacity cannot take part in elections, and are also at risk of being irreversibly deprived of their reproductive rights through sterilisation,” said Devandas.

She pointed out that some provisions of the law governing forced placement in a psychiatric institution or placement in a long-term medical and social institution, as well as coercion of people with

a disability to undergo medical treatment without their consent, are contrary to the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

The UN Rapporteur praised Astana’s openness to a constructive dialogue and further work on mitigating the remaining issues. She also underscored the importance of the government’s initial efforts to reduce the population size of medical institutions through various pilot projects implemented by nongovernmental organisations.

Pilot projects are also being implemented to ensure inclusive education, and Devandas stressed the need to expand their scope.

Devandas added that associations of persons with disabilities play an important role in informing the reform process and in monitoring the country’s compliance with the convention.

The Special Reporter’s findings and recommendations will be presented March 2018 at the 37th session of the UN Human Rights Council. Devandas visited Kazakhstan at the standing invitation of the Kazakh Foreign Ministry, which was extended to all UN Special Rapporteurs back in 2009.

American student finds family in Kazakhstan



Vera Swanson with her great-uncles.

By Zhazira Dyussebekova

ASTANA – Vera Swanson was one of the 40 student ambassadors who worked at the United States Pavilion at EXPO 2017. Two years ago, she learned Kazakhstan was not only the destination for her Russian language studies, but also the place where her grandfather was born. Through her summer experience, she reunited with her relatives in Taraz and now has a big family in Central Asia.

“I attended college at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, where I studied environmental science and Russian. In summer 2015, I had the opportunity to come to Kazakhstan and study Russian. Before coming, my mom shared with me that we have relatives there who I absolutely needed to meet,” said Swanson in an interview with The Astana Times.

Her mother was born and raised in the Caucasus, in Northern Os-

setia, and her father was born and raised in Minnesota. Her mother’s parents, however, are from Taraz, Kazakhstan. During Soviet times, her grandfather moved to Almaty to study at the Mining Institute and was then sent to the Caucasus to work as an engineer. He ultimately settled in the region.

Vera, a Russian name meaning “faith,” was also her grandmother’s name.

“My mother grew up in the Caucasus but later moved to Moscow for graduate studies. She then studied in the United States under the Fulbright program. She now works as virologist at the Mayo Clinic. The last time she was in Kazakhstan was around 40 years ago,” she said.

In 2015, Swanson came to Almaty to study in the philology department at Kazakh National University. Later, she travelled to Taraz with her aunt (her mother’s cousin), who lives in Moscow and grew up in Merke, a city near Taraz.

Swanson discovered her grandfather was one of four brothers, one of whom was the chief physician at the regional hospital where his memorial plaque is displayed. A second brother worked as a chief builder in Taraz. Unfortunately, only two of the men are still living. Her grandfather is buried in Vladikavkaz; his brother, in Taraz.

The reunion was very sentimental, said Swanson.

“I was very emotional because I could now connect faces to the names and stories I heard growing up. Having gained and developed the language skills I did, I am now able to converse freely with my relatives or read books from their libraries. I visited my relatives in Taraz for New Year’s this year with my mom and uncle and remember making shashlik together and joking around. Being able to understand those interactions and connect on a deeper level was very special,” she said.

Swanson has relatives living

in Taraz, Karaganda, Almaty and the capital.

“I feel like I have more relatives in Kazakhstan than I do in the States,” she added.

Swanson, whose interest in Russian began several years ago, speaks the language fluently.

“I thought it was important for me to study my mother’s native language. I started taking classes in college. My university has a wonderful Russian flagship centre, which is an initiative of the government for students to study critical languages. The study abroad component of the program often sends students to Almaty,” she said.

Swanson first visited Kazakhstan in summer 2015, returned last August 2016 and studied for an academic year until May 2017. She then went home for a few days before returning to work at the expo. In Almaty, she stayed with Kazakh families, with whom she keeps in touch and has only wonderful memories.

“One time we went to the Barakholka Market to eat the best shashlik. I remember my family recognising Oraz and fasting that first summer I came. We would have dinner very late. My host mom’s mom would always visit and I’d call her ‘apashka,’” she said, smiling and using the Kazakh word “apa” (grandmother) in a diminutively affectionate way.

After almost a year in Almaty, Swanson was selected to be one of the United States Pavilion’s student ambassadors at expo.

“What makes our pavilion special – we have 40 students, recent graduates, all from different states, working here and interacting with the local Kazakh citizens. Our job is to greet people in their native language. All of us know Russian and we are learning Kazakh to explain a little about ourselves and, if they have questions, explain what life is like for us. Because oftentimes through the media, people have a different view of a place. We were there to

give a face to our country, to provide conversation,” she said.

During her stay in Kazakhstan she has visited Turkestan, Shymkent, Aktau, Mangystau region, Karaganda and Ust-Kamenogorsk, as well as Charyn Canyon, Kolsai Lakes, Borovoe and many other sights.

“I think it is a wonderfully warm country with some of the best landscapes I have ever seen – mountains to steppes to canyons. It is a very diverse place; it has something to offer everybody. The warmth of the people and diversity of the nation are what makes this place really special,

and I hope many people can discover it,” she said.

“I feel like Central Asia often gets overlooked by many people. Whenever I share with others where I am going or where I am studying, I always have to come with the map and point – ‘I’m here.’ And they react by saying, “that’s huge!” They know Mongolia, but they don’t know Kazakhstan. I hope that by going back to the States I can bring the stories and the pictures of this place. Kazakhstan is already on the map, but I want to make sure it is a recognised place,” she added.



Vera Swanson’s grandparents Gennady and Vera.

CULTURE

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 20, 2017

Astana opera lovers give thunderous applause to La Scala

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – For more than 200 years, La Scala, the prestigious Italian theatre, has brought its musical pleasures to various corners of the world, delighting fans at every stop. The first Kazakh tour of the famous Milanese orchestra and chorus, held Sept. 1-9 at the Astana Opera, was dedicated to EXPO 2017.

The capital's premiere of Giuseppe Verdi's comic opera "Falstaff," presented Sept. 1, 4, 6 and 8, was a sensation. As the organisers promised, residents and guests were treated to an emotional experience.

Stage Director Damiano Michieletto noted the composer created a work unlike any other written throughout his life.

"There are no arias and choruses. The opera is completely different. As for me, it was a life lesson: you can never stop in search of a new one. Verdi found new ways of solving problems; hence, all of us should strive for something more! Come listen to the opera and see for yourself," he said.

Dreams and reality, past and present are intertwined in a fascinating production which combines various styles and eras. The touch-



ing and unpredictable story of Sir John Falstaff's adventures is a fa-

vourite of listeners throughout the world.

Falstaff is an aging singer dealing with the last temptations and

illusions of love and the story is filled with escapades, tricks and

antics. The production creates a connection between Verdi's last opera and his charity, underlining a common atmosphere of melancholy and the composer's profound humanism.

Charismatic Ambrogio Maestri is considered to be the role's most celebrated baritone. His debut in 2001 and more than 250 subsequent performances have been applauded at nearly 30 of the world's most famous venues.

The artists performed under the leadership of Maestro Zubin Mehta with choirmaster Maestro Bruno Casoni. The tour was made possible thanks to the Kazakh Ministry of Culture and Sports and Eni, an Italian energy company working in the country since 1992.

Established in 1778, Teatro alla Scala is one of Italy's most important cultural institutions and the world's most notable opera houses. Many operas by the most prominent Italian composers of the 19th and 20th century premiered there, including "Falstaff," first presented in 1893.

Despite Milan's rich opera and ballet season, the theatre regularly performs in all the top international venues, accomplishing its mission to promote Italian culture and musical heritage. La Scala has realised more than 800 performances in 39 countries.

Kazakh TV unveils fascinating new season

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – Kazakh TV is an image-building, nation's leading educational channel about the dynamically developing Kazakhstan,



Aikumys Seksenbayeva

its investment and tourist potential, global initiatives and cultural and historic heritage. The network recently launched the fall season with 15 new shows demonstrating the unique local flavour of national cuisine and the history of ancient Kypchaks, Turks and Guns and promoting domestic singers abroad.

The channel is broadcast nationally and in 118 countries internationally in Kazakh, Russian and English. Kazakh TV content is generally defined in six main categories – global economy and international relations, nature and tourism, history, heritage and traditions, culture, art and people and outstanding persons.

"We have been actively preparing for the new autumn TV season and planned the premiere of 15 new TV shows. Our channel is widely known among viewers thanks to tourism projects, so we could not get around this topic. We present Invite Me, Culinary Tour and Tugan Olke. These shows will feature the remote corners of our vast country through the history of people and their nature, thereby encouraging viewers to travel around the country, opening it from a new, unexplored side," said Kazakh TV General Producer Aikumys Seksenbayeva.

"We are launching a very interesting culinary project called Culinary Tour. Together with Konstantin Druzhinin, the host of the show, the audience will travel around Kazakhstan. Studying the unique local flavour of national cuisine and using the most popular products, the presenter will be

cooking outdoors in nature. For example, in such regions as Aktau and Balkhash, where fresh fish in local cuisine is very popular, the presenter will reveal the secrets of preparing fishbarmak and koktal according to local recipes. That is, in each region residents keep their own secrets of cooking the most popular dishes, and we will tell you about them," she added.

Australian traveller Robert Boyd, the host of Invite Me, will get acquainted with unique personalities and their families who are engaged in unusual businesses and contribute to developing their native land. The heroes are engaged in beekeeping, farming, tailoring and even famous stunt director Zhaidarbek Kulguzhinov, noted the host.

Cultural and historic shows have a special place on the channel. The premiere of the Kui (stories told by music) cycle will bring together the sound of the best kuis of popular composers such as Kurmangazy Sagyrbaiuly, Tattimbet Qazangapuly, Dina Nurpeissova, Kali Zhanleuova and many other traditional musicians. The main goal is to acquaint viewers with national music in all its diversity, volume and significance.

"I would also like to mention the project Following the Ancestors' Traces, which was made based on the results of the expedition of the research group led by Sapar Isakov, who visited 65 countries studying the migration of ancient Kypchaks, Turks and Guns. The project, called Treasure of the Nation, is devoted to the study of the directions of the ancient Silk Road in the territory of Kazakhstan and neighbouring countries," said Seksenbayeva.

"We hope the younger generation of our viewers appreciates the uniqueness of the projects Quest.kz and Hot Q, which are promoting domestic performers abroad and popularising their creativity. The modern Kazakhstan music industry is not a fake interest of an international audience and can compete in the world music business. We see this from the experience of Dimash Kudaibergenov and Ninety-One group. All of them can become bright ambassadors of modern Kazakh culture outside the country and we really want to contribute," she added.

All the programmes are available at www.kazakh-tv.kz and on social networks. Use hashtag #kazakhtv to find the new shows.

KitapFest book festival held in Almaty

By Frol Leandroer

ASTANA – For the fourth consecutive year, KitapFest, organised by the Bauyrzhan Charity Foundation and Eurasian Franchise Association with support from the akimat, was held in Almaty on the square in front of the National Academy of Sciences.

The event, with the main goal to popularise reading, hosted a large book exchange, meetings and master classes with Kazakh writers, contests and events, a poetry reading and fair from Kazakhstan's largest publishing houses and

bookstores. Readers met not only with the authors of popular books, but also with famous Internet personalities.

As the organisers noted, Kazakhstan's National State Book Chamber has registered only 235 books this year, a small number for the country. To help increase that figure, Bauyrzhan Foundation social projects coordinator Maira Alzhanova feels modern Kazakh writers need to develop marketing skills to promote their work.

"Bayan Yessentayeva's book sales exceeded 20,000 copies, which is a breakthrough. This

shows what people are interested in. This shows that what our writers present is not interesting for readers. We need to develop the market," she said.

Venues like KitapFest allow readers to meet directly with writers, providing an opportunity to expand the audience of Kazakh literature.

"The main mission of the festival is to cultivate reading, and we are giving away 4,000 books free of charge. Many visitors who came were surprised at the amount of Kazakh literature that they did not know before. We have also conducted a mini-poll to find out what

is interesting for Kazakh readers; for example, the book that people would have taken with them to a deserted island," said the organisers.

KitapFest, held for the first time in August 2014, proved its status as the most interesting and large-scale book festival in the country, gathering more than 3,000 visitors of different ages and professions. The festival offered guests a range of emotions and surprises: a corridor of books, meetings with Kazakh writers, lectures and seminars, contests and gifts, and, of course, thousands of books.



Films in memory of Nelson Mandela shown in Astana

By Frol Leandroer

ASTANA – The South African Embassy in Kazakhstan with the support of Kinopark 8 IMAX Sar'yarka (Kazakhstan), Videovision Entertainment (South Africa) and the South African Honorary Consulate in Almaty presented free screenings Sept. 8-9 of the South African films "Mandela: Long Walk to Freedom" and "More than Just a Game" in memory of late South African President Nelson Mandela.

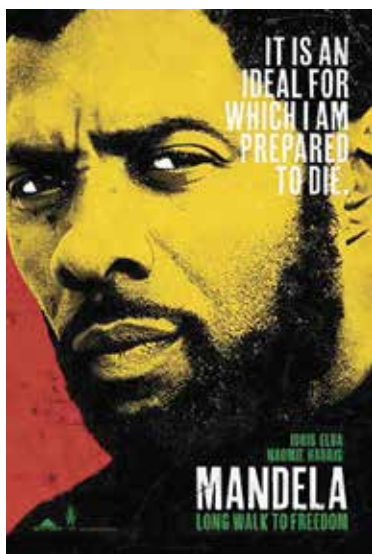
"Mandela: Long Walk to Freedom" is a 2013 British-South African biographical film directed by Justin Chadwick from a script written by William Nicholson and starring Idris Elba and Naomie Harris.

The film is based on the 1995 autobiographical book "Long Walk to Freedom" written by anti-apartheid revolutionary and former South African President. The film illustrates Mandela's early life, coming of age, education and 27 years in prison before becoming president and working to

rebuild the country's once segregated society.

"More than Just a Game" is a 2007 semi-documentary film directed by Junaid Ahmed. The film shows how political prisoners on Robben Island in South Africa founded the Makana Football Association in 1966.

The screenings were presented with the support of the South African Honorary Consul Nurlan Abdulov. South African Minister of Science and Technology Naledi Pandor also attended.



Burial of Eneolithic era man discovered in East Kazakhstan

By Dana Omirgazy

ASTANA – The burial of a man, representing the Afanasevo culture of the Eneolithic era was discovered near the village of Karatal in the Zaisan district, the Kazinform news agency reports, citing the press service of the East Kazakhstan region akimat (administration).

According to head of archaeological excavations Abdesh Toleubayev, the unique artefacts found during excavations surprised scientists and archaeologists. It turned out that the territory of East Kazakhstan had a settlement of the Afanasevo culture in the third and second millennium BC.

“Previously, there were doubts that our ancestors of the Afanasevo culture period lived in the East Kazakhstan region. But now, obvious evidence is found,” Akim (Governor) of East Ka-



zakhstan region Daniyal Akhmetov said.

The head of the region allocated approximately 300 million tenge (US\$889,200) for the continuation of archaeological research. A sarcophagus will be built on the burial place.

Archaeological excavations are carried out within the framework of a three-year plan for the development of scientific research in archaeology. Today, a large-scale programme named Ruhani Zhangyru (Modernisation of Kazakhstan’s Identity) is continuing

across the country and in the East Kazakhstan region. It includes several dozens of projects, which are based on the diversity of the region’s cultures. Sacred geographical places are among the priority developments. As Akhmetov noted, the country has something to tell the present and future generations.

Afanasevo culture is the southern Siberian archaeological culture that spanned the late Eneolithic and the early Bronze Ages. The name of the culture was generated from the Afanasevo Mountain (near the village of Bateni in the Bograd region of Russia’s Khakassia region), where the first burial ground of this culture was unveiled in 1920. In addition to the main district – Altai and Khakass-Minusinsk Hollow, – the area of monuments includes the eastern Zhangyru (Modernisation of Kazakhstan, Western Mongolia and Chinese Xinjiang.

Nurly Zher programme introduces first housing in Aktoobe



Photo credit: forbes.kz

By Dana Omirgazy

ASTANA – The first housing constructed under the Nurly Zher programme was commissioned in Aktoobe, reported forbes.kz.

Regional Akim (Governor) Berdibek Saparbayev, Aktoobe Akim (Mayor) Ilyas Ispanov, House Construction Savings Bank (HCSB) chair Lyazzat Ibragimova, Damu Entrepreneurship Development Fund chair Abai Sarkulov, Sberbank chair Alexander Kamalov and Sollers Construction Director Andrey Storozhev took part in the ceremony.

Sberbank financed construction of the multi-storey house, a 502 million tenge (US\$1.47 million) project. A three-year, 400-million tenge (US\$1.17 million) line of credit was issued to Sollers, which invested 102 million tenge (US\$300,288) of its own funds.

tion sector and the mortgage lending market have begun showing positive dynamics. We, for our part, will continue to participate in the programme and in the near future we plan to finance developers in Kyzylorda and Uralsk,” he added.

Ibragimova talked about the scope of the project.

“The programme provides for many directions designed to improve the living conditions of our citizens. One of them is the stimulation of housing construction by private developers. Today, the first house was commissioned within the framework of this direction and the bank depositors are among the new settlers. We will hear such positive news more than once. The bank plans to introduce more than 12,000 apartments and about 350 private houses by the end of the year,” she said.

Sarkulov noted the housing

“The programme provides for many directions designed to improve the living conditions of our citizens. One of them is the stimulation of housing construction by private developers.”

Sberbank, HCSB and Sollers agreed to sell 50 percent of the apartments to HCSB depositors. The 27 apartments will be provided to them at a fixed price of 140,000 tenge (US\$413) per square metre. According to the document, the developer can sell the remaining units independently or offer them to HCSB clients.

Sollers received a 14-percent per annum interest rate subsidy under the Nurly Zher programme, 7 percent of which is subsidised by the Damu fund. The total area of the residential complex is 3,115 square metres.

“This project is an excellent example of effective cooperation between business, government agencies and banks,” said Kamalov.

“Thanks to the state programme, the housing construc-

programme is not the first backed by the fund.

“To date, the Damu fund has already subsidised two developers. These are Sollers and Altyn Shar West from Astana. Thus, we expect the commissioning of another residential complex of 20,000 square metres in Astana in the near future. Altyn Shar is located near the EXPO 2017 pavilions. The complex will feature children’s and sports grounds, comfortable sidewalks and driveways, covered parking and commercial and office premises. Now there are 24 more developers’ projects in the second-tier banks, of which five have already been approved. Interest of developers in the Nurly Zher programme is visible, which, of course, will have a positive impact on the final cost of housing,” he said.

Electric car charging stations launch in Astana and Almaty

Staff Report

ASTANA – Construction of electric car charging stations under the pilot project has been completed with the active support of the Almaty and capital administrations and private investments.

The Ministry of Energy will be increasing construction of up to 100 charging stations and corresponding infrastructure in both cities by the end of the year. The ministry plans to build another 20 stations with instant charging systems (up to 30 minutes) along the Astana-Almaty roadway.

The first charging stations in the capital were installed at Nursultan Nazarbayev International Airport and Nurly Zhol railway station. In Almaty, the station was constructed in the central part of the city.

The new charging stations comply with all international standards and are capable of charging all available brands and models of electric vehicles. The charger combines all existing charging modes with alternating current. Four vehicles can be charged at one station at the same time, as the capacity of each station is 51

kW, and the process requires one-four hours.

For safety, the stations provide differential protection against current leakage and emergency power off, as well as current sensors for automatic power off when the charging process is complete.

More than 200 electric vehicles are presently on Kazakh roads. While they are designed primarily for movement within the city, an increased network of fast-charging stations will accommodate longer trips of several hundred kilometres. There are also plans to develop electric vehicles domestically and pilot production has already been tested in Kostanai.

The research group carried out electric car tests to determine the possibility of their operation in the Kazakh climate and learn more about the country’s necessary infrastructure conditions. The research is continuing in an effort to reduce the cost of electric vehicles for local customers. Scholars feel one of the best approaches for increasing the advantages of electric cars as a fast and environmentally-friendly type of motor transport will be developing a charging station network and corresponding infrastructure.



Photo credit: kazpravda.kz

700,000 South Kazakhstan inhabitants to be provided with drinking water

By Frol Leandroer

ASTANA – Forty moraine lakes have been identified in the highland areas of the South Kazakhstan region which, due to their melting and the Ugam River, are expected to provide drinking water to 700,000 people living in the Kazygurt, Maktaaral and Saryagash districts. The assessment was made at an altitude of 3,340-3,500 metres through an aero-visual survey of moraine lakes and rivers in the Ugam range of the Aksu Mountains, said South Kazakhstan Akim (Governor) Zhanseit Tuimabayev.

Preliminary negotiations with Uzbekistan were held as well and agreements on the joint use of water were reached,” he noted. “From a scientific point of view, there is a need to correctly plan this project aimed at supplying drinking water.”

A helicopter with Tuimabayev aboard flew around Badam Lake and the mountainous areas of the Tolebi and Tulkubas districts, allowing him to monitor the moraine lakes. He also chaired a meeting with Uzbek representatives at a high-altitude lake to discuss issues related to flood water prevention, constructing additional small water reservoirs and efficient use of the Ugam River waters.

Regional emergency situations department head Nurbolat Derbisov elaborated on measures taken to prevent floods.

“Protective dams are installed in the territory of rivers and lakes in the region, the length of which is 86.95 km. Their security is under strictly control,” he said.

South Kazakhstan Kazselezhachita department head Yerbol Alzak spoke about the current state of moraine lakes in mountainous areas.

“This year, one aero-visual and four ground-based research works were carried out in the territory of the South Kazakhstan region in the Karzhantau, Ugam and Maidantal mountain ranges. Based on the results of the studies, the moraine lakes of the mountainous areas were found not to be dangerous,” he said.

Thirty-two million tenge (US\$95,412) was allocated from the regional budget this year for aero-visual work, 19 million (US\$56,651) of which has been disbursed to date.

During the meeting, Tuimabayev provided instructions to the heads of the relevant departments on floodwater prevention and control on the current state of rivers, lakes and glacial lakes in the foothills. He asked them to keep the issues of supplying drinking water from Ugam River to the three districts under strict control.

“Every year in the spring time there is a threat of flooding in our region. In this regard, we are planning the construction of 30 small reservoirs next year. In addition, we use the water of the Ugam River for drinking water,” he said.

“There is also a need to build a hydroelectric power station in the riverbed and conduct water pipes from the tops of the mountains. At the same time, I instruct scientists and specialists in this field to carry out thorough work, as well as to implement the construction of this project in a high-quality and efficient manner,” he added.

Harvest campaign shows positive results

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – Prime Minister Bakytzhan Sagintayev reviewed the nation’s harvesting progress Sept. 12, noting the quantity of Kazakh grain has increased this year. The gross grain harvest is expected to exceed 19.5 million tonnes, which will raise the country’s export potential to eight million tonnes.

Harvesting operations are currently underway in all regions, said First Vice Minister of Agriculture Kairat Aituganov. As of the report date, 11.6 million hectares have been harvested and 14.7 million tonnes of grain have been cropped with an average yield of 12.6 cent-

ners per hectare. The harvesting speed exceeds the last year’s level by 2.5 million hectares, or 16 percent.

Approximately 76.7 percent of all crops have been harvested in the three main grain producing regions. The Kostanai region has collected 3.8 million tonnes; Akmola, 3.5 million tonnes and North Kazakhstan, 3.3 million tonnes.

The harvest is complete in the South Kazakhstan, Zhambyl and West Kazakhstan regions, where farmers collected 1.4 million tonnes. The yield is 3.5 percent more than last year.

Barley harvesting has nearly concluded; 1.8 million hectares, or 86 percent of the area, have been

reaped and 2.7 million tonnes of crop collected. Kazakh farmers have harvested about 24 percent of oilseeds areas, exceeding the 2016 level by 10 percent. Close to 1.2 million tonnes have been threshed. Vegetable crops are still being gathered in the Almaty, Zhambyl and South Kazakhstan regions. To date, 76 percent of the areas have been harvested and 3.1 million tonnes of vegetables collected, a 13-percent hike over last year.

The government supports farmers during harvesting, providing a discount on the necessary diesel fuel and organising reception points for crops throughout the state. The reception points are ready, according to the Ministry of Agriculture press service.

Kazakhstan has introduced a new methodology for determining and assigning granary ratings. Be-

ginning this year, Food Corporation will stop working with grain-receiving enterprises that have an unreliable rating.

To improve the quality of this year’s grain, measures have been taken to support seed production

and the use of mineral fertilisers. As a result, this year’s share of third-class grain is 76 percent compared to last year’s 44 percent. Grain containing more than 25 points has reached 47 percent in contrast to 9 percent in 2016.



Photo credit: kazakh-cerno.kz

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 20, 2017

After competition, Almaty awards best landscapers

Staff Report

ASTANA – One hundred landscapers of Almaty took part in the recent competition for the title of the best, held by the Chisto po-Almatinsky (Clean as in Almaty) fund with the support of the Efes Kazakhstan company.

The competition lasted four months. All of the city’s condominiums applied for participation in the competition and then local residents voted for the best worker. Thirty people reached the final stage. Secret visitors checked the yards that they tend to figure out whether it was clean in the yard, whether the children’s playgrounds were cleaned and whether the paths to the entrances were swept.

The results of the competition were announced on the Family

Day. Kassymzhan Mametbakiyev was named the best yard keeper of Almaty. He is 56 years old. Over the last 41 years, he has been working as a landscaper. Residents of the micro district, where he works, have already nominated him three times to participate in the contest. Twice the man was among the top three winners and this year he finally became the best. Among the winners of the competition, there was a woman. Tatyana Khramova is a novice in the profession. Her work experience is just over a year. However, Almaty residents noticed the tenacity, diligence, honesty and responsiveness of Khramova and she received a well-deserved award.

Six landscapers were awarded with money prizes. The competition’s prize fund was 650,000 tenge (US\$1,914). The Efes Ka-

zakhstan has been supporting the contest for five years.

“We are a socially responsible company and pay a great attention to environmental issues. The city’s cleanliness is directly linked to the environmental situation. On the initiative of Almaty akimat (city administration), we initiated the competition five years ago, and we were pleased with the results. We believe that the competition is very fair and has a deep social character, because, in comparison with the salary that yard keepers receive, we present very substantial prizes,” Corporate Relations Department Director of Efes Kazakhstan Chingiz Kaskeyev said.

At the beginning of the year, the social project received the Ecology nomination at the Best in CSR contest in the area of corporate social responsibility and sustainable development in the CIS.



Kassymzhan Mametbakiyev

Modernising Kazakhstan’s identity in globalised world discussed in Astana

By Aigerim Bulambayeva

ASTANA – The Institute for Eurasian Integration held its second international conference in the capital Sept. 15 within a series of meetings on “Modernisation 3.0: Modernisation of Kazakhstan’s identity.” The conference included two sessions – “Modern Kazakhstan culture in the global world” and “Modernisation 3.0: social and political trends.”

Aida Balayeva, the President’s Executive Office domestic policy

department head, welcomed the participants as she discussed the modern Kazakh culture project.

“National Kazakh culture must not be limited by geographic borders and remain within the nation. Its objective is to enter the global scene and become a part of the universal cultural fund,” she said.

Balayeva stressed the importance of not only preserving the national culture, but also promoting it abroad. She noted switching to the Latin alphabet is a crucial step in reaching that goal.

The modern national culture so-

called “golden fund,” a selection of best works in literature, cinema, music and the arts, was systemised through the project. It is planned that works of literature will be translated into six official UN languages.

“This is an enormous number of achievements which deserve to be presented to the world. The project will become a facet that will enable our culture to shine in a new light,” said Balayeva.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs international information committee chair Talgat Zhumagulov present-

ed the results of the overseas study on successful cultural promotion

as creating virtual tours to museums and galleries via free online platforms; supporting young talents and partnering at international book festivals, including supplying Kazakh books to the events.

Ministry of Culture and Sports culture and arts department director Almaz Nurazkhan listed Kazakhstan’s cultural achievements

and discussed their presentation abroad.

“The most important asset is our creative youth,” he said.

Nurazkhan mentioned popular

Kazakh artists, like Alan Buribayev, Dimash Kudaibergen and Mariya Mudryak, whose performances are met with ovations around the world. He added the national operas “Kyz Zhibek” and “Birzhan Sara” are expected to be translated into the languages of the countries where they will be performed.

“Integration of our culture into the globalised world is our main objective,” he noted.

Other speakers, such as culturologist Zira Nauryzbayeva and producer Karlygash Alzhiyeva, named the existing issues that must be addressed for successful cultural modernisation to occur.

Nauryzbayeva stressed the importance of a free market approach to book publications and the need to implement it, while Alzhiyeva identified art specialists’ brain drain as a hindrance.

The modern national culture so-called “golden fund,” a selection of best works in literature, cinema, music and the arts, was systemised through the project.

Kazakhstan to have 36 new schools in 2018

By Aigerim Bulambayeva

ASTANA – Kazakhstan will unveil 36 schools next year, Kazakh Vice Minister of Education and Science Bibigul Assylova announced at a Sept. 11 Mazhilis (lower house of Parliament) meeting. The meeting addressed the elimination of three-shift education, schools in disrepair and overcrowding at preschools.

“Twelve schools in disrepair will be substituted by new schools. In 2018, 36 schools will be opened, and the construction of all those schools began this year,” said Assylova.

“In 2015 and 2016, 35 schools

were opened in the country, which enabled elimination of three-shift education in 27 schools and disrepair in five schools,” added the official.

Assylova also noted that the amount of the funds from the National Fund allocated to resolve the problem of three-shift education was 72 billion tenge (US\$212.8 million) this year and 112 schools, including 56 new ones, are under construction.

The plan of the akimats (regional and city administrations) envisions 76 schools to be put into operation by the end of the year, including 52 schools that have been commissioned as of Sept. 1.

“Three-shift education was eliminated in 42 schools in seven regions and nine schools in disrepair were substituted in five regions,” added Assylova.

Space will be created for approximately 45,000 additional students, said the vice minister, which will enable the elimination of the three-shift education in 63 schools.

Earlier, in his annual state-of-the-nation address, President Nursultan Nazarbayev set three tasks in the sphere of education until 2020 – eliminating three-shift education, addressing schools in disrepair and providing children aged 3-6 years with kindergartens.





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A. Baigarin
Kazakhstan Deputy Prime Minister

Scott Davis
Chevron Kazakhstan Managing Director

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NATION&CAPITAL

EXPO 2017

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 20, 2017

Italy celebrated national day as exhibition neared its end

By Zhazira Dyussembekova

ASTANA – The Italian pavilion celebrated National Day at EXPO 2017 Sept. 4 with a performance by the Nello Salza Ensemble and the famous trumpeter for whom the group is named. The event opened by raising the flags and performing the national anthems of Italy and Kazakhstan.

“Italy rightfully occupies an important place in the foreign policy of Kazakhstan, being one of the most active economic partners among European countries. This is evidenced by the presence of a number of large Italian companies and the dynamic development of trade and economic cooperation. I would like to note the fruitful work of the Kazakh-Italian intergovernmental working group on industrial economic cooperation, which strengthens the partnership relations between the two countries,” said Kazakh Vice Minister of National Economy Aibatyr Zhumagulov during the official part of the event.

He noted trade between Kazakhstan and Italy for the first half of this year was \$4.8 billion,



a 39-percent increase compared to 2016.

Italian Ministry of Economic Development Undersecretary Ivan Scalfarotto noted the expo will give impetus to developing his na-

tion’s renewable energy sector in cooperation with other countries, including Kazakhstan.

“Indeed, there is a great similarity between the themes of the exhibitions – EXPO Milan 2015

and EXPO Astana 2017. Both exhibitions call for finding difficult solutions to global problems, since the deficit, shortage of food and energy resources are always topical issues at any time for hu-

manity. Therefore, for the future prosperity and for our generations, we must come up with new ways of solving difficult problems,” he said.

The opening ceremony was followed by Salza performing with the capital’s Philharmonic Chamber Choir. He began his career as first trumpet of the San Carlo Theatre in Naples, then with the Opera Theatre in Rome. Salza has travelled to five continents with the Academy of Santa Cecilia Orchestra and soloists Andrea Bocelli, Jose Carreras, Placido Domingo and Katia Ricciarelli.

Known as “The Trumpet of the Italian Cinema, Salza has performed popular scores in films such as “Once upon a Time in America” directed by Sergio Leone, “The Untouchables” by Brian De Palma, “The Legend of 1900” and “Cinema Paradiso” by Giuseppe Tornatore, “Life is Beautiful” by Roberto Benigni and the recent “The Hateful Eight” by Quentin Tarantino. The last featured the 2016 Oscar winning best original score by Ennio Morricone.

National Day is an important celebration, with more than 400

people visiting the venue, said Italian Pavilion General Manager Valentina Pomatico. She was pleased with the turnout.

“We are happy, we are satisfied – I think we had big success,” she said.

“Milano was an international exhibition, while the one is Astana is the specialised one in the middle between Milano and Dubai. The Kazakhstan one is strategic. Italy decided to participate in this. It is different from Milan, but I think it was very successful. The Kazakh side did a very good job,” she added.

The pavilion features 15 of Italy’s 20 regions presenting relevant achievements in green energy and using the platform to develop business and cultural events, said Italian Ambassador to Kazakhstan and EXPO 2017 commissioner Stefano Ravagnan. The pavilion has also hosted important events in the space and transport industries. He noted the nation succeeded in finding prospects in green economy, as Italian company Bionet SRL signed a memorandum with Kazakh Invest in July to construct a plant in the capital.

EXPO 2017 manifesto lays out environmental calls to action

By Dmitry Lee

ASTANA – The Manifesto of Values and Principles, presented Sept. 5 during the EXPO 2017 Future Energy Forum (FEF) at the capital’s Congress Centre, addresses global environmental issues and calls for action.

The manifesto is the concept combining project papers and proposals voiced during the exhibition, according to steering committee head Dr. Rajendra Pachauri. “The manifesto is the product of the group of experts who constitute the steering committee and the result of various conferences with fine speakers. Now, it’s our offering to the government of Kazakhstan and it is up to them whether to accept what’s been proposed by the manifesto,” he said during a press conference.

Pachauri is the chief mentor of

the Protect Our Planet Movement and president of the World Sustainable Development Forum.

“The implementation, I think, will have to be done by the expo’s host country. It is to their glory and credit that there will be a legacy of the exhibition, so we expect that there will be an effort on the part of the leadership of this country to see that the legacy of the expo becomes a reality,” he added.

The document is designed to tackle current global climate issues and help promote alternative energy across the world. It covers key global issues such as transformation to higher efficiency levels, transition to low carbon and zero carbon energy sources, energy for an urbanised world and a call for international cooperation.

During the FEF, experts stressed 50 percent of Kazakhstan’s electricity supply will be generated by renewables by 2050.

According to steering committee members, the manifesto’s project papers are aimed at becoming the road map to spread the most thought-provoking ideas and projects showcased during the expo.

“The manifesto is the result of the brainstorm sessions that have taken place during the three months of the exhibition,” said Dr. Kanat Baigarin, vice president for innovation and research at Nazarbayev University and a member of the steering committee.

The project papers include topics and proposals such as a global future energy institute, post-expo green fund for a sustainable future (a project of the Astana International Financial Centre), access to energy for all including off-grid solutions for rural areas, values and principles for a new GDP standard and solar power to Kazakhstan’s high-profile municipal buildings.

Russia celebrates national day with cultural programme

By Dana Omirgazy

ASTANA – Russia celebrated its National Day at EXPO 2017 Sept. 8 with Kazakh First Deputy Prime Minister Askar Mamin and Russian Vice Prime Minister Arkady Dvorkovich leading Russia’s delegation and ambassadors and exhibition visitors joining the official ceremony.

“The Russian pavilion demonstrates the powerful energy potential and technological capabilities of the country. Russia is an important trade and economic partner for Kazakhstan in the world. For the third consecutive year, Russia is Kazakhstan’s largest trading partner. According to the results of the first half of this year, the trade turnover increased to \$7.4 billion, which is 34 percent more than in the same period last year,” said Mamin.

He noted Kazakh-Russian relations have become a model not only for the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) countries, but also an example of how bilateral relations between nations should develop in the 21st century.

“It is important that the first expo in the CIS region is hosted

by Kazakhstan, with which we enjoy a friendship and strategic partnership. It is always nice to visit Astana, the city that was at the origin of the Eurasian integration project,” he added.

Dvorkovich thanked Kazakhstan for creating comfortable conditions at the exhibition, indicating Russia submitted a bid to host EXPO 2025. He hoped his colleagues, partners and friends would support his country’s candidacy.

“There are plans for EXPO 2025 to take place in Yekaterinburg between May 2-Nov. 2, 2025. The core theme of the upcoming exhibition is ‘Changing the World: Innovations and Better Life for Future Generations,’” he said.

Following the introduction, visitors were treated to a number of Russian cultural events, participated in a national parade accompanied by the sounds of the Omsk Philharmonic brass orchestra and enjoyed traditional songs, dances and snacks.

Talented artists from the world’s largest country created a festive atmosphere. Visitors welcomed the dancers, singers and musicians, applauding and singing with them.

The celebration featured performances by groups including the State Academic Russian Folk Ensemble, trumpeter Vadim Eilenkrig, Buranovskiy Babushki Ensemble, Slavyane Folk Band and Altai State Youth Song and Dance Ensemble. The Coffeetime Band performed the expo anthem in Kazakh, triggering joy and pride among local citizens. Guests also enjoyed an interactive programme, gifts and surprises.

“I took part in many celebrations of the national days at the expo. All of them impressed me greatly. Today, I really enjoyed Russia’s day with fascinating traditional songs and dances. Everyone was delighted to hear the expo’s anthem in the Kazakh language performed by the Russian band. I feel sad the expo is coming to an end,” said visitor Irina Nazarova.

The Russian pavilion is one of the biggest at the expo, occupying more than 1,000 square metres. It has welcomed nearly 800,000 visitors. The exhibition space, focusing on the Arctic, nuclear power and renewable energy sources, features a piece of a real iceberg from the Arctic.

EXPO 2017 best pavilions awarded as exhibition closes, legacy lives on

Continued from Page B1

Astana was nominated the “City of the Future” by National Geographic Traveler magazine and the organisation featured the capital in its documentary “Megastructures: Astana – City of the Future.” Approximately 196 companies and 200,000 individuals were involved in the expo construction.

One hundred and fifteen countries and 22 international organisations took part in the exhibition, which opened June 9. Each participating nation presented its own vision and concept of future energy and showcased its latest technological achievements in the energy field.

The International Exposition Bureau (BIE) awarded 24 gold, silver and bronze medals of honour, certificates and prizes to participants and pavilions in several categories. The Gold Medal – BIE’s highest award – was given to Nazarbayev for his contribution and success in hosting the exhibition. A second gold was awarded to international participants for their spirit and support.

Medals of honour were presented to the Astana EXPO 2017 national company for its dedication and high professionalism, the capital’s authorities and citizens

and expo commissioner Rapil Zhoshybayev for attracting such a large number of participants. Certificates of merit were given to all expo volunteers for being the backbone of the exhibition and the expo’s communications service for covering the event in the media.

BIE announced an additional award and \$24,000 cash prize to the National University of Lesotho.

“The EXPO 2017 Astana edition of the BIE Cosmos Prize has been awarded to the National University of Lesotho for its initiative to design and produce low-cost solar collectors. Jointly awarded by the BIE, the Expo ’90 Foundation and the expo, this year’s edition of the BIE Cosmos Prize was open to not-for-profit projects and citizen and group initiatives working in the area of ‘Future Energy,’ the theme of the expo in Astana,” noted the official BIE statement.

Russia received the gold award for exhibition design among type A pavilions (more than 700 square metres). The silver award went to the United Kingdom, the bronze to the Republic of Korea. For theme development, the gold award was presented to Germany, with China and France receiving the silver and bronze, respectively.

Among type B pavilions (400-

700 square metres), Qatar was granted the gold award for exhibition design, with Azerbaijan receiving the silver and Monaco the bronze. For theme development, the gold award in the category was given to Switzerland, with Hungary receiving silver and India the bronze.

For type C pavilions (less than 400 square metres), the gold award for exhibition design was granted to Poland, with silver going to Slovakia and bronze to Latvia. Finland received the gold award, Singapore the silver and the Czech Republic the bronze in theme development.

Among category D pavilions (joint pavilions within the plazas), the Caribbean Community plaza received the gold award for exhibition design, with the Pacific Ocean plaza taking the silver and the Latin American plaza the bronze. The theme development awards were given to Tajikistan (gold), Ghana (silver) and Ukraine (bronze). Honorable mention went to the International Organisations joint pavilion.

Close to 3.8 million people visited the exhibition, nearly twice as many as the 2 million anticipated by expo officials. The event closed with late-hour grand fireworks.



SPORTS

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 20, 2017

Kazakhstan beats current champ Argentina to return to Davis Cup World Group



Photo credit: Sergey Kirving

By Anuar Abdrakhmanov

ASTANA – After a year-long hiatus, Kazakhstan’s men’s tennis team returned to the Davis Cup World Group by defeating Argentina in the playoffs.

The Argentines, the current Davis Cup champions, were the clear favourites in the match, even though their 3-2 home loss in February to Italy sent them to the playoffs. Kazakh captain Dias Doskarayev, however, never stopped telling his players they could surprise any opposition.

“There are always chances. We are playing at home on an important stage. We have good statistics at home, regardless of the opponents. Of course, we are playing the current Davis Cup champions and it will be very difficult. The most important thing for our tennis players now is to prepare well and believe in victory. Our players can

do it; they proved it many times,” he said before the match, which was contested Sept. 15-17 at Astana’s National Tennis Centre.

Kazakhstan’s number 1, Mikhail Kukushkin, met Guido Pella in the first game, earning the first point for his team with a 6-7, 7-6, 6-2, 6-4 victory. The match was quite long, lasting more than three hours.

“I have never played the Argentinean in individual tournaments, but I knew that my opponent was a very strong player, so I set my mind on the hardest fight with him. I believe I could only have won over Pella thanks to our fans. They gave me great support and helped me win,” said Kukushkin after the match.

The guests equalised the score in the match after Argentinean leader Diego Schwartzman defeated Dmitry Popko 6-4, 6-2, 6-2.

Few could suggest Kazakhstan would win the doubles. The loss of Andrey Golubev, who was always good in this format, meant it would

be very difficult to be victorious on the second day. Initially, Denis Yevseyev was to partner with Aleksandr Nedovyesov, but shortly before the game Doskarayev made a substitute, introducing Timur Khabibullin. The decision proved to be the right one. In a very difficult game, Nedovyesov and Khabibullin earned an important win against Maximo Gonzalez and Andres Molteni.

Kukushkin vs. Schwartzman was the decisive confrontation of the three-day match. The Kazakh player moved better and was more accurate in key episodes, which allowed him to beat his opponent 6-4, 6-4, 7-6, bringing his team an early victory and an elite place in next season’s Davis Cup.

“If you play for your country and your people with all your heart, if you fully believe in yourself and the team, you can beat any opponent, even such a strong one as Argentina. I congratulate everyone on our victory. Kazakhstan’s tennis is now at a very high level. More and more people are getting interested in it. Some people take tennis classes, others come to watch and support the players. It is great. I hope that this victory will contribute to this great trend,” said Doskarayev.

Jordan launches ‘GGG’ clothing line with Kazakh ornamentation

Staff Report

ASTANA – The Jordan American brand of sportswear recently presented a collection of clothes devoted to Kazakh boxer Genady Golovkin (37-0, 33 KOs), vesti.kz reports. Nike has already started selling two kinds of caps, four T-shirts and one sweatshirt from the Golovkin’s collection.

The design is based on Kazakh ornamentation and uses the boxer’s phrase – Big Drama Show and his initials – GGG. Cost of the clothing starts from \$32. The most expensive item costs \$65.

Golovkin signed an exclusive advertising contract with Jordan in April 2016. He became the third boxer who represents this brand. Pioneers were Americans Andre Ward (31-0, 15 KOs) and Roy Jones Jr. (65-9, 47 KOs).

Jordan is a joint brand of Nike and legendary basketball player Michael Jordan. The company has also specially made boxer shorts in the Kazakh style for Golovkin. GGG himself took part in the presentation at a store in Paris in December. In June, Jordan invited the Kazakh boxer to visit him and handed him the equipment for the Sept. 16 fight against Mexican

Saul “Canelo” Alvarez (49-1- 1, 34 KOs).

for Apple Watch. Golovkin found himself shadow boxing in a white

Golovkin, who is 35 years old, is the first Kazakh athlete for which a major international sports brand has produced clothing. In 2015, he starred in a new commercial for Apple Watch.

Golovkin, who is 35 years old, is the first Kazakh athlete for which a major international sports brand has produced clothing. In 2015, he starred in a new commercial

room and checking his heart rate with the brand new Apple Watch. The commercial ends up with the words “Track Every Beat” appearing on the white background. Apple’s official YouTube channel and website as well as GGG’s official social media accounts shared the video.

Golovkin is a professional boxer from Kazakhstan, who currently holds the unified WBA (Super), WBC, IBF, and IBO middleweight titles. As of May 2017, he is ranked as the world’s best middleweight by BoxRec and the Transnational Boxing Rankings Board (TBRB), and second best by The Ring. The Ring also ranks him as the world’s second best active boxer. The BoxRec and the TBRB find him the fifth best active boxer.

Kazakh curling team prepares for World Cup

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – Curling has never been popular in Kazakhstan, but interest in the sport has developed dynamically since the Winter World Universiade 2017. The country now has a national team, which is holding friendly matches in preparation for the World Cup. Competitions between mixed teams and juniors are organised at the Almaty Arena ice palace, reported Zakon.kz.

“Despite the fact that the new curling season has just begun, we did not stop training. National men’s and women’s teams, mixed teams (men and women) and athletes with hearing disorders and organ transplants are involved in the trainings. We recently used a training camp in Korea, where we were supported and provided everything necessary for the trainings. We spent 10 days at one of the best stadiums in the world,” said Kazakhstan Curling Association Secretary General and head coach Viktor Kim.

“Now, we are preparing for the new season and we will soon go to Turkey to prepare for the World Cup among the mixed teams, which will be held Oct. 14-16 in Switzerland. After that, we plan to participate in the Pacific-Asian championship, where teams for the Olympic Games will be selected. After this event, we

are going to have trainings in Korea again,” he added.

The sixth winter sports and athletic meeting, the main start of the four-year national level, will kick off in Kazakhstan in December. Curling will be presented in four disciplines: men, women, mixed couples and mixed teams.

As a new sport for the country, curling is unfamiliar to many citizens, but there is a keen interest. The 827 officially registered athletes claim this sport is absolutely for everyone.

Curlers take turns sliding heavy, polished granite stones across the ice towards a target area of four concentric circles. The two competing teams have four players and eight stones. Points are scored for the stones resting closest to the centre of the target area and teams strive to accumulate the higher score.

“Today is the first training after our trip to Korea. In fact, there is a difference between our ice and the Korean one, which corresponds to Olympic standards,” said women’s national team captain Zarema Abydkadyrova.

She believes in the need to have a will and if there is a will, there will be a result. Abydkadyrova suggests everyone engage in the sport, because it is suitable for people of all ages, adding the number of people interested and involved has grown significantly in recent years.

Astana loses first UEFA Europa League match in Spain

By Anuar Abdrakhmanov

ASTANA – FC Astana, the only Kazakh club in this year’s UEFA Europa League, lost 3-1 while visiting Spanish club Villarreal CF in its first group stage match on Sept. 14.

The teams played one another three years ago in the last qualifying round of the same tournament. The Spaniards, known locally as El Submarino Amarillo or Yellow Submarina because of their home kit colour, secured a confident 4-0 win in that battle. Four members of Astana’s current line-up played in that game, including defenders Abzal Beisebekov, Yevgeny Postnikov and Dmitry Shomko and forward Patrick Twumasi. Midfielder Serikzhan Muzhikov went to Spain as well, but sat out the match. This time Villarreal, known for its successful performances in the last two decades in the Spanish Premier League and European tournaments, was the favourite again.

To the surprise of the host team’s fans, Astana was quite active early in the match. Muzhikov made the game’s first shot towards the goal, but it went above the bar. Villarreal responded by dominating for a long period, putting pressure on Kazakh goalkeeper Nenad Eric. Ul-

timately, a shot by forward Nicola Sansone reached its aim for a 1-0 lead. The visitors’ forward Roman Murtazayev responded with a dangerous header, followed by Beisebekov and Twumasi’s long-range shots, all saved by Villarreal goalkeeper Mariano Barbosa.

Astana finally managed to even the score midway through the second half. Assisted by Twumasi’s corner kick, defender Yuri Logvinenko headed the ball into the hosts’ net. Villarreal needed only seven minutes, however, to prove its status as the team to beat. First, Cédric Bakambu had a clear run on goal, sending the ball into the right top corner of the net. Russian Denis Cheryshev then finished his partner’s cross from the right flank, setting the final score and win for the Spanish club.

“We tried to play good football. The team can be more dynamic and aggressive. Slight mistakes were made [when we missed] three goals. I am glad we scored a goal [following our good performance early] in the second half, but we still weren’t active enough in attacking,” said FC Astana head coach Stanimir Stoilov.

The team’s next match will be Sept. 28 against SK Slavia Prague. Kick-off will be 9 p.m. at Astana Arena.



Astana hosts Global Islamic Finance Awards

By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – The Astana International Financial Centre (AIFC) hosted Sept. 6 the Global Islamic Finance Awards (GIFA), a prestigious award honouring individuals and institutions that have contributed to the promotion of Islamic banking and finance.

Established in 2011 by Edbiz Corporation, an international Shariah advisory firm, the award seeks to push Islamic banking and finance forward worldwide. The inaugural GIFA ceremony took place Dec. 7, 2011 as part of the Oman Islamic Economic Forum (OIEF).

This year, the event gathered more than 200 representatives of the Islamic finance industry, including 50 winners, from more than 20 countries. Kazakhstan President Nursultan Nazarbayev and high-ranking Kazakh officials also attended.

AIFC Governor Kairat Kelimbetov opened the award ceremony. He called Kazakhstan a pioneer of Islamic banking and finance in the Commonwealth of Independent States incorporating the regulatory framework for Islamic banking in the national legislation in 2009.



Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev (L) presents the Global Leader in Islamic Finance Award to President of Djibouti Ismail Omar Guelleh.

“In 2009, Kazakhstan became the first country in the CIS region and Central Asia to create a path for Islamic finance industry. Since then Kazakhstan has witnessed a gradual growth in developing of Islamic finance industry,” said the AIFC governor. One of the pillars in the work of the AIFC, scheduled to launch next year, is Islamic finance, added Kelimbetov.

“AIFC will serve as an Islamic finance getaway and Islamic finance hub for the region,” said Kelimbetov. Edbiz Corporation CEO Sofiza Azmi also addressed the gathering. “I am both honoured and delighted to be here today to celebrate the success of award winners who have made outstanding achievements contributing to the sustainability of Islamic banking

and finance,” said Azmi. “GIFA is a global brand recognised as a most respected finance award in the world,” she noted, that has the “most detailed approach to screen the best of the best.”

The awards’ most prestigious honour is Global Leader in Islamic Finance.

Nazarbayev received this award in 2014 as part of the 10th World Islamic Economic Forum in Dubai. During the Sept. 6 ceremony, Nazarbayev presented the award to President of Djibouti Ismail Omar Guelleh.

“It is an honour to host the GIFA. Gathering participants of the global financial market is an effective tool of international cooperation. Today’s ceremony identifies leaders in various fields of Islamic finance. This will contribute to the further development of finance services. I thank the founder of the award for bringing it to our country,” Nazarbayev said.

He also reiterated the importance of Islamic finance for the country, referring to the results of the Boston Consulting Group research that estimated the assets of the Islamic finance sector in Kazakhstan will reach \$23 billion by 2025 and make up 10 percent of total banking sector assets.

Int’l audience gathers to advance sustainable development goals



By Dana Omirgazy

ASTANA – Horyou, an action oriented social network for social good, organised the Social Innovation and Global Ethics Forum (SIGEF) Sept. 5 to discuss future energy, smart cities and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and lead an official delegation to EXPO 2017. International speakers, panellists and moderators attended the event.

“With SIGEF, Horyou is committed to encouraging multi-stakeholders to gather, interact and establish partnerships to shape better times to come. SIGEF will bring together social entrepreneurs, impact investors, philanthropists, government officials and representatives from civil society to spread the message that we can all be changemakers,” said Horyou founder and CEO Yonathan Parienti.

Participants discussed the challenges of climate change amid economic development and urban growth. UNDP Deputy Resident Representative for Programme and Operations Munkhtuya Altangerel focused on low carbon urban development in Kazakhstan.

“Cities represent entire systems or I can even say ecosystems. If we are to build smart and sustainable cities, we need to think how we bring more sustainability into every part of urban infrastructure. After having tried and tested demonstration projects promoting greater energy efficiency

across Kazakhstan, we are now working to reduce carbon intensity in a series of Kazakh cities,” he noted.

Parienti added it is important that the sustainability agenda is driven by youth, children and all citizens of Kazakhstan.

Reinforcing its global presence and impact, Horyou organised the first SIGEF this year in Central Asia, with an agenda of discussions deeply anchored in the future of interconnected societies, according to horyou.com.

Horyou and the SIGEF team plan to visit the expo country pavilions Sept. 6-7, the biggest future energy gathering this year.

“We are thrilled to bring our SIGEF international delegations to connect with participants from all continents who are attending EXPO 2017 Astana, to build bridges of collaboration and foster sustainable solutions that will benefit our societies,” said Parienti.

Through technology, innovation and social entrepreneurship advocacy, Horyou promotes meaningful and global interactions amongst its adherent organisations, members and personalities. With its platform, app and Spotlight, the first Global Social Currency for Impact, it helps transform positive ideas into concrete actions while building constructive relationships both online and offline. The Horyou community embraces more than 1,000 organisations and 220,000 users from more than 180 countries.

International green technologies centre to help Kazakhstan transition to a green economy

By Frol Leandroer

ASTANA – The international green technologies centre to open in Astana next month will help Kazakhstan transition to a green economy and will focus on renewable energy throughout Central Asia, Kazakh Energy Minister Kanat Bozumbayev said at the recent Eurasian KAZENERGY forum, Kazinform reports.

“An international centre of green technologies and future energy investment projects will be cre-

ated on the basis of EXPO in the coming month. Its tasks include transforming the energy sector and the transition to a green business. It will cooperate with the industrialised (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development) OECD countries, with Russia, China, the United States, India, and countries of Latin America. The centre will become a worthy continuation of EXPO’s practice. The centre will be focused not only on Kazakhstan, but on the entire Central Asian region,” said Bozumbayev.

Delegates of the two-day forum also discussed sustainable energy source management, climate change and carbon dioxide emissions reduction. The gathering also discussed energy efficiency and smart energy as well as nuclear and uranium industry development.

Kazakhstan is the world’s leading uranium supplier and that market is expected to grow, said Bozumbayev.

The minister noted that Kazakhstan uses traditional and renewable energy sources, saying the country

hopes the share of renewable energy sources will be 3 percent by 2020, 10 percent by 2030 and 50 percent by 2050.

“Undoubtedly, we feel the influence on taking these responsible decisions on the further development of the industry. I am confident that by joint efforts we will be able to build a reliable foundation for an effective, cleaner and greener future of energy. We are obliged to provide precisely this kind of future to the next generation of power engineers,” Bozumbayev concluded.

St. Regis opens hotel in Astana

By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – Astana is becoming an attractive tourist destination, as the young and vibrant city has been recently hosting numerous international events and the Aug. 21 opening of the St. Regis in Astana makes the city an even

more appealing destination for sophisticated travellers.

With the first flagship St. Regis opening in New York in 1904, the St. Regis now has 61 hotels worldwide that extend the brand’s timeless elegance and impeccable service, including a new one in Astana.

Introducing an exceptional hos-

pitality and comfort, the St. Regis Astana is nestled beside the Yessil River, one of the most prestigious areas of Astana, offering a spectacular view to the riverside.

“The St. Regis Astana reflects the country’s rich history and culture and the design, services and cuisine offerings of the St. Regis,” said St. Regis Hotels & Resorts

Global Brand Leader Lisa Hollo-day.

“Astana is a rapidly developing city with the rising popularity. We would be happy to offer our services to business people and tourists visiting Astana,” added Hollo-day.

The St. Regis serves as an ideal stay for tourists and business per-

sons, as they can take advantage of the hotel’s close distance to the city’s popular sights and governmental and commercial buildings.

The hotel includes 120 guest rooms, including 14 Ambassador Suites, six St. Regis Suites, two Royal Suites and a Presidential Suite with private terraces, and a

ballroom, five meeting rooms and a business centre for meetings and events.

The guests are also welcome to immerse themselves in a distinguished dining experience with La Rivière restaurant, the Grill and the St. Regis Bar offering an extensive menu of vintage wines and champagnes.

