



## IAEA low enriched uranium fuel bank opens in Ust-Kamenogorsk

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) supported by the Kazakh government opened Aug. 29 its first-ever Low Enriched Uranium (LEU) Bank in Kazakhstan. The \$150 million facility will help ensure a steady supply of low enriched uranium for countries' nuclear power programmes.

Speaking at the bank's elaborate launch ceremony in Astana's newly opened Hilton Hotel, Kazakhstan President Nursultan Nazarbayev highlighted that during the years of independence, his country has progressed from the holder of the world's fourth nuclear arsenal to a leader in global non-proliferation. He said that the opening of the bank is the result of many years of work and is a very important event for the state.

"As a state possessing large volumes of uranium-containing raw materials, we contribute to the peaceful use of atomic energy," he said at the ceremony.

"The LEU Bank will serve as a last-resort mechanism to provide confidence to countries that they will be able to obtain LEU for the manufacture of fuel for nuclear power plants in the event of an unforeseen, non-commercial disruption to their supplies," IAEA Director General Yukiya Amano, who addressed the ceremony as well, said on Aug. 28.

The LEU Bank is based at the Ulba Metallurgical Plant (UMP) in Ust-Kamenogorsk, in the East Kazakhstan region. The facility will store nuclear fuel and sell it to IAEA members. The bank will store up to 90 tonnes of low-enriched uranium,



sufficient to run a 1,000 MW light water reactor or give power to a large city for three years.

President Nazarbayev said that by providing the IAEA the possibility to establish the LEU Bank, Kazakhstan is helping to strengthen the non-proliferation regime and creating a unique mechanism for the safe supply of nuclear fuel. He emphasised that the bank will function under the full control of the IAEA and will be in its official legal possession.

"We are the largest producer of uranium and are ready to play an important role in the world energy. Also, Kazakhstan is in the mainstream of a global green trend. That is why we are holding the EXPO 2017 international exhibition, dedi-

cated to the energy of the future, in Astana," President Nazarbayev further said.

"I am confident that the IAEA LEU Bank will make a valuable contribution to international efforts to ensure the availability of fuel for nuclear power plants," Amano said at the event.

The IAEA plans to start buying uranium soon and to start shipping it to the bank in 2018.

The IAEA is the world's central intergovernmental organisation, established for scientific and technical cooperation in the nuclear field. The IAEA seeks safe, secure and peaceful uses of nuclear technologies and science.

The bank is funded by the U.S.,

the European Union, Kuwait, Norway, the United Arab Emirates, and the Washington-based Nuclear Threat Initiative, an NGO which jump-started the process of its establishment with an offer of \$50 million as seed money provided by billionaire Warren Buffett.

In 2009, Kazakhstan proposed to host the LEU bank in Kazakhstan under the IAEA. An agreement was signed with the IAEA on Aug. 27, 2015. Kazakhstan is a leading producer of uranium, boasting more than 15 percent of global uranium reserves.

Russia established its own LEU bank in 2010, but the LEU bank in Kazakhstan is the first to be fully owned and managed by the IAEA.

## President opens Parliament's third session

By Aigerim Seisembayeva

ASTANA – The third session of the Kazakh Parliament's sixth convocation opened Sept. 4 with President Nursultan Nazarbayev setting the legislature's tasks for the coming 10 months.

Speaking before the members of both chambers, Nazarbayev summed up the results of Parliament's work during the previous session and stressed the importance of continuing the current legislative reform provisions.

The head of state noted Kazakhstan's internal stability and public consensus made possible the three modernisation processes relating to economy, politics and national identity. He also mentioned the external tendencies and challenges the country is currently facing: an unstable global environment, the sanctions policy pursued by world powers and the spread of destructive phenomena that, according to Nazarbayev, are becoming even more active.

"At the same time, total digitalisation is gaining momentum, bearing both new opportunities and risks. All of these mean that at the time of modernisation, every minute counts. Kazakhstan surely needs to keep up and I know we can do it," he said.

The President noted the legislative process has become more transparent. Parliamentary hearings have become more frequent and experts and representatives of civil society and the media are invited to bill consideration processes. Kazakh citizens are not always aware of their legal rights and duties, however, and special attention should therefore be paid to explanatory work, he stressed.

"During the previous session, the Parliament considered and adopted 84 draft laws. Among them is the law 'On Amendments and Additions to the Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan.' Fifteen bills were elaborated on the legislature's initiative over the past year," said Nazarbayev.

He also emphasised the high responsibility of the Parliament and the government to execute the tasks set before the governmental bodies.

"Today, Kazakhstan is imple-

menting a number of strategically important tasks. The Parliament and the government must take all the necessary measures to ensure the implementation of the Plan of the Nation, the state-of-the-nation address and all the programmes adopted over the past years," he said.

Nazarbayev dwelled on certain areas of social development, drawing attention to the tasks of modernising national identity and ensuring economic growth.

"This year, the draft of the new tax code will be submitted to the Parliament. We must significantly improve our tax policy and encourage business to work transparently. There is a need to improve legislation on special economic and industrial zones. We also need to legislatively provide the National Bank with more opportunities for effective control over banks," he said.

The President also noted the importance of developing the insurance system, sorting out medicine turnover, ensuring the country's informational security and implementing law enforcement reforms.

"The Parliament and the whole country are to carry out big and responsible work. Large-scale tasks and solutions are, in fact, our response to the global challenges of 2017. Modernisation requires the mobilisation of all forces. Under the new conditions, the legislative and executive branches should collaborate constructively," he said.

The session was attended by a renewed Senate. The upper chamber elections in June resulted in 16 new deputies, one from each region, the capital and Almaty.

Parliament currently has 27 bills under consideration. Some of the most important are the draft laws on taxation, insurance, housing, social security and regulating the agro-industrial complex. The members are expected to pay close attention to the new version of the law on currency regulation and currency control.

The legislature will also consider the code on taxes, other mandatory budget payments and customs regulations, as well as the code on subsoil and subsoil use, before the end of the year.

## Kazakhstan can be moral leader, key mediator in nuclear disarmament: head of CTBTO

By Dmitry Lee

ASTANA – Executive Secretary of the Vienna-based Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty Organisation (CTBTO) Preparatory Commission Dr. Lassina Zerbo believes Kazakhstan and Japan have a moral obligation to lead the world toward nuclear non-prolifer-

ation and ultimately nuclear weapons disarmament.

"Japan as a country that has suffered from nuclear weapon use and Kazakhstan as the country that has suffered the most nuclear explosions" have the experience to back up their position, he told The Astana Times in an exclusive interview.

Zerbo is a staunch believer that involving youth in nuclear weapon

non-proliferation and disarmament movements should be the next focus for the organisation.

"Kazakhstan has participated in many meetings with youth, as we are focusing on a big youth component. What I am trying to do as my next step is to join the efforts by [Kazakh] President Nursultan Nazarbayev, who has spent all efforts to make sure the youth in Kazakhstan are well-educated and

well-aware of the risks of nuclear weapon testing in the country."

"Now this youth needs to join youth from other countries together with what has been achieved with President Nazarbayev in Kazakhstan, so people are well aware about what happened at the Semipalatinsk nuclear test site; so that never again there would be a situation where this is possible," he stressed.

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## UN General Assembly commemorates International Day against Nuclear Tests

By George D. Gleboff

NEW YORK – The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) commemorated the International Day against Nuclear Tests with an Aug. 30 special meeting highlighting the need for unified efforts to legally stop further nuclear weapons testing. Addressing the audience, UNGA

President Peter Thomson called for global action to halt nuclear tests and the proliferation of nuclear arsenals and materials.

Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for Disarmament Affairs Izumi Nakamitsu made a statement on behalf of UN Secretary-General António Guterres. The speech reflected the importance of

this date, Aug. 29, the UN International Day against Nuclear Tests, as a tribute to the victims of nuclear tests and a reminder to all humankind of a serious threat to international stability and security. It also called upon all countries to unite their efforts for the early entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT).

"More than 2,000 nuclear tests have been conducted over the past seven decades — from the South Pacific to North America, from Central Asia to North Africa. They have harmed some of the world's most vulnerable peoples and pristine ecosystems," the statement noted.

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## Pugwash Council calls for nuclear disarmament

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – The Pugwash Council called upon all governments and people to reflect on the grave and irreversible ecological and humanitarian consequences of nucle-

ar weapons and to spare no efforts towards achieving a nuclear-weapon-free world. This was stated in the Astana Declaration "From Prohibition of Nuclear Testing toward Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons" Aug. 29 at the 62nd Pugwash Conference.

"One of the initiatives that changed the tide in the fight against nuclear weapons testing was at Semipalatinsk. The decision by Kazakhstan to permanently close the Soviet nuclear test site was promulgated on Aug. 29, 1991. It became one of

the significant factors that led to the moratorium on nuclear testing, followed by the successful negotiation of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) in 1996," according to a council document.

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## Economy grows 4 percent in 2017 so far

By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – Kazakhstan's economy has witnessed a 4-percent growth in the first seven months of 2017 and Minister of Economy Timur Suleimenov marked the overall macroeconomic stability during an Aug. 29 government meeting that focused on the main priorities of the nation's socio-economic development for 2018-2022. The government also approved the budget for the next three years.

Macroeconomic stability is a key tenet of the third direction in the nation's Third Modernisation, Global Competitiveness Programme set forth by President

Nursultan Nazarbayev, said Suleimenov.

"The tax and budget policy is what ensures macroeconomic stability and this year the macroeconomic situation is good, as we witnessed a 4-percent growth. The current budget situation is also good," said Suleimenov.

The economy is expected to grow 3.4 percent through the end of this year, he added. Referring to the International Monetary Fund report, he noted the global economy is projected to grow by 3.5 percent in 2017 and 3.6 percent in 2018 driven by a gradual acceleration in economic activity in advanced economies.

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# NATION

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 6, 2017

## Minister reports on Digital Kazakhstan programme as launch date approaches

Staff Report

ASTANA – President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev held a meeting Aug. 23 with Minister of Information and Communications Dauren Abayev, according to akorda.kz, during which the minister reported on the development of the Digital Kazakhstan programme.

Nazarbayev stressed the relevance of large-scale digitalisation of the economy in the context of growing global competition.

“Today this issue is being brought to the forefront. The whole world is moving in this direction, and we must not lag behind, which is a very difficult task. It is necessary that all departments, ministries and regions work together well,” said Nazarbayev.

Abayev reviewed the four priority areas identified in the new programme.



Photo credit: akorda.kz

“We have discussed the draft

programme with all interested parties. The Digital Kazakhstan programme outlines four main di-

rections of work – development of infrastructure, improvement of human capital, digitalisation of eco-

conomic sectors and improvement of the system of provision of public services,” he said.

The President gave a number of specific instructions to end the meeting.

The main goal of the Digital Kazakhstan programme is the progressive development of the country’s digital ecosystem to achieve sustainable economic growth, improve the competitiveness of the economy and the nation, and improve the quality of life of the population.

The programme will be presented Sept. 13.

“We are well aware that infrastructure is important for such a large country as Kazakhstan. The penetration rate of the internet exceeds 70 percent, but its quality varies. In cities and towns with more than 2,000 people, the internet connection is good. But in Kazakhstan, 47 percent of the population lives in rural settlements. Therefore, if we do not build the infrastructure now, it will be difficult to even the digital inequality between the village and the city,” said Abayev during the Eurasian Week forum.

### NATIONAL NEWS IN BRIEF

Astana hosted the Women for the Future Energy International Forum Aug. 31. “President Nursultan Nazarbayev set the task of increasing the share of alternative and renewable energy to 50 percent by 2050,” Kazakh State Secretary Gulshara Abdykalikova said at the event, Kazinform reports. “The world needs to increase the participation of women in a global, inclusive and sustainable development. We should make our special contribution to the green economy transition and the use of alternative energy.” More than 300 delegates from 25 countries attended the forum, where issues on ensuring sustainable and inclusive growth in a renewable energy economy; the contribution of women in promoting innovative ideas in alternative energy; and growing a green economy through effective partnership of the state, business and civil society were on the agenda.

The youth wing of the Association of Business Women was presented at an Aug. 30 international business conference in Astana. “A young generation of entrepreneurs has grown up in a totally different environment. They don’t know those problems that the first generation of entrepreneurs in the 1990s had to face. They grew up in the era of the internet and digital technologies and they have a different view on how to do business,” said Kazakh Senator Dariga Nazarbayeva. It was proposed to introduce basics of entrepreneurship courses in schools and organise a competition for the best business project the regional and national levels.

The Riger Transport and Logistics Centre for the storage of medicines and medical supplies has opened in Karaganda. The project, worth 1.372 billion tenge (US\$4 million), was approved for subsidising the interest rate on loan. An automated control system has been introduced to improve the efficiency of work processes. “The Nur Otan party carries out constant monitoring of the targeted and effective use of funds allocated for the implementation of state programmes set by Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev,” said Nur Otan Party First Deputy Chairman Mukhtar Kul-Mukhammed at the opening ceremony.

The Taraz Akimat (city administration) presented Aug. 25 an industrial park with an area of 41 hectares at the Taraz metallurgical plant. It contains production, administrative and storage facilities, and production infrastructure to support industrial facilities. A special programme of cooperation for small and medium-sized businesses has also been launched. It is planned to open and launch a business incubator in a 7,000-square-metre building on the site.

Two open-air museums are planned to launch in Atyrau, reported Kazinform. “Archaeological work at the ancient settlements of Saraishyk and Aktobe-Laeti is underway this year. The money was allocated and the specialists started to work. When the work to preserve the monuments finishes, two open-air museums will be opened. It is expected to develop a special tourist zone near these settlements with the participation of the regional Entrepreneurship and Industrial-Innovative Development Department,” said Culture, Archives and Documentation Regional Department deputy head Azamat Zholyayev at an Aug. 26 briefing.

Khabar TV channel is planning to release in December the “Batyr-lar Zholy” (“The Way of the Warriors”) historical television series that is now filming near Almaty. “It is important to know your own history, remember how it all began, what efforts it cost our forefathers to build and protect the state. Viewers will be able to see how important the role of these glorious warriors was in the history of our country,” said Khabar Agency Board Chairperson Almagul Akhmetzhanova. The series tells about the life and exploits of Kazakh warriors. The show takes place at the beginning of the 17th century at a time of civil strife among the Kazakh sultans (feudal lords) and biis (rulers, noble judges).

## Prime Minister gets two new deputies

By Dmitry Lee

ASTANA – Kazakh Prime Minister Bakytzhan Sagintayev received two newest deputies following the presidential decrees Aug. 29. Yerbolat Dossayev and Askar Zhumagaliyev were presented as two new deputy prime ministers during the Aug. 29 governmental meeting.

Dossayev, born in 1970, worked as a deputy chairperson at Bank Turan Alem and later at ATF Bank in the 1990s. He was subsequently appointed as the advisor to the Kazakh prime minister, then held the posts of vice minister at the Ministry of Energy, Industry and Trade and Ministry of Finance.



He later headed the Kazakh Agency for Regulation of Natural Monopolies, Protection of Competition and Support of Small Business and has served as the minister at the Ministries of Finance, Healthcare, Economic Develop-

ment and Trade. In 2014, he was appointed Minister of National Economy and two years later was elected chairperson of the board of Baiterak National Managing Holding.

Sagintayev noted Dossayev will

strengthen the “economic block, in particular, coordination of the ongoing portfolio of projects for the modernisation of key economic sectors.”

Zhumagaliyev, born in 1972, was appointed to the Ministry of Transport and Communications in 2001.

He had held posts as chairperson of the Agency for Informatisation and Communication and president of Kazakhtelecom. He was later appointed Minister of Communications and Information, Transport and Communications and chair of the Agency for Communications and Information. Since 2015, he has been chairman of the board of the Kazatomprom national atomic company. Zhumagaliyev will supervise the ongoing work of digitising the

economy, as the draft of the Digital Kazakhstan state programme is currently on the agenda, noted the report from primeminister.kz.

Sagintayev indicated the head of state has set specific tasks for the current government.

“In particular, [those instructions were given] within the framework of the Aug. 18 meeting on the socio-economic development of regions and implementation of state programmes, as well as a meeting on the activities of the National Commission for Modernisation, which took place on Aug. 25,” he said.

With the two recent appointments, Sagintayev now has four deputies. The other two are Askar Mamin as First Deputy Prime Minister in charge of the real economic sector, and Askar Myrzakhetmetov and Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Agriculture.

## Kazakhstan steps up radicalism prevention efforts

By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – Work to prevent the spread of religious radicalism is well underway in Kazakhstan, as state agencies led by the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Civil Society are implementing a comprehensive set of measures to contend with the problem. The action is in line with the fifth direction in the nation’s Third Modernisation, Global Competitiveness Programme put forward by President Nursultan Nazarbayev earlier this year.

“Secular tradition is an old legacy of Kazakhstan which is founded on tolerance, peace and respect of rights of religious and non-religious people,” noted Minister of Religious Affairs and Civil Soci-



Minister of Religious Affairs and Civil Society Nurlan Yermekbayev.

ety Nurlan Yermekbayev, quoting the head of state during an Aug. 28 briefing.

The ministry developed a concept of the state policy on religion for 2017-2020 as an open message to society about the country’s perspective on the topic, he said, incorporating key tenets of the Kazakh

leader’s state-of-the-nation address and public recommendations.

The document sets an “ideological foundation” for 60 amendments in the country’s 13 laws and four codes, he added. Though the amendments have not yet been endorsed, the stipulated measures are underway.

The ministry and other competent bodies are monitoring religious propaganda channels, said Yermekbayev. During the first seven months of the year, experts examined nearly 3,000 such channels and determined 1,500 were spreading illegal content.

Starting Aug. 1, the ministry, together with the Prosecutor General’s Office and the Ministry of Information and Communication, launched a cyber shield portal that

allows the state bodies to combine their efforts in revealing illicit content, including printed materials. It cuts bureaucratic procedures and duplication of effort, he said.

Yermekbayev added the ministry expanded the scope of control on the content of religious associations without interfering with their canonical issues by cooperating with the 3,600 religious groups in the country.

Children will also have a new textbook, preliminarily called “Society and Religion,” which unlike previous editions places a stronger emphasis on the state’s secular principles. The content will serve to raise religious awareness among the younger population, usually the most vulnerable to radical ideas due to lack of religious knowledge.

These and other measures envisioned in the concept seek to make the work of religious associations more transparent, protect the rights of citizens regardless of their religious affiliation or lack thereof and enforce the key role of secularism.

The government acknowledged its negative position towards destructive religious groups for the first time in October and the majority of the population shares this view, said Yermekbayev.

“Over the past year, people developed a clear negative attitude and rejection of destructive religious movements. Based on a sociological survey, nearly 85 percent of the population has a negative attitude towards pseudo-Salaflism. Others either do not know or are not interested,” he said.

## Almaty Appeals Court upholds conviction of fugitive ex-banker in the nation’s biggest fraud case

Staff Report

ASTANA – The Almaty City Court Appeals Board upheld the decision of the Almaty City Specialised Criminal Court against BTA Bank’s former board of directors’ chairman Mukhtar Ablyazov, who in June 2017 was found guilty of organising and leading a criminal group and embezzling more than one trillion tenge (more than US\$7.5 billion) from the bank. The ex-banker was sentenced in absentia to 20 years in prison, according to the court statement.

The bank launched the global legal proceedings against Ablyazov in 2009 after PricewaterhouseCoopers auditors identified that from 2005-2009, Ablyazov siphoned more than \$10 billion through a network of companies he owned. Ablyazov fled to Britain the same year after the bank de-



Mukhtar Ablyazov

faulted on \$10 billion in debt owed to majority-state-owned Royal Bank of Scotland (RBS), Barclays, JP Morgan Chase, PNC Bank NA, Bank of New York and others.

The most comprehensive legal proceedings are 11 claims filed by BTA Bank in the English High Court seeking to recover more than \$6 billion in assets which Ablyazov misappropriated. The bank has secured numerous judgments of \$4 billion against Ablyazov and others. In February 2012, High Court

of England Judge Sir Nigel Teare found Ablyazov guilty of lying to the court about the scale of his fortune, including a nine-bedroom mansion on The Bishops Avenue, London’s premier billionaire’s row; Oakland Park, a 100-acre estate near Windsor, and an apartment in Central London. The judge said Ablyazov has been accused of “fraud on an epic scale” and of using the bank “as if it were his own private source of funds.”

He sentenced Ablyazov to 22 months in jail for “brazen,” “deliberate” and “substantial contempt” of court, saying he had lied under oath about his ownership of companies and property as well as dealing with assets in breach of a worldwide freezing order.

“The seriousness of Mr. Ablyazov’s conduct, in my judgment, requires immediate custody,” Teare told the court. The judge issued a warrant for Ablyazov’s immediate

arrest when he failed to appear for his sentencing. Rather than abide by the court’s ruling, Ablyazov fled the U.K. and became a fugitive from justice.

In November 2012, the U.K. Court of Appeal unanimously upheld Ablyazov’s conviction.

“It is difficult to imagine a party to commercial litigation who has acted with more cynicism, opportunism and deviousness towards court orders than Mr. Ablyazov,” said Lord Justice Maurice Kay of the U.K. Court of Appeal.

In separate legal proceedings, Justice Henderson ruled Nov. 26, 2013 that Ablyazov had misappropriated an additional \$300 million in AAA-rated investment bonds from the bank in 2008. In assessing the case, the English judge concluded Ablyazov’s defence to the bank’s claims was variously “implausible, untenable and frankly incredible.” Ablyazov was eventually

tracked down by private investigators working for BTA and arrested July 31, 2013 in France. French courts refused bail three times on the basis he was likely to flee the country if released on bail.

On Oct. 24, 2014, the Court of Lyon granted both Russia and Ukraine’s requests to extradite Ablyazov, a decision later upheld by the French Supreme Court. While in custody, Ablyazov fought every level of the nation’s courts to prevent extradition. He applied to the Conseil d’État and, in a highly unusual move in December 2016, France’s highest administrative court cancelled the extradition order on the grounds that Russia had a political motive in making the extradition request.

Numerous legal proceedings are currently underway against Ablyazov and others related to him in various jurisdictions, including Cyprus, the United States and elsewhere.

# EURASIA&WORLD

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 6, 2017

## EXTERNAL NEWS IN BRIEF

Kazakh Ambassador to Hungary Nurbakh Rustemov visited the Lakitelek People's Institute in Hungary Aug. 30. Every year the institute runs courses of Kazakh, Russian, Mongolian and Belarussian languages, with Kazakh language the most in demand, the Kazakh Embassy in Budapest reports. During the visit, the Kazakh envoy met with students and Deputy Speaker of the Hungarian National Assembly and Director of the Institute Sándor Lezsák. Rustemov spoke about the history of independent Kazakhstan and key achievements of the young nation and introduced Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev's recent article, "Course Towards the Future: Modernisation of Kazakhstan's Identity." He also noted the strategic cooperation between Kazakhstan and Hungary, highlighting the particular importance of close cultural and humanitarian ties.

Kazakh students in Moscow celebrated Constitution Day on Aug. 30 with a festive flash mob near the Chistyev Prudy and Abai Kunanbayev monument. The Kazakh student association, including Bolashak programme students and Zhas Tulpar association activists, took part in the event organised with the support of the Kazakh Embassy in Russia. The students noted that although they are far from their home country, they wanted to celebrate this important date in the history of their nation. Passers-by congratulated Kazakhs and many of them turned out to know about Constitution Day.

Kazakhstan has rendered humanitarian aid worth \$914,000 to Tajikistan, including food products. Kazakhstan's Ambassador to Tajikistan Nurlan Seitimov took part in an official ceremony to transfer the aid in Dushanbe. Kazakhstan sent 21 freight cars carrying flour, grain, meat and dairy canned goods. The diplomat marked Kazakhstan's consistent assistance to the Central Asian nation in its efforts to help mitigate the consequences of natural disasters and address the needs of people and regions affected by them.

Kazakh diplomats presented the nation's tourism potential in Kiev Aug. 30, performing national songs accompanied by Kazakh national music instrument the dombra and offering a master class on setting up a yurt, the portable felt house used in the past as a dwelling by Kazakh nomads. The Ukrainian side pointed out that the number of Ukrainians travelling to Kazakhstan in recent years had halved, yet EXPO 2017 taking place in Astana changed the situation, bringing nearly 2,000 Ukrainians to the Kazakh capital. The Kazakh diplomats briefed representatives of Ukrainian tourism companies on Kazakhstan's tourism potential and the country's range of travel possibilities.

President of Turkmenistan Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov met Aug. 28 with Kazakh Ambassador to Turkmenistan Orman Nurbayev, whose diplomatic mission ended in August. Nurbayev thanked the Turkmen leader for his contribution to the development of bilateral ties between the two nations and his constant support throughout Nurbayev's mission in Ashgabat. Berdimuhamedov, in turn, emphasised the special attention devoted to the country's neighbours, including Kazakhstan, with whom they share deep historical roots, spiritual ties and traditions of brotherly nations. He highlighted the high level of cooperation and thanked Nurbayev for his fruitful work and significant personal contribution. Taking the opportunity, the sides discussed various issues in Kazakh-Turkmen bilateral and multilateral cooperation.

## Kazakhstan seeks to further promote global nuclear security, launches LEU Bank to boost nuclear power industry

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – The International Atomic Energy Agency's (IAEA) Low Enriched Uranium (LEU) Bank was to be launched Aug. 29 at the Ula Metallurgical Plant in Ust-Kamenogorsk, said Parliament Senate Chairman Kassym-Jomart Tokayev at the opening of the 62nd Pugwash Conference on Science and World Affairs here on Aug. 25.

The conference titled "Confronting New Nuclear Dangers," held Aug. 25-29 in the capital, attracted more than 200 delegates from 46 countries.

A short film with a deep, meaningful message featuring the Semipalatinsk nuclear test site, its victims and Kazakhstan's peace actions received a big round of applause at the opening ceremony. It also featured The ATOM Project, an international campaign seeking to galvanise global public support against nuclear weapons testing, and its Honorary Ambassador and armless artist Karipbek Kuyukov.

"The documentary expresses more eloquently than I can the history of the nuclear age and efforts being made by both the nation of Kazakhstan and [President] Nursultan Nazarbayev, as well as Pugwash," said Pugwash President Jayantha Dhanapala.

He noted the Kazakh people and Kuyukov capture Nazarbayev's principles, a man who has done so much for nuclear disarmament including the creation, together with other four regional states, of a nuclear-weapon-free zone centre in Central Asia.

"We have seen Kazakhstan converted into a dialogue platform not only for nuclear disarmament, but also for conflicts like the Syrian conflict, with the Astana Process contributing towards the search for a political solution... The inauguration of the LEU Bank is a



Photo credit: Inform.kz

great tribute to the way in which Kazakhstan has contributed towards the strengthening of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, in particular the strengthening of two pillars of the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and non-proliferation," he said.

In his keynote remarks, Tokayev noted the country has been a staunch advocate of the Central Asian Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone treaty signed in Semipalatinsk in 2006.

"The establishment of the IAEA LEU Bank on the Kazakh territory is a vital contribution towards strengthening the non-proliferation regime," he added.

As a non-permanent member of the United Nations (UN) Security Council in 2017-2018, Kazakhstan has been focusing on nuclear disarmament issues.

"We have been promoting initiatives voiced by President Nursultan Nazarbayev, that is to establish a global anti-nuclear movement and to build a nuclear-weapon-free world by 2045, the year when the UN will celebrate its centennial anniversary. We are convinced that these actions to achieve nuclear zero are indispensable," he noted.

Tokayev added Kazakhstan calls upon all states to step up international efforts to strengthen the regime of the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons treaty and to bring into force the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT).

"A fair exercise of rights of all states to peacefully use nuclear energy under the strict verification by the IAEA is crucial to promoting global nuclear security. The nuclear deal on Iran has raised the prospects of peace and stability in the Middle East. We are confident that the LEU Bank will ensure an assured supply of nuclear fuel to boost the nuclear power industry," he said.

Pugwash Secretary General Paolo Cotta-Ramusino stressed Kazakhstan has been affected by nuclear weapons and plays an important role in contributing to stopping nuclear tests.

"We are reminded of the adverse effects of nuclear tests in terms of health, environment and people, but also in terms of politics, since nuclear tests are contributing to the creation of new nuclear weapons... The fewer countries that have nuclear weapons, the better it is. Non-proliferation is a key is-

sue. We will discuss nuclear risks, since nuclear weapons still exist. We have about 15,000-16,000 [nuclear weapons in the world right now]. Numbers can vary according to the various opinions and estimates," he said.

Cotta-Ramusino added "the idea of having an international nuclear fuel centre is an important one, something we would like to push and promote all over the world."

"We need to have international cooperation for the production of nuclear fuel for nuclear energy plans in a way that we have reciprocal control and basically a check that none of these nuclear fuels and materials can be used for military purposes," he said.

UN Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for Disarmament Affairs Izumi Nakamitsu spoke about the dangers that thousands of nuclear weapons can cause.

"We face a range of new challenges to the global disarmament and non-proliferation regime from deteriorating security conditions and shifting global balances due to the new technologies that are rapidly overhauling the status quo of the world economy, society and security," she said.

Nakamitsu reaffirmed the UN's united and solid commitment to nuclear disarmament and engaging in inclusive dialogue necessary to make it happen.

Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organisation (CTBTO) Executive Secretary Lassina Zerbo emphasised a number of challenges facing the international community making the need for dialogue and discussion among practitioners, the academic community and international organisations more critical than ever. He stressed the CTBTO's role in non-proliferation and disarmament.

"I have experience confronting one particular type of nuclear dan-

ger – the danger posed by nuclear testing. It is hard and dangerous in [terms of] destabilising impacts on global security and terrible effects on human health and environment. The absence of wartime does not mean the absence of victims and that leads me to the lesson learned by Kazakhstan's experience of nuclear testing. Kazakhstan is a vivid example of the risk posed by nuclear tests," he said.

"I think the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty flows in Kazakhstan's blood. In his manifesto, President Nazarbayev rightly points out that the effects of nuclear weapons and nuclear weapon testing cannot be contained in time or space. These are global issues which require global cooperation," he added.

Zerbo noted the importance of trust at the regional and international levels, adding that making the world free of nuclear tests is achievable.

"It needs strong political will and preference for multilateral and collective security. We can't ignore the collective ban treaty when we talk about non-proliferation and disarmament," he said.

"The CTBTO is doing important work by giving states confidence that the global moratorium against nuclear testing is being upheld and that no nuclear test or explosion will go undetected. To finish what we started, we need the ratification of the treaty by eight remaining countries. These are China, the U.S., Egypt, Iran and Israel, which are countries that need to ratify the treaty, and India, Pakistan and North Korea that have never signed it," he said.

The issues of nuclear disarmament and the UN negotiation process to prohibit nuclear weapons, energy and regional security and the future of civilian nuclear energy were also on the agenda of the five-day conference.

## UN General Assembly commemorates International Day against Nuclear Tests

Continued from Page A1

Nakamitsu also underlined that on Aug. 29, 1991 the Semipalatinsk nuclear test site was shut down by decree of Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev.

Deputy Foreign Minister Roman Vassilenko represented Kazakhstan in the discussion.

Welcoming the participants, Vassilenko said he took every member state's participation in the meeting "as an indication of our common firm commitment to a world without nuclear tests, as well as our true aspirations to ultimately build a future without a nuclear threat."

According to Vassilenko, the International Day against Nuclear Tests was designated by the UNGA as it unanimously adopted Resolution 64/35 Dec. 2, 2009. He thanked the UN community for endorsing this resolution, initiated by Kazakhstan, and especially the large number of member states who co-sponsored it.

Vassilenko said that Aug. 29, 1991, led to the subsequent silencing of many test sites and to other global actions and processes to reduce the global nuclear threat, including the development of the CTBT. The CTBT progressed considerably, he observed, and already provides an important service to mankind through its advanced monitoring systems. A new nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia was established, the first of its kind in the Northern Hemisphere.

Since 2015, he continued, Kazakhstan, along with Japan, as Co-Chair of the Article XIV Conference on the CTBT's early entry into force, has urged all stakeholders to work aggressively towards the treaty's entry into force.



"Yesterday, Kazakh Foreign Minister Kairat Abdrakhmanov and CTBTO Executive Secretary Lassina Zerbo, in their joint statement called on all UN member states to commemorate the International Day against Nuclear Tests annually by holding joint international events devoted to the urgent need for the early entry into force of the CTBT, especially given the continuing worrying quest for nuclear capabilities and nuclear tests in different regions of the world, including the Korean Peninsula," said Vassilenko.

He urged those states that have not yet signed or ratified the CTBT to do so without delay, and especially called on the remaining eight CTBT Annex II States, whose signatures and ratifications are needed for the treaty's entry into force, to demonstrate leadership in taking this important step.

"We owe it to the estimated millions of victims of nuclear weapons testing and to future genera-

tions," he said, adding that "if we need any further inspiration, let us remember the horrible consequences of nuclear weapons use in 1945 in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and of the four decades of nuclear weapons testing in Kazakhstan, as well as in the South Pacific, North Africa, North America and other regions."

Vassilenko mentioned The ATOM Project and its Honorary Ambassador and artist Karipbek Kuyukov, who was born armless because of the effects of nuclear testing at Semipalatinsk, have done a lot to tell the world of those consequences. "And I would urge everybody to learn that history to get motivated for further striving towards the noble goal of legally ending nuclear weapons testing on this planet," he declared.

"We believe the recently adopted Nuclear Weapons Ban Treaty will become yet another step towards a world free from the nuclear threat. We believe the ban treaty can and

should contribute to further progress in nuclear disarmament, including the early entry into force of the CTBT," said Vassilenko.

At the same time, Vassilenko expressed hope for continued dialogue among nuclear-weapon states and non-nuclear-weapon states on further actions in the area of nuclear disarmament, pointing out that, in this light, the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva remains "a key platform."

Vassilenko told the audience about Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev's Manifesto "The World. The 21st Century," which suggests elaborating the 2045 Global Strategic Initiative Plan, the main goal of which is to eliminate the root causes of war and conflicts and create a nuclear-weapons-free world by the UN's Centenary.

Noting that recently Astana hosted the Jubilee Conference of the Pugwash movement of scientists Aug. 25-29 and the opening of the IAEA Low Enriched Ura-

nium Bank Facility in Kazakhstan Aug. 29, Vassilenko shared the important initiatives outlined by Nazarbayev at the bank's launch ceremony.

"First, he proposed convening a summit of all states possessing nuclear weapons to collectively discuss further steps they could and should take towards nuclear disarmament. He further said the nuclear-weapon-free zones serve as effective means of stopping further nuclear proliferation and called for joining the efforts of all states participating in such zones."

According to Nazarbayev, Vassilenko continued, Kazakhstan has been a consistent proponent of nuclear disarmament and global nuclear security and believes that nuclear security can only be universal and non-discriminatory. The Kazakh leader had therefore proposed reviving the process of global nuclear security summits and offered Astana as a host for such a summit.

"President Nazarbayev further said that in 2020 the world will mark the 50th anniversary of the entry into force of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and called for joint efforts to make sure that by then the Nuclear Weapon Ban Treaty also enters into force," the diplomat noted.

Speakers of the UNGA meeting representing different regions and continents, such as Latin America (Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Mexico), Europe (Belgium, Italy, Norway, Switzerland), Asia (Malaysia, South Korea, Japan), as well as representatives of Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan thanked Kazakhstan and its leadership for establishing the international day which helps enhance the international community's commitment to banning nuclear testing.

The permanent representatives of the UN member states, experts, as well as representatives of international organisations and media took part in the meeting.

# ECONOMY

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 6, 2017

## 60 percent of privatisation programme completed, says Samruk Kazyna chair

Staff Report

ASTANA – The privatisation of 60 percent of companies sought for Kazakhstan's national privatisation programme within the Samruk Kazyna National Welfare Fund has been completed. Samruk Kazyna Chairperson Umirzak Shukeev reported Aug. 23 on the fund's activities to Kazakhstan President Nursultan Nazarbayev, highlighting the progress in its transformation and privatisation programmes.

Established in 2008, the fund manages assets, either in whole or in part, worth \$66.7 billion in strategic national companies in various sectors, including KazAtomProm, Air Astana, Kazakhstan



Temir Zholy and KazPost.

Following the instruction of Nazarbayev in 2013, the fund launched the transformation programme a year later to double the value of the fund assets, boost pro-

duction efficiency and improve assets management.

The privatisation programme envisaging the sale of 215 companies, unveiled the same year, was meant to optimise the assets port-

folio and enhance the performance of companies once they are put into a competitive environment.

Nazarbayev emphasised the importance of the fund for the Kazakh economy.

"Samruk Kazyna serves a special role for the country's economy. It manages the important state assets. The situation is now good. Prices for metals remain at a good level," noted the Kazakh President during the meeting with Shukeev.

Shukeev reported the progress in the fund activities in the last seven months.

"Production and cost indicators of the fund are much higher compared to the previous year. In general, the situation within the fund is now stable. Currently, we

are implementing over 130 transformation projects in subsidiaries. The privatisation of 60 percent of 215 companies sought for privatisation is completed. Now we are proceeding to selling large companies," Shukeev said.

He also touched upon the course of preparations for the International Forum of Sovereign Wealth Funds (IFSFW-2017) scheduled for Sept. 5-7 in Astana. The event will bring nearly 200 participants, including representatives of sovereign wealth funds from more than 30 countries, multilateral development and financial institutions and foreign investors, together to review issues for investment community amid unstable global economy.

### ECONOMY NEWS IN BRIEF

Twenty-four investment projects worth \$5 billion, covering areas such as engineering, agriculture, trade, chemistry, mining and infrastructure, are underway in Kazakhstan, said Kazakh Invest Deputy Chairperson Nursultan Jiyenbayev at a meeting with embassy representatives from 20 countries, reported 24.kz. He noted Kazakhstan creates all the conditions needed to launch joint ventures with foreign companies. Nearly \$1.5 billion was invested in the agro-industrial complex in the past five years, including a meat processing plant and factory producing semi-finished products built in the Almaty region. Foreign guests offered a number of project comments and recommendations, stressing the greatest attention should be given to infrastructure.

Pension savings in the Single Accumulative Pension Fund surpassed the mark of 7 trillion tenge (US\$20.75 billion) at the end of June and by the end of July reached 7.3 trillion tenge (US\$21.63 billion), reported ranking.kz. The average monthly increase was 84 billion tenge (US\$248.9 million). The volume of mandatory contributions in July was 56.7 billion tenge (US\$168 million), 2.4 times more than the mandatory contributions for July 2016. Mandatory contributions reached 403.5 billion tenge (US\$1.19 billion) from January-July, 76.3 percent more compared to the same period last year. The maximum increase – 61.3 billion tenge (US\$181.7 million) – was recorded in June.

Organic products from the Kostanai and Almaty regions are being exported to the European market, reported khabar.kz. The enterprises have passed certification to cultivate organic products and sell oilseeds, melon crops, grains and vegetables to Europe. The total amount of supplies exceeded \$10 million, said Vice Minister of Agriculture Gulmira Issayeva during the Agrarian Investment Forum. She added state support measures and the growth of investments are contributing to the development of the agro-industrial complex. In addition, the European Investment Bank will provide 100 million euros (US\$118.9 million) to lend to Kazakh farmers.

Kazakhstan will start issuing preferential loans to purchase domestic agricultural machinery, according to First Vice Minister of Agriculture Kairat Aituganov, reported khabar.kz. The interest rate will be no more than 5.5 percent per annum and the term of the loan is up to 10 years. Foreign agricultural machinery, which currently prevails in the country's market, is purchased annually for 20 billion tenge (US\$59.1 million). "Today, according to our analysis, we can replace the production of hinged and trailed equipment by 80 percent; that is, reduce import substitution by 80 percent. For the first time, KazAgro Holding and the Ministry of Agriculture developed the road map for lending. This year, 4 billion tenge (US\$11.83 million) is allocated for pilot lending for the purchase of trailed and attached equipment," he said.

More than 5,600 new jobs will be created in the Atyrau region under the State Programme of Accelerated Industrial and Innovative Development. Five projects worth 5 billion tenge (\$14.7 million) will be commissioned this year, creating 344 workplaces. Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev has emphasised developing the manufacturing sectors of the economy, which allowed the region to make a huge step towards a departure from commodity orientation. Twenty-eight projects worth 66.9 billion tenge (US\$197.9 million) were put into operation, creating 2,135 jobs in the first five-year period of industrial-innovative development from 2010-2014, said regional Department for Entrepreneurship and Industrial-Innovative Development head Aikyn Yeleusizov.

## National Bank should prevent inflation growth, Nazarbayev says

By Dana Omirgazy

ASTANA – President Nursultan Nazarbayev during an Aug. 14 meeting with National Bank Chairman Daniyar Akishev noted that the country's free floating national currency exchange rate

is working and instructed the nation's chief bank to continue inflation prevention measures, according to akorda.kz.

"All this plays a very important role – both the currency rate and everything else. How to improve the financial system, pension funds," Nazarbayev said.

Akishev briefed the President on the status of the currency and financial markets.

"The situation in the foreign exchange market was quite stable, except for the first week of August, when there were changes in the tenge exchange rate against the U.S. dollar, depending on ex-

ternal factors, primarily the exchange rate of ruble against the U.S. dollar. The fact that the sanctions the U.S. plans to implement against Russia can have an effect, including on Russia's neighbours, is also a negative background in the external financial markets. Analysing the situation, we be-

lieve that sanctions will not have a negative impact on Kazakhstan. Accordingly, the impact on the exchange rate will be minimal. The President gave a number of specific instructions to ensure stability in the exchange market and the need to give clear explanations," Akishev said after the meeting.

In the first week of August, the tenge rate has changed in the corridor of 320-340 tenge per dollar. Over the last two weeks the rate has lowered the fluctuations and fixed at about 332-334 tenge per dollar.

## National Bank cuts base rate to 10.25 percent



By Zhazira Dyussebekova

ASTANA – The National Bank of Kazakhstan has reduced the base rate to 10.25 percent with a corridor of +/-1 percent, according to an Aug. 21 press release.

"The annual inflation rate continues to decelerate and remains within the target range; its deceleration trajectory matches the forecasted estimates of the National Bank. Easing monetary policy conditions is stipulated by the stable level of the inflationary expectations, stabilisation of the situation on the commodity markets and also by the forecasts of the further deceleration of the inflation level in the medium term," read the statement.

In addition, the National Bank has reconsidered the possibility of further reducing the base rate in the short run, taking into account the existing uncertainty and volatility of external conditions. The base rate was cut due to several factors, including annual inflation and its expected increase, as well as economic activity and monetary conditions.

The annual inflation in July slowed to 7.1 percent due to the price drop of food products and remains in the middle of the target range. The core inflation in annual terms also keeps decreasing, noted the bank.

Economic activity continues to recover with stable growth in the domestic consumer market and investment demand. Economic recovery is proven by trade data and employment and external demand indicators, said the regulator. At

the same time, the negative dynamics of real wages limit inflationary risks.

### Economic activity continues to recover with stable growth in the domestic consumer market and investment demand.

"The gradual credit expansion supports the consumer demand; however, the further expansion of consumer credit will depend on the dynamics of the interest rate for individuals, which currently remains at a rather high level," according to the bank.

The National Bank also sees the situation stabilising in the commodity markets, with oil prices reaching \$50 per barrel after the recent drop in June. In addition, the external situation can be characterised by the growth of uncertainty and risk aggravation. In July, the rise of the FAO (Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations) Food Price Index was higher than expected as the result of the price growth for most cereals and dairy. Increased external pressure was also caused by the change in economic conditions among Kazakhstan's main trade partners.

Monetary conditions remain neutral, stated the report. The real interest rate is at a level corresponding to long-run potential economic growth rates.

## Balance of payment improvements reduce exchange rate risk, says NB chairman

By Zhaniya Urankayeva

ASTANA – The inflation target in Kazakhstan is determined at the level of 5-7 percent with further gradual decrease to 4 percent and lower by 2020. This was announced by National Bank Chair Daniyar Akishev Aug. 29 at a government meeting dedicated to the forecast and main priorities of social and economic development for 2018-2022 and the risk assessment for the exchange rate policy. The inflation forecast for 2018 is the key indicator for the National Bank.

The National Bank's estimates of future inflation and inflation expectations of the population demonstrate that "inflation will be stable within the target boundaries."

"A significant improvement in the balance of payments in the first half of 2017 reduces further risks for the exchange rate policy provided that world prices for the positions of Kazakhstan's exports are stable," said Akishev.

The head of the National Bank



National Bank Chair Daniyar Akishev.

emphasised that the dynamics of the national currency will be determined on the basis of fundamental factors, including the balance of payments, world oil prices and exchange rates in the trade partner countries that will prevent imbalances and ensure the competitiveness of the economy.

According to Akishev, the financial market will implement a programme to support the financial stability of the banking sector adopted by the National Bank board.

"The programme envisages cap-

ital injections into large banks in the form of subordinated debt on a return basis. The funds provided will go to the banks' capital. The limited capital of banks is a significant factor," he noted.

The volume of non-performing loans will be reduced by more than 1 trillion tenge (US\$3 billion) within five years, according to estimates.

"This will strengthen the financial stability and stability of the banking system and ensure an increase in the issuance of new loans to priority industries in the amount of at least 300 billion tenge (US\$887 million) per year," he said.

The financial regulator will continue to liberalise the activities of issuers and investors and simplify market regulation to further reform the stock market. Improvement of the stock market infrastructure and introduction of new technologies will also continue.

The bank will continue to implement a policy of free floating exchange rate.

## Economy grows 4 percent in 2017 so far, projected to grow 3.4 percent by year's end

Continued from Page A1

"If we look at key budget indicators, most importantly we cut budget deficit, which this year was 3.1 percent and next year, 1.1 percent. This is a significant decrease and in terms of macro and budget policy this is a big step forward," he said.

The budget deficit is expected to reach 1 percent by 2019-2020, according to Minister of Finance Bakhyt Sultanov, which will allow preserving the state debt at moderate levels.

The government approved a 9,217.9 billion tenge (US\$27.5 billion) state budget plan for 2018,

a 134.6 billion tenge (US\$401.6 million) increase above this year's plan, noted Sultanov.

Nearly half of the budget is earmarked for social sector spending and underpinning the budget plan hike are the increase in pensions and birth allowances as well as restructuring the living wage and process of assigning pensions.

Forming the budget policy was complicated due to two fiscal limitations, he said.

"First, it is the new budget policy under which we should ensure stability and management of the state debt and in this regard we need to keep the budget deficit at

around 1 percent in the next years. The state budget plan sets it at 1.1 percent for next year and at 1 percent in 2019-2020," Sultanov said.

The budget will eventually become less dependent on the National Fund and starting in 2018 will no longer use targeted transfers from the fund.

"As you know, over the past four years we used the National Fund for targeted transfers to finance our anti-crisis programmes that supported both banking and real sectors of the economy and implement our infrastructure development programmes. It produced good results," he added.

# BUSINESS

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 6, 2017

## BUSINESS NEWS IN BRIEF

The Kazatomprom national atomic company intends to sell a 40 percent stake in the Caustic company, according to kapital.kz. Dependent companies and subsidiaries of Kazatomprom are being sold through the Business Transformation Programme. The starting price of the block of shares is 7.44 billion tenge (US\$22 million). Applications for the sale are due by Sept. 25. Caustic produces caustic soda, liquid chlorine, hydrochloric acid and technical sodium hypochlorite for oil fields; the chemical, medical and food industries; and non-ferrous and ferrous metallurgy. It was established in 2002 at the Pavlodar chemical plant. Around US\$108 million was invested in the construction.

PJ Western, the owner of the Papa John's brand franchise in Russia and Belarus, will develop a network of pizzerias in three more countries: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Poland, according to Vedomosti. According to preliminary data, the first Papa John's pizzeria will open in Almaty this fall. The network plans to open 16 restaurants by 2022. Papa John's International was founded in 1984 in the U.S. Now it is the third-largest pizza delivery company in the world. The network includes 5,000 restaurants in 45 countries.

The largest co-working space in Central Asia is being built in Almaty. Its total area will be 13,000 square metres, according to the Almaty administration press service. The new office space will have 64 offices, four conference rooms, an exhibition area with a capacity of up to 1,000 people and a zone for children. Another new co-working space of 10,000 square metres will include the Centre for Contemporary Arts; Impact Hub, a network for the development of social entrepreneurship; Expo-zone; and American Corner + Maker's Space, a youth development enterprise offering consultations on obtaining educational grants and youth entrepreneurship.

Over the last seven years, 74 industrial projects worth 160.5 billion tenge (US\$473.2 million) were put into operation in the Ak-mola region, according to the regional communications service. The projects helped create 7,000 permanent jobs. The new projects are being supported by the Industrialisation Map, part of Kazakhstan's State Programme of Industrial and Innovative Development for 2015-2019, which includes 90 projects.

Over six months, Kazakhstan has imported 17,200 tonnes of tea worth US\$62.8 million, according to energyprom.kz. The average price for the tea is 2,900 tenge per kilogramme. Annual growth in tea sales reached 15.9 percent. The production of tea and coffee products from January to July 2017 amounted to 10,080 tonnes – only 1.8 percent more than a year earlier. The stagnation is caused by a reduction in output from Kazakhstan's main tea and coffee production region, Almaty. This year it produced 83.1 percent of the country's volume; last year it was 86.7 percent. The sector has been declining over the long term: the volume of output in the tea and coffee industry in 2016 were 9.8 percent below the indicators of 2015. The key tea suppliers to the country are Kenya (6,970 tonnes worth US\$25.2 million), India (6,920 tonnes worth US\$22.86 million) and Russia (1,740 tonnes worth US\$10.25 million).

Kazakhstan will introduce preventive control of the activities of businesses, according to Kazakh Minister of National Economy Timur Suleimenov. The draft law proposes to exclude 24 of the 114 spheres of control and three spheres from 18 areas of supervision in connection that were found to be inefficient or redundant. This will cut 50 percent requirements for the verification of business entities.

## Zaman-Bank becomes country's second Islamic bank

By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – Kazakhstan's previously commercial Zaman-Bank became an official Islamic bank Aug. 17 after receiving a license from the National Bank of Kazakhstan. The license allows the bank to tap into the Islamic banking sector and makes Zaman-Bank the second Islamic bank in the country.

Established in 1991, Zaman-Bank announced plans to convert to an Islamic bank in 2014, but was delayed as a result of a lack of regulations concerning the conversion process.

Converting is complicated because banks must conform to Islamic law principles and the country's National Bank regulations.

But with an Islamic banking ac-

counting for less than one percent of the country's total banking sector assets, the segment offers a wide range of opportunities.

Al Hilal Bank, operating since 2010 based on intergovernmental agreements between Kazakhstan and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), had been the country's only Islamic bank so far.

"The bank converted to an Islamic bank, because this sector is still open in Kazakhstan, especially consumer banking," said Head of Zaman-Bank Islamic Finance Development Unit Timur Rustemov in an interview for this story.

May 2013 marked a milestone event in the history of the bank, he said, as Zaman-Bank signed a strategic partnership agreement with the Islamic Corporation for the

Development of the Private Sector (ICD), a multilateral organisation and a member of the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) Group.

Subsequently, ICD acquired a mandate to transform Zaman-Bank into an Islamic bank with expected investment of up to 35 percent of the bank's subscribed and paid-up capital, noted the bank representative.

Zaman-Bank is planning to focus on retail banking and small and medium enterprises (SMEs), which are crucial for such an emerging economy as Kazakhstan. The bank already offers a range of deposit options, including wakala and mudaraba.

"With the second Islamic bank entering the sector, we hope eventually to offer Islamic auto finance, Islamic mortgage and a range of products and services for SMEs," noted Rustemov.

## More than 250 projects worth \$5.1 billion launched in first two years of industrialisation plan

By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – Kazakhstan launched 258 projects worth 1.7 trillion tenge (US\$5.1 billion) in the first two years of its second five-year industrialisation plan. The plan is meant to diversify the country's economy and boost domestic production.

Kazakhstan's First Vice Minister of Investments and Development Alik Aidarbayev reported on the country's progress in its State Industrial and Innovative Development Programme for 2015-2019 during an Aug. 22 press conference.

"In line with the industrialisation road map, we continue launching new ventures, creating and preserving jobs. We unveiled 258 projects worth 1.7 trillion tenge (US\$5.1 billion) since the beginning of the second five-year plan in 2015. We created 21,000 jobs. Since the beginning of this year, 32 projects worth 489 billion tenge (US\$1.47 billion) were commissioned, providing jobs to 3,900 people. Over the industrialisation years, [since 2010] 1,060 projects amounting to 5.1 trillion tenge (US\$15.33 billion) were launched creating 100,000 jobs," said Aidarbayev.

One of the key goals of the programme, according to the vice minister, is the diversification of the predominantly resource-based Kazakh economy and the subsequent increase of the processing industry's share in the domestic market.

"Our economy needs diversification and this programme has been working for several years now. The results are evident and every year we are witnessing the growth of the processing industry. It constitutes 12 percent of the current [gross domestic product] and 30 percent in the economy in general," added Aidarbayev.

A rapidly growing sector in the domestic economy, the processing industry also serves as a main driver of industrial growth, according to Aidarbayev.

"Within seven months of 2017 the real growth in the processing industry was 6.3 percent, while production grew 5.3 percent. The volume of exports totalled \$6.2 billion, which is 27.8 percent more than in the same period last year. This is due to the favourable conditions in international markets and expansion in new foreign markets. The amount of investments in the processing industry is estimated at 411 billion tenge (US\$1.24 billion) in the first half of 2017, which shows a 2.7 percent increase compared to the same period last year," noted the vice minister.

The industrialisation programme allowed the country to produce 500 different commodities previously not produced domestically, including passenger and freight cars, electric locomotives, x-ray equipment and pharmaceutical products.

One hundred projects worth more than one trillion tenge (US\$3 billion) are to be implemented by the end of this year.

## Manufacturing industry is major driver of growth, says official

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – Approximately 500 new locally made items have appeared on the market in the past seven years, said Kazakh First Vice Minister for Investments and Development Alik Aidarbayev at a government press conference in late August.

"About 500 new items previously not produced in Kazakhstan were launched, including freight and passenger cars, electric locomotives, trucks, cars and buses, transformers, X-ray equipment, LED lamps, titanium ingots and slabs, medicines, dairy products and other items," he said.

He noted 1,060 projects worth 5.1 trillion tenge (US\$15 billion) were initiated and more than 100,000 jobs created through the industrialisation programme from 2010-2014 and 2015-2019.

"In total, items worth about 8 trillion tenge (US\$24 billion), including 2.2 trillion tenge (US\$6.5 billion) in 2016, were produced since the beginning of the industrialisation programme implementation. The worth of items released was more than 180 billion tenge (US\$539 million) on average a month as part the implementation of the Business Road Map," said Aidarbayev.

The projects launched as part of the industrialisation map produced items which represented 18.5 percent (1.4 trillion tenge [US\$4 billion]) of the total manufacturing industry output in 2016.

Plans are underway to commission more than 100 projects estimated at 1 trillion tenge (US\$3 billion) and creating 10,000 jobs in the second half of the year.

More than 250 projects valued at approximately 1.7 trillion tenge (US\$5

billion) have been implemented and 21,000 jobs created in the manufacturing, pharmaceutical and food production industries in the past two years. Thirty-two projects generating more than 489 billion tenge (US\$1.4 billion) were started this year.

"All these enterprises, of course, operate in different sectors of the economy. Prommashkomplekt is one of the largest enterprises in the machine industry and is expected to produce wheel sets for waggons. Yessil House will produce high-quality aluminium in the Pavlodar region. The enterprise was launched with the participation of German investors," he said.

Product diversification and manufacturing sector growth are the major goals of the industrialisation programme. The manufacturing share of the GDP was 12 percent and reached 30 percent in the economy as a whole.

## KTZ boosts digitalisation to increase competitiveness

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – A conference called Drivers of Transport Development was held in the capital Aug. 28 in conjunction with the Eurasian Week international forum. The agenda focused on digital transformation in the transport industry and the Eurasian Economic Commission's (EAEC) cooperation with the Silk Road Economic Belt, including a report by Kazakhstan Temir Zholy (KTZ) on its plans to boost the digitalisation process.

KTZ Chief Engineer Batyr Kotyrev presented an introduction about innovative technologies in transport and spoke about the importance of ensuring high level, efficiency transport and logistics services. As a result, there is a need to make qualitative changes in infrastructure, service and institutional environment.

Kotyrev emphasised that simplifying and accelerating customs procedures, improving logistics and tracking and controlling cargoes throughout the supply chain are essential for the industry. He also stressed digitising the transport and logistics complex to ensure transparency, improve efficiency and reduce operating costs.

"Taking into account these and other factors, Kazakhstan Temir Zholy implements a set of measures for innovative and technological development, providing for a phased transition to the digitalisation of the company's business," he said.

Kotyrev indicated new technological platforms such as the multi-

rail system, contractual and commercial work and energy dispatch traction have been introduced in the railway industry, which completely corresponds to the goals of this year's state-of-the-nation address – "The Third Modernisation of Kazakhstan: Global Competitiveness." In accordance with the national programme, KTZ has created Digital Railway.

"The strategy provides for digitalisation of the company's business model and the introduction of new technologies in all key operating segments: freight and passenger transportation, infrastructure and transport logistics," he said.

The company is planning to introduce a multimodal transportation management system and terminals in the transport logistics sector, an intelligent planning and management system for freight rail transport. The strategy also includes operating and maintaining infrastructure, using a high-tech diagnostics system based on the Magistral Automated Control System and constructing a wireless network based on the LTE-R standard.

Introducing satellite Internet in passenger trains and equipping stations with digital services will allow the national railway to switch to electronic ticket sales and provide a new level of passenger service.

Using modern information technologies is a top priority for the company, as they will increase the efficiency of all processes, number and quality of services provided and level of competitiveness and client-centeredness, said Kotyrev.

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# EDITORIAL & OPINION

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 6, 2017

## EXPO 2017, OIC and its first ever Summit on Science and Technology

Science – and the practical technological developments that spring from advances in knowledge – affect every moment of our lives. They are the reasons we live longer and healthier, are more prosperous and have more opportunities than previous generations. Science has transformed our lives for the better.

We should be grateful, too, that the pace of scientific advances is not slowing down. We are depending on science to find the solutions to many of our most pressing global problems.

Look, for example, at the challenge of climate change. It's thanks to science that we are aware of worrying changes in our atmosphere and the impact on our climate and societies now and in the future. We have seen these warnings realised in the devastating flooding in Bangladesh and the southern United States in the last few days. But we are also relying on science to help us find solutions to this increasing climate crisis.

It is, of course, important that countries collectively and individually act to reduce the greenhouse gases in our atmosphere. But we also need to develop technology, which will help us mitigate and adapt to the climate change underway. And it is as critical that all these steps are taken while allowing countries to continue to grow their economies and improve living standards.

Some of these answers like generating more electricity from solar and wind power rather than fossil fuels are already well known. But if we are to maximise the benefits of such green energy sources, there is still a great deal of work to do. We need to find ways, for example, of storing efficiently the power generated when the sun shines and wind blows.

The switch to renewable and sustainable energy sources is, of course, the central theme of EXPO 2017 which is now entering its final days. It put science and technology centre stage, showcasing the latest developments in the area of future energy and identifying areas where we need to make faster progress.

It also fascinated and thrilled the millions of visitors to the exhibition site and its many pavilions. We won't know the final figures until sometime after EXPO17 finally closes its

doors, but it looks as if it will have attracted approximately four million people over the summer. Surveys have shown that they have overwhelmingly enjoyed what they have seen and experienced.

Not surprisingly, most of those attending have come from Kazakhstan but there have, as anyone living in Astana has noticed, a steady stream of visitors from far further afield. As well as the physical legacy that EXPO 2017 has been designed from the start to leave behind, one of its intangible impacts will be helping to put Kazakhstan more firmly on the global tourist map.

The main long-term aim of the exhibition was, however, to share knowledge about science and forge partnerships to accelerate advances in the future. There are plenty of signs that the exhibition has already encouraged such developments. And it is this same spirit which lies behind the hosting of the first Organisation of Islamic Cooperation Summit on Science and Technology in Astana next week.

This first summit is an important development for an organisation that is growing in global importance. It will decisively push science, innovation and education up the OIC's agenda, which is key to modernising economies and meeting the needs of its 1.5 billion citizens. There is massive scope for increased cooperation in science and technology, which will not only benefit individual member countries but the world as a whole.

The summit will also provide a powerful answer to those few voices who try to suggest that somehow Islam is against science and education. It is a distorted and backward view which anchors Islam in the past and ignores the extraordinary contribution of Islamic science to the world.

It was, after all, Islamic scholars, physicians, mathematicians and scientists who kept the light of learning burning when Europe was trapped in the Dark Ages. And today, scientists from Islamic countries continue to play a key role in advances in knowledge in every continent and in every field. These contributions should be celebrated and encouraged to make our world a healthier, more prosperous and peaceful place.

## Astana Expo and warm feeling that stays on

By David Valera

As someone who spent the major part of his summer in Kazakhstan working in and around EXPO 2017. I think it's important to share both my thoughts and experiences as well as feelings about this, especially as a foreigner.

To begin with, my connection to the expo goes back four years when this was still in the very early stages and it seemed like the entire country was still preparing. Throughout those years I would go to Kazakhstan and I would see the progress and the tremendous effort being made by the Kazakh government and its people as they prepared for what is to be one of this country's biggest events thus far.

When I arrived earlier this summer I not only found the expo to be beautifully completed and efficiently functioning but I also found myself arriving into a beautiful and modern new airport with an amazing facility and highly educated and professional staff.

Everyone I meet spoke fluent and perfect English and if your main language was not English (for the first time ever since I have been visiting Kazakhstan) I also met many Kazakhs whose Spanish was better than my own, and if Spanish was not your language then many Kazakhs also spoke fluent German, Italian and countless other languages perfectly.

The Kazakh people representing Kazakhstan both at the airport and at the expo truly are a great example of both the excellence and incredible progress this country continues to make towards



being the leader in future energy, smart city design, nuclear non-proliferation and a technologically advanced and modern society.

Everywhere I went, I was greeted with a warm smile, friendly hello and made to feel completely at home. The city of Astana (where the expo is being held) although it has always been a beautiful city, was transformed into a magnificent and modern metropolis where laser light shows, countless celebrations and fascinating events were held every night. Many world-famous artists such as DJ Aoki, David Guetta and Akon performed throughout the event. The beautifully designed architectural facilities are also a testament to how much this country continues to advance into the future.

Many of my friends and

family always ask me about safety so let me be very clear: the level of safety, security and oversight in and around the country as well as the city itself made me feel safer than being in my own home! And yes, police were everywhere but they were all courteous and professional and always greeted me with a smile and very polite 'hello.'

Although my work continues in this part of the world, I am truly and incredibly happy for the people of Kazakhstan and all the success they continue to achieve.

As someone who has traveled often to many different countries I continue to love both Kazakhstan and its people, not simply because of all the success they seem to be having but because even with all this success they remain hum-

ble, kind, hard working, welcoming and, above all, extremely proud of their culture.

Lastly, I really want to say 'thank you so much' to all my dear friends who greeted me while I was a visitor in your beautiful country, from meeting me at the airport, to never letting me pay for dinner, to showing me your beautiful Borovoye (Kazakhstan's version of the Hamptons). You made me feel not simply like part of your family but like a true Kazakh!!! I hope someday to return the favour when you visit NYC in the future.

I love you, Kazakhstan!

**The author is Director of Government Relations at CRM and Senior Vice President for International Trade & Development at GP International.**

## Kazakhstan can be moral leader, key mediator in nuclear disarmament: head of CTBTO

Continued from Page A1

This is an important element, he said, as it is young people who will be the leaders of tomorrow.

"And I often say they're the leaders of today due to social media – and if so, then we should give them the tools for them to make sure their world today is safe and secure and they can prepare a better world for the next generation."

The key tool, he outlined, is "knowledge about what nuclear testing is, the consequences of nuclear testing, visiting Kazakhstan, knowing more about Semipalatinsk, knowing more about Hiroshima and understanding how this fits and how this can lay out the [groundwork] for the enforcement of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT)."

"The world has to know that Kazakhstan has stopped nuclear tests and closed its nuclear test site and has given up the fourth largest nuclear arsenal in the world to try and promote peace and security in Kazakhstan and the region, and then for the rest of the world. Having Central Asia as a region free of nuclear weapons is an important step for both the country and its president. Then we hope his leadership in this matter will shine around the world and the region for people to understand that the 21st century should remain as a world where nuclear weapons are history."

The IAEA Low Enriched Uranium (LEU) Bank that officially



opened Aug. 29 makes Kazakhstan "shine in the international community" as a country that has taken concrete steps to resolve some global issues that led to the proliferation of nuclear capabilities, Zerbo said. The bank is a stockpile of LEU, necessary for nuclear fuel, that will be available for countries to purchase to power their peaceful nuclear energy projects in case of global supply chain interruptions.

"Kazakhstan should be commended for that," Zerbo said. But there remains work to be done for people in Kazakhstan to understand that the bank is a force against nuclear proliferation, not a return to dangerous nuclear activities on its soil, he noted.

Aug. 29, the day of the LEU Bank's opening ceremony, is a very symbolic day for the CTBTO, Zerbo highlighted. "It's the International Day against Nuclear Testing and [we are] the only organisation that cares about this issue right now."

The CTBTO, established in 1997, is an international organi-

sation that will only be fully operational upon the entry into force of the CTBT – which is yet to be signed and ratified by eight so-called Annex II states with nuclear weapons or nuclear weapon capabilities: China, Egypt, India, Iran, Israel, Pakistan, North Korea and the U.S. Until then, the organisation is the preparatory commission. One hundred and eighty-three countries have signed the treaty to date, and 166 have ratified it; however, international experts speculate that the eight countries that have not signed and ratified are unlikely to join any time in the near future, as we still live in a world where nuclear weapons are seen to guarantee security.

Zerbo has an important message about that.

"Prohibition of nuclear weapons can't happen in a snap," he said. "It needs negotiations, agreements and compromise. On the one hand, we have two countries in the P5 [the five permanent members of the UN Security Council] – the U.S. and China – their ratifications are pending. On the other, we have Iran, Israel and Egypt in the Middle East; while India, Pakistan and North Korea have not even signed the treaty. Experts say that China is waiting for the U.S., Iran is waiting for Israel, India is waiting for Pakistan and so forth – but someone has to take leadership. Of course, any of those remaining eight countries' leadership would be helpful but in the current geopolitical context, I think it is wise

for the international community to inject the notion of bringing the CTBT into force as an element for confidence-building."

Kazakhstan can help bridge this gap, Zerbo says. Kazakhstan is currently a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council, but

it has also only recently become a middle-income nation and has its own development work to do. Kazakhstan, with its unique nuclear history, can mediate between these groups. "This is where I am asking Kazakhstan to play that role, because Kazakhstan is among those

two [groups], as it has good relations with the P5 countries and the Group of 77 [coalition of developing nations]," he said.

"Kazakhstan has a role to play using its moral obligation to make people understand that we all want to achieve a world free of nuclear weapons but we have to make sure that we have established the trust necessary among countries before we can achieve that dream." It is a deficit of trust that has led people of the world to believe they need nuclear weapons to protect themselves, Zerbo believes. But this crucial trust can be built.

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# OPINIONS

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## EXPO 2017 “is what conversation on transition to clean energy needs to be about,” says head of UN Environment Programme

By Aigerim Seisembayeva

ASTANA – Erik Solheim, head of the UN Environment Programme and Deputy Secretary-General of the UN, visited Astana late last month to meet with senior Kazakh officials and discuss joint activities, as well as become acquainted with the future-energy themed EXPO 2017. The Astana Times had the opportunity to interview the Norwegian-born diplomat.



Erik Solheim

**First of all, thank you for visiting Kazakhstan and attending EXPO 2017 with the theme of Future Energy. The country largely depends on fossil fuels – do you think it fulfilled its aim to showcase the best practices in clean energy and encourage other nations to use them?**

For me, this really has been a welcome declaration of intent that sends a very strong message. Kazakhstan has shown that it understands the challenges faced by the planet and that the future, both for its own economy and the rest of the world, needs to be low carbon.

What is also so encouraging is that rather than sit around and talk about the problems, Kazakhstan has hosted an event entirely focused on solutions. We have seen the solutions of the future and solutions that can be deployed today, ranging from energy-generating buildings to electricity from garden plants and even a sustainable dance floor that I had a go on myself!

Ultimately, this is what the conversation on the transition to clean energy needs to be about. It is about showcasing innovation, making connections and highlight-

ing the incredible opportunities that are out there.

**As you know, the Kazakh government aims to rearrange its energy mix and make 50 percent of the country's energy come from renewables by 2050. What are the tools to make investors interested in this process? What incentives should the government apply to make this goal a reality?**

This is an important and welcome commitment, and it is perfectly achievable. A key ingredient will be to create the policy framework and stable business space for this change to take place, so investors can be mobilised and confident that a shift to renewable energy is irreversible. From a political perspective, it always helps if such strategies are presented as a non-partisan, national priority.

As a key voice in the Central Asia region, it is also important for Kazakhstan to do its part to ensure that the environment is a central priority in the development of China's One Belt, One Road initiative.

**What are your practical recommendations for Kazakhstan's**

**speedy transition to a truly green economy?**

Specific incentives can come in two broad forms. One is the phasing down or removal of subsidies that encourage excessive production and consumption of fossil fuels. These subsidies serve as a disincentive for investments in renewable energy.

The other is the public sector's sharing of risks with investors in renewable energy. This risk sharing could be done in the form of loan guarantees, tax breaks for both producers and users of renewable energy, public procurement requiring the use of renewable energy products, requirement for the national grid to be open to renewable energy sources and public investment in research and development, among others.

In broader terms, it is also critical to build public support for the change by finding ways in which the public can quickly see that the shift brings more jobs and better health, for example.

At expo, we held a high level dialogue on this topic together with the government of Switzerland and the explorer and Solar Impulse pioneer Bertrand Piccard. There is promising momentum that the transition will be a speedy one.

In order to ensure a speedy transition, it is important first to specify measurable goals and targets over specific time periods, then to estimate the amount of investments required to deliver those goals and targets. Domestic and external financial resources need to be mobilised to make the investments happen and these investments need to be monitored and evaluated

to see how they contribute to the achievements of the goals and targets, while making policy adjustments as needed.

**The world is now heading towards urbanisation. By 2050, two-thirds of the world's population is expected to be living in cities. Do you think it is possible to combine urbanisation and a green future? How can we achieve this?**

It all depends on how we choose to live. With the right urban planning and infrastructure – coupled with smart choices made by citizens – we can certainly achieve this. There is no reason for cities to be unbearable, polluted and gas-guzzling places!

Look at Astana. Any visitor can see how rapidly it is developing, yet it still aims to see more than half of its land area flourish with green cover by 2030. Connecting artificial forests and parks throughout the city will not only help clean the air, but also reduce its temperature and ensure it remains a pleasant place to live.

Meanwhile, the city of Copenhagen is also growing, but still aims to become carbon neutral by 2025. Thanks to excellent urban design and the fact that cycling is fun, cheap and healthy, even now there are more bikes than people in the city! Such examples show how urbanisation and a green future can go hand-in-hand.

While more and more of us live in cities, we can and must keep our relationship with nature intact. Astana shows that we need not imagine ugly, grey and inefficient buildings when we think of urbanisation – green can and must be beautiful. That puts us in a bet-

ter position to take care of the environment.

**How do you assess Kazakhstan's Official Development Assistance programme?**

I very much commend the programme, which shows just how mature and valuable the country's role is for the region. Such leadership can also help contribute to the global goals. We hope that Kazakhstan can continue to set an example and also step up its investment in our common climate; for example, to the environment fund that supports our work and the quality of service that we strive to deliver to member states.

**Time has shown that policies and environmental challenges are closely intertwined and interdependent. Taking into account that the U.S. administration is one of the biggest and most influential actors, what do you think are the consequences of the Trump administration's decision to withdraw from the Paris Agreement?**

Earlier this year, a coal museum in Kentucky in the United States needed to install new electricity capacity. What type of energy did it choose? It opted for solar power. This speaks volumes as to where we are inevitably heading. There can be no doubt that the future lies in clean energy.

If anything, I think we have seen a renewed surge in momentum from cities and the private sector towards climate action in the United States. As a result, at this rate we can realistically expect the country to fulfil its commitments made under the Paris Agreement – whether it is officially a part of it or not. We are talking about a po-

tential win-win for us all, whether for bright young minds preparing for a job in the clean energy sector or people living in what are sadly high-risk areas for hurricanes or other natural disasters.

You mention how policies and environmental challenges are closely linked and I would add other factors. With pollution levels rising worldwide, prices for renewables falling and the high potential for job creation, I strongly believe the clean energy transition will happen even faster than we think.

**We know that you have solid experience as a peace negotiator, having contributed to the peace processes in Sri Lanka, Sudan, Myanmar, Nepal and Burundi. Do you think the Astana Process is bringing any tangible results? What else can be done to make it efficient?**

There certainly has been some progress, in that we have seen some reduction in violence in Syria as a result of the Astana Process. I very much hope that it will succeed, but unfortunately the kind of tangible result that we need to see – a complete cessation of violence and a halt to a terrible humanitarian crisis – has not happened yet. This is ultimately what matters most: an end to the terrible suffering of the Syrian people.

Speaking from experience, I fully understand how challenging a peace process can be. Getting two sides or multiple sides to the same table is in itself a huge challenge and every step of the process can be extremely frustrating and discouraging. Every step can be very time consuming, meaning a great deal of patience, determination and resolve is required.

## Kazakhstan, Poland build on 25 years of relations, says envoy

By Galiaskar Seitzhan

As became known, President of the Republic of Poland Andrzej Duda plans to pay a state visit to Astana on Sept. 6-7. On the eve of this major event in bilateral relations development, we asked a few questions from the Ambassador of the Republic of Kazakhstan to the Republic of Poland Margulan Baimukhan.

**What is the basis of the Kazakh-Polish cooperation, what is the mutual interest of the two countries?**

Thank you for your interest in the theme of Kazakhstan-Poland cooperation. On April 6, 2017, we marked the 25th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between our two countries. Cooperation between Astana and Warsaw has reached a high level and is developing very well.

The approaches of Kazakhstan and Poland to the issues of ensuring regional and global security, fighting the main challenges and threats of the present are common or similar. Moreover, the parties often support each other's international initiatives. For example, Poland voted in support for the candidacy of Kazakhstan on the issue of holding EXPO 2017.

Thus, from the political perspective, there are no unsettled issues or disagreements between the two countries. At the same time, by mutual recognition of the parties, there is a significant unused potential in the sphere of economic cooperation. In this regard, I think it will be correct to say that the basis of our contacts, first of all, is the promotion of trade and investment and innovation cooperation.

Poland is the leader in economic growth in Central and Eastern Europe, the second-fastest growing economy in the European Union. The GDP growth in 2017 is forecasted to be 3.9 percent. Therefore, it is not by chance that it is one of the leading economic partners of Kazakhstan in the European region. In turn, our country in terms of economic development also takes



Margulan Baimukhan

a leading position in the Eurasian space. As a result, Polish-Kazakh turnover is more than 80 percent of the total trade volume of Poland with the countries of our region.

**In August last year, President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev paid a state visit to Warsaw. How did it affect the course of bilateral cooperation?**

High-level visits have always been great events in bilateral relations, as they create a powerful stimulus to their further development. As a rule, the meetings of the heads of state result in a breakthrough in all spheres of cooperation: political, economic, cultural, humanitarian, scientific and technical, etc.

On August 22-23, 2016, the President of Kazakhstan visited Warsaw. During the talks with the President of Poland, the sides discussed topical issues of bilateral relations and the international agenda. The visit gave a qualitatively new and significant impetus to the promotion of all-round cooperation between our countries.

Further development can be observed in the legal framework of bilateral interaction. Within the framework of the visit, the Declaration on Economic Cooperation between Kazakhstan and Poland was adopted in the presence of the heads of state, two intergovernmental agreements on cooperation in the field of agriculture and readmission, as well as a Framework Agreement

on Cooperation between the Development Bank of Kazakhstan and the Bank of the National Economy of Poland were signed. The latter document provides for opening by the Polish side of a credit line in the amount of 300 million euros to finance joint investment projects in Kazakhstan.

An important event of the visit was the Kazakh-Polish business forum. More than 400 Polish companies and representatives of central state bodies, economic and financial organizations of the two countries took part in it.

**What is the situation in bilateral trade?**

The visit of the head of state to Warsaw gave a significant impetus to bilateral cooperation, including the sphere of trade, which has become most noticeable since the beginning of this year. In particular, according to the Ministry of Development of Poland, the trade turnover in the first half of 2017 amounted to 601.9 million euros. The increase compared to the same period of last year exceeded 75.5 percent. At the same time, exports from Kazakhstan amounted to 389.1 million euros (up by 90 percent), imports from Poland – 212.8 million euros (a growth of 54.5 percent). It is expected that by the end of 2017 bilateral trade will significantly exceed one billion euros.

**What is being done by the embassy to develop mutually beneficial cooperation with Poland?**

Currently, private capital of Poland is actively represented in many areas of the Kazakh economy. More than 200 entities with Polish participation are registered in our country. The gross inflow of direct Polish investments into the economy of Kazakhstan amounted to \$190 million, and the amount of Kazakh investments in Poland is \$25.5 million. Among the Polish flagship investors in the Kazakh economy are Polpharma group of companies (pharmaceutical plant in Shymkent) and Selena Group (a plant for the production of construction mixtures and products for thermal insulation in the Spe-

cial Economic Zone Astana – New City).

Kazakhstan is regularly visited by representatives of large Polish businesses, who study the possibilities of investing in various projects in Kazakhstan. The embassy strongly supports this process, considering that Kazakhstan has all the necessary conditions for this.

As a new format for cooperation, the embassy sees the interaction of potential Polish investors with a specialised national investment company Kazakh Invest. It is expected to carry out the work by a principle of “one stop shop.” In this regard, the company will not only be the “entry point” for a potential Polish investor, but will also provide its support in interaction with government agencies and solve emerging issues on-site. In general, the embassy is aimed to work on specific points of specific projects. At the initial stage, probably, their number will not be so high, but they will immediately get a commitment to a long-term investment presence in the Kazakhstan market.

We also expect active cooperation with Kazakh Invest and other business entities of Kazakhstan to promote Kazakh products to the Polish market. In this regard, we believe it is important to study the Polish experience in determining the product line and supporting exports. For example, it is interesting, due to what factors, according to the results of the first half of 2017 alone, the volume of income from Polish exports, according to official statistics, amounted to 100 billion euros? Naturally, the most important tasks of any embassy include informing its capital about positive developments in international practice that can be useful in the realities of its own country.

**Which sectors of the economy are the most relevant in the Kazakh-Polish cooperation?**

Drivers of economic growth in our country are the new sectors of the economy, created in the framework of innovative industrialisation. In this regard, economic cooperation between the two countries will focus on the implementation of

joint projects in the fields of pharmaceuticals, engineering, IT, agro-industrial complex, food industry, chemical industry, financial sector, tourism, mining equipment, building materials and furniture. Poland has appropriate technologies and knowledge in these areas. The country is leading in Europe for a number of positions in the industrial nomenclature. In particular, it is the first in the production of TVs, third in the production of copper, eighth in steel and tenth in paper and cardboard production. An important place in the EU economy belongs to Polish agriculture. Poland is the first in the European Union for growing apples, the second for rye and potatoes and the third for beets and rapeseed. Among the European leaders are Polish producers of wheat, milk and meat.

Both countries also have a significant transit-transport potential. Therefore, today joint projects related to One Belt, One Road initiative are also topical. It is noteworthy that the wide-gauge railway track [used in Kazakhstan, Russia, Belarus and other CIS countries] reaches the heart of Poland through its eastern border for a distance of up to 300 kilometres.

A new breath should be given to interregional cooperation between the Kazakh regions and the Polish voivodships. It should be noted that each separate region of Poland has its own production and export priority products. Thus, the eastern voivodships specialise in the processing of agricultural products and the production of agricultural machinery. In turn, the western regions specialise in manufacturing metal structures and plastic products.

An important and new element of cooperation can be the participation of Polish capital in the privatisation of assets of the Samruk Kazyna Sovereign Wealth Fund as well as facilities in the regions within the framework of the Comprehensive Privatisation Plan for 2016-2020.

From January 1, 2017, the introduction of a visa-free regime for Polish citizens, the launch of the direct Astana-Warsaw air communication, as well as active participation of Poland in EXPO 2017, were

stimulating conditions for further development of mutually beneficial cooperation.

**What other areas of cooperation, except for the development of economic contacts, are of particular interest in the relations with Poland?**

The relations between the two countries are expanding in the sphere of education. The impetus for this was the entry into force on June 6, 2016 of an intergovernmental agreement on cooperation in education. Currently, more than 770 students from Kazakhstan study at Polish universities.

Agreements are also being implemented in the field of cultural exchange. For example, in November 2016, the creative team of Astana Ballet showed performances, devoted to the 25th anniversary of independence of our country, in opera theatres of Warsaw and Wrocław. The works by the canonical writers of the two countries were published in Kazakh and Polish. In the near future, it is planned to sign an intergovernmental agreement on cultural and scientific and technical cooperation.

An important role in strengthening the ties between the two countries belongs to the Polish diaspora residing in Kazakhstan. At present, it accounts to about 34,000 people. It serves as a kind of living bridge of friendship and cooperation between our countries. Kazakhstan has created all conditions for the Polish diaspora, including for the study of the native language, preservation of the national culture and traditions.

The unifying factor of Kazakhstan and Poland is the common memory of the World War II. Over 60,000 Kazakhs died for liberation of Poland from the Nazi invaders. The embassy is involved in the search for burials of the soldiers who died on the Polish territory. At the same time, Kazakh diplomats actively cooperate with archival depositories of local authorities, as well as the Polish Red Cross. In turn, hundreds of Poles worked during the war at defence industries in Kazakhstan.

# EURASIA&WORLD

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 6, 2017

## Astana and Seoul: 25 years of mutual sympathy, trust and support

By Dana Omirgazy

ASTANA – With the new government of South Korea, Astana and Seoul have greater momentum to expand relations. This year, dealings between the countries have intensified significantly thanks to EXPO 2017, said South Korean Ambassador and Korean pavilion commissioner Kim Dae-sik in an interview with The Astana Times.

“As the new ambassador, I found out that our relations are very strong. I would rather say that our relations are more than excellent. Various aspects define our relations, including economic, political, cultural and people-to-people exchange,” he said.

The relations between the countries have been developing rapidly in all areas during the past 25 years, he noted.

“Since the establishment of diplomatic ties between the countries in 1992, our cooperation has been developing well. In 2009, we became closer as strategic partners. As clear evidence, we opened the consulate general in Almaty and a cultural centre in Astana. It is not a common case in every country. There are several Korean institutions and centres supported by public finance in Almaty and Astana,” said Kim.

Cultural and educational activities organised by Korean centres to familiarise local citizens with Korean culture always gather a large



Kim Dae-sik

number of visitors. The ambassador believes the interest reflects the closeness and friendship of the nations.

“This close relation and friendship somehow was initiated by understanding of President Nazarbayev himself. He really has a very strong and positive image of Korea. He always mentions that Korea is one of the countries Kazakhstan should learn from. Nazarbayev has made five state visits to Korea since 1992. His attitude toward Korea became the locomotive to make our relations closer. People of both countries also became closer,” he said.

He expressed his appreciation for the Kazakh government’s strong support of Seoul’s policy toward North Korea.

“It is very important for our security as North Korea makes a provocation by firing missiles or making nuclear tests. In addition,

the Kazakh government issued a statement in which it very strongly condemns North Korea’s actions. Kazakhstan voluntarily abandoned nuclear weapons in 1993. As a global leader, your President showed a very good example of making a world free of nuclear weapons,” he told the paper.

From an economic point of view, Kazakhstan is the most important partner for South Korea in the Central Asian region. The country is also considered to be the biggest destination for investments.

Approximately 200 Korean companies are operating throughout Kazakhstan. Seoul proposed the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) conclude the free trade agreement, which, if enacted, could expand trade volume, investments and industrial cooperation.

“Your government announced that Kazakhstan is set to be a hub for transport and logistics connecting Europe and Asia. This is, of course, a very good direction because of Kazakhstan’s location in Central Asia. It is a good strategy. If such an idea is implemented, a greater volume of Korean products can be moved through this route,” said Kim.

Tourism statistics indicate 34,000 Kazakhs visited South Korea last year and 28,000 Korean tourists came to Kazakh cities. Introduction of a visa free regime between the countries at the end of 2014 was followed by a rapid increase in tourist flow.

“The Astana expo provided a great venue to intensify our relations. Many Koreans visited Astana this year. The Korean pavilion is the biggest one with the biggest number of cultural events organised throughout the three-month period. Expo is a festival; everybody goes there to look at advanced technologies. For the success of the festival of our friend, we have tried to be the most active pavilion. We have been holding about 250 performances and we try to show our friendship and showcase our achievements in renewable energy for citizens of Kazakhstan and other countries,” he said.

“In July, we celebrated Korean National Day with numerous fo-

ways to develop cooperation,” he added.

This year, Korean diaspora are celebrating their 80th settlement year in Asia. The Korean diaspora in Kazakhstan includes 107,169 people, according to 2016 statistics. They grow as excellent Kazakh citizens and are a very good bridge to connect Kazakhstan with Korea, noted Kim.

“As a new ambassador, I have very strong motivation and will to further promote our relations. I have big hope and I believe that our future is very bright. I will really try to expand our relations further. Economic cooperation implies cooperation not only in conventional energy, that is oil

development, e-government, and small and medium-sized enterprises,” he said.

South Korea has also been demonstrating a strong commitment to renewable energy and the pavilion highlights 10 key technologies. Korea is also trying to promote renewable energy sources as much as possible and Kim believes the countries have good potential for win-win cooperation in the field.

“Kazakhstan has set a target to generate up to 50 percent of energy from renewable and alternative sources by 2050 and started the Green Bridge Partnership Programme in 2011. This is a very ambitious target. South Korea also aims to generate 20 percent of its electricity with clean, renewable energy by 2030,” he said.

He also shared his impressions after visiting the host nation’s pavilion.

“I saw every aspect of Kazakh culture and the way of life of Kazakh people. I like Kazakhstan’s idea of future energy,” he added.

Nazarbayev visited the Korean pavilion Aug. 26. The Kazakh President, who made a state visit to Korea last November, stressed the deep ties between the countries and thanked everyone in the Korean language.

The Korean pavilion welcomed its 400,000th visitor this month. As expected, the number of visitors will reach half a million people in early September.

**KIM: “This close relation and friendship somehow was initiated by understanding of President Nazarbayev himself. He really has a very strong and positive image of Korea. He always mentions that Korea is one of the countries Kazakhstan should learn from. Nazarbayev has made five state visits to Korea since 1992. His attitude toward Korea became the locomotive to make our relations closer. People of both countries also became closer.”**

rums and seminars. One of them was organised by ethnic Koreans. At that forum, business people from the two countries discussed

and gas and construction, but also in many other areas such as the IT sector, health and medical areas, education, human resource devel-

## Pugwash Council...

Continued from Page A1

At the initiative of The ATOM Project, the conference participants stood at 11.05 am to observe a minute of silence as a mark of respect for victims of nuclear tests on the Aug. 29 United Nations (UN) International Day against Nuclear Tests.

Parliament Senate Chairman Kassym-Jomart Tokayev said in his conference closing speech that “the Pugwash conference has been known for bringing scientific insight generating meaningful and collaborative dialogue on the most pressing issues facing humanity and seeking a world free of nuclear weapons.”

The Pugwash has a wide outreach engaging the young generation and groups worldwide.

“The Astana meeting brought a new momentum to this important work. It’s not a coincidence that our country was offered to hold this forum. Today the international community marks the International Day against Nuclear Tests. That day 26 years ago the Semipalatinsk nuclear test site was closed down by the historic decree of Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev who all these years has been playing a key role in global efforts in non-proliferation and disarmament areas,” he said.

Tokayev added that the contact with the Pugwash will be maintained in the future as it fulfils its noble mission promoting the cause of peace through dialogue across divides and offering new thinking and creating approaches to emerging challenges.

In his concluding remarks, Pugwash Secretary General Paolo Cotta-Ramusino spoke about the topics discussed by the working groups during the five-day conference.

“The conference started with the test ban treaty saying that in Kazakhstan, the legacy of the nuclear tests is a serious problem. We wanted to use this opportunity to strengthen and to stress the importance of bringing CTBT into force. Then we discussed the proposal in the UN for a new treaty, which in fact is a total nuclear ban. We are looking forward to helping the treaty itself to be expanded the most as we can,” he said.

A nuclear-weapon-free zone and WMD-free zones in the Middle East and nuclear risks were also discussed.

“Nuclear dangers are not only connected with the existence of

weapons but also the possibility that these weapons can be used,” he said. “Nuclear weapons can be used in the future not out of vacuum. Quite reasonably nuclear weapons can be used as in the situation where there’s a conflict and antagonism. The important part of Pugwash in general that has been reported here is to deal with the regional conflicts in situation when nuclear weapons matter.”

The security challenges in Central Asia and civilian nuclear energy also drew the attention of the scientists at the event.

“The radical groups are getting more and more relevance in world policy and they have an influence on the situation where we have conflicts. On the last day, we discussed the nuclear agreement concerning Iran and risk that this agreement can be dismantled. Finally, there is a strong correlation between nuclear energy and capability of building nuclear weapons,” he added.

“The idea of creating bank for Low Enriched Uranium (LEU) is a part of the deal of building the international fuel cycle centre,” he stated.

Since 1945, nuclear weapon testing has played a primary role in the horizontal and vertical proliferation of nuclear weapons. Such testing has also inflicted great damage on the environment and people, especially in areas adjacent to nuclear test ranges but also globally. The cumulative consequences of more than 2,000 nuclear tests conducted since 1945 by nuclear weapons states can be compared to a slow-motion limited nuclear war, waged by them on themselves and on humankind, the declaration said.

The document concluded: “This year marks the 60th anniversary of the first Pugwash Conference. The tragic results of the Castle Bravo hydrogen bomb test by the US in 1954 in the Marshall Islands led Joseph Rotblat to set in motion what has now become a truly global movement. Here in Astana, on the International Day against Nuclear Tests, and aware of Kazakhstan’s important contributions to this cause, the Pugwash Council calls upon all Governments and the people of the world to reflect on the grave and irreversible ecological and humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons and to spare no efforts towards achieving a nuclear-weapon-free world.”

## UK, Kazakhstan to train prison officers to international standards

By Zhazira Dyussebekova

ASTANA – Kazakhstan and the United Kingdom are marking their 25th anniversary of cooperation this year with Kazakhstan’s sixth largest investor launching a new project to train prison officers, said U.K. Minister for Europe and the Americas Sir Alan Duncan.

“I am pleased to announce today a U.K. investment of about \$100,000 for a new project. NGOs will work in partnership with the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Kazakh government and Anti-Corruption Agency to train prison officers to retain international standards in prisons, contributing to President Nazarbayev’s ambitious programme of reforms in the judicial and rule of law sectors,” said the British politician during the Aug. 31 event at the Nazarbayev Centre dedicated to relations between the countries.

Kazakhstan has made real progress in implementing human rights protection in accordance with internationally recognised standards, he added.

“And as you make even greater strides to secure an even more prosperous and ever more developed future for the nation, it is important to remember that the foundation of the future rests on the society, where human rights and the equality of all citizens under the law is guaranteed,” he added.

Training for judges was held two months ago.

“In June, the U.K. Law Society, in partnership with the Astana International Financial Centre (AIFC) and the Supreme Court of Kazakhstan, ran a training project to provide Kazakh judges with an understanding of the English Common Law system and rule of law,” he said.



Sir Alan Duncan

Collaboration is increasing in a variety of areas, such as between the AIFC and the City of London, the famed financial centre in the British capital.

“I welcome Kazakhstan’s decision to use English Common Law as the basis for the financial centre,” he added.

“This year we are celebrating 25 years of diplomatic relations between Kazakhstan and the United Kingdom and I am pleased to say that today this relationship has never been stronger. It is the rela-

tionship that our leaders have recognised as an important one and so they strengthened our ties through engagement between our peoples,” he said.

The visit was the first for the U.K. official, who touched on several points during his speech, including the country’s departure from the European Union.

“The U.K. will continue to engage with the world,” he said. “We are leaving the European Union, but we are not leaving Europe. We also want to strengthen our relationship and build strong partnerships with countries such as Kazakhstan as we look towards the future.”

The U.K. will continue to work with its partners to find solutions to some of the world’s most complex challenges, he said.

“Our commitment to our extensive security cooperation with our allies remains solid. In this, Kazakhstan is a very important partner. Two years in the UN Security Council present Kazakhstan with a unique opportunity to play a major role in tackling serious security issues facing the world. It will allow the country to bring unique geographical, historical and cultural perspectives to the work of the council,” he said.

The United Kingdom also supports Kazakhstan’s commitment to develop its peacekeeping capacity in supporting UN security operations.

“The U.K. in the sixth larg-

est financial contributor to UN peacekeeping. Some 700 British peacekeepers are deployed in six missions around the world. We are working together to sharpen that capacity through the Steppe Eagle peacekeeping training programme, which is the U.K.’s largest bilateral defence exercise. I eagerly await Kazakhstan’s first deployment on UN peacekeeping operations,” said Duncan.

The U.K. is one of the financial contributors in developing the IAEA Low Enriched Uranium Bank launched on Aug. 29.

“We really welcome Kazakhstan’s vital contribution in developing the Low Enriched Uranium Bank, which was opened this week. It will play an important role in ensuring that there is a safe, secure and assured source of low enriched uranium to generate nuclear energy for peaceful purposes,” he said.

The U.K. has invested more than \$20 billion in Kazakhstan in its 25 years of independence and the nation remains an attractive market for U.K. companies. More than 500 British firms are registered in Kazakhstan, most working in the oil, gas and mining sectors.

Duncan’s agenda included a visit to EXPO 2017.

“The expo shows that Kazakhstan is taking its place in the world. I hope it will open new doors and new opportunities for Kazakhstan, such as modern trading routes along the old Silk Road,” he said.

## EAEU free trade zone negotiations with Iran close to end

By Frol Leandoer

ASTANA – Negotiations between the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) and Iran to create a free trade zone are in their final stage.

“We have been conducting quite intensive negotiations with Iran for over eight months,” said Eurasian Economic Commission (EEC) Minister for Trade Veronika Nikishina, reported Kazinform. “We have had seven rounds of difficult negotiations. We have practically completed

these negotiations. The result of the negotiations consists of three parts. One of them is the agreement text, which is the regulatory framework that will determine the rules of the game. This is very important due to the fact that Iran is not a member of the World Trade Organisation (WTO). That is why the trade rules write-up between the union and Iran are a key element and we think we have produced a good enough text where Iran is ready to take on a very large package of trading strategies equivalent to the WTO.”

The other two sections of the

agreement are on commodity and agricultural goods, she added.

“Negotiations are almost complete. Now, it remains agreeing on individual goods, as there is no mutual consent of the parties yet. This is probably the biggest problem that we, together with our Iranian partners, [will face] and will soon stop at that stage of the agreements (...), giving us a good chance to report to the presidents of our countries about the completion of the negotiations and ask for mandates for signing agreements by October of this year,” she added.

If agreements cannot be reached, the negotiations will be postponed.

“If we do not complete the negotiations in the next few days, but insist on continuing to improve the quality of the agreements, then we will proceed to a somewhat slow stage of negotiations and this agreement cannot be signed in the near future,” she said.

EEC Collegium Chairperson Tigran Sarkisyan earlier noted the formation of a free trade zone remains the most important intellectual constructive dialogue between the Eurasian integration association and Iran. The nation is among several countries which are top priorities for the EAEU in terms of creating free trade. At the same time, union country presidents have repeatedly expressed their support for deepening the relations between the EAEU and Iran.

# Nation&Capital

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 6, 2017

**PEOPLE**

**Globalink Kazakhstan: from humble beginnings to infinite opportunities**

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**CULTURE**

**Astana Opera star wishes nation well on Constitution Day**

**B3**

**SPORTS**

**Kazakh boxers win gold, bronze and silver medals at world boxing championships in Hamburg**

**B7**

## World holds minute of silence in memory of nuclear test victims

By Zhazira Dyussebekova

ASTANA – An international moment of silence honouring the memory of victims of all nuclear weapons testing in the world was held at 11:05 a.m. local time Aug. 29 to mark United Nations International Day against Nuclear Tests.

The time was chosen because at this point in the day, clock hands show a V. This moment is meant to signify a coming victory of common sense over fear and a victory for global efforts towards a nuclear-weapons-free world, The ATOM Project (Abolish Testing. Our Mission) website explains. The Aug. 29 minute of silence was first initiated by The ATOM Project in 2013.

“Each year on Aug. 29, we observe the International Day against Nuclear Tests to respect the victims of the past and to remind the world of the persisting threat these tests pose to the environment and international stability. More than 2,000 nuclear tests have been conducted over the past seven decades – from the South Pacific to North America, from Central Asia to North Africa. They have harmed some of the world’s most vulnerable peoples and pristine ecosystems,” said Secretary-General of the United Nations Antonio Guterres in his official message this year.

According to him, it is essential that the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) finally enters into force to ensure that no state can conduct another test. “Just eight more Annex II States



need to ratify to accomplish this,” he added.

The CTBT was opened for signature in 1996 and has been signed by 183 states and ratified by 166 states. It needs the signatures and ratifications of eight specific states listed in CTBT Annex II – China, Egypt, India, Israel, North Korea, Pakistan and the United States.

“I urge all countries yet to join the CTBT to do so as soon as possible.

For almost 20 years, a global norm has existed against nuclear testing based on voluntarily unilateral moratoriums. I applaud this restraint, but it is not enough. Continued nuclear tests by the Democratic [People’s] Republic of Korea demonstrate that even the strongest norm is no substitute for a legally binding prohibition,” stated Guterres.

The UN Security Council adopt-

ed its first resolution focused solely on nuclear testing last year. “I hope that represents a new momentum towards taking the essential next step in ridding the world of the menace of nuclear weapons,” he added.

The UN International Day against Nuclear Tests was established December 2, 2009 at the 64th session of the UN General Assembly. The resolution was initiated by Kazakhstan to commemorate the day in 1991 when President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev made the historic decision to close the Semipalatinsk nuclear test site, where 456 nuclear tests were conducted by the Soviet Union.

The ATOM Project is an international campaign launched in 2012 as a way to generate global popular support for a permanent end to nuclear weapons testing and, ultimately, the abolition of nuclear weapons. More than 1.5 million citizens of Kazakhstan have been seriously exposed to nuclear weapons tests, and to this day children are born with severe deformities, illnesses and a lifetime of health challenges.

Nazarbayev has urged his global counterparts to commit to peace, dialogue and renunciation of nuclear weapons in his manifesto, “The World. The 21st Century” released during the 2016 Nuclear Security Summit in Washington, D.C. He warned there would be “no winners” in any modern war as it would inevitably lead to the use of weapons of mass destruction. As a result, the planet would end “as a graveyard of radioactive materials.”

## New religion textbook to be included in national school curriculum

Staff Report

ASTANA – A new religion textbook will be added to the national school curriculum, announced Minister of Religious Affairs and Civil Society of Kazakhstan Nurlan Yermekbayev at a recent government meeting.

Society and Religion is the textbook’s working title, according to Yermekbayev.

“Together with the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan, work is being carried out on the editing of the new textbook, which will be included in the school curriculum. The textbook’s content is focused on the scientific presentation of knowledge about world religions and the secular founda-

tions of the state,” the minister informed.

Yermekbayev noted that the introduction of the textbook into the curriculum will begin no later than the next academic year or in the second half of this year.

Also, according to the minister, the issue of training specialists in religious studies is being taken care of.

“Taking into account certain aspects of the development of the religious situation, the issue of the opening of the faculties of specialty religious studies is being worked out in one of the regions in western Kazakhstan, in Zhambyl, Kyzylorda and East Kazakhstan regions, which will prepare the necessary secular experts on religion in regions where there are risks of spreading such destructive currents,” he explained.

## Social Medical Insurance Fund will have sufficient budget to finance medical institutions

By Dmitry Lee

ASTANA – In a recent interview with KazPravda, Zabira Orazaliyeva, Social Medical Insurance Fund (SMIF) managing director for medical care users, gave an overall assessment of the fund’s first month of operation.

“Taking into account the obligations of individual entrepreneurs working on a special tax regime on the basis of a patient, they need to pay contributions at the beginning of the period. SMIF was expecting to receive no less than \$1.7 million in July,” she said.

The deadline is no later than the 25th day of the month; July payments, for example, needed to be made before Aug. 25, she said, adding “we are expecting the increase in the amount in August compared to July.”

According to official data, as of Aug. 10, more than \$3.8 million was transferred to the SMIF accounts at the National Bank of Kazakhstan.

“Companies have made deductions for 699,000 individuals as of Aug. 10. More than 97,000 individual entrepreneurs, private notaries, private bailiffs, lawyers, professional mediators and individuals who receive income under civil law contracts have made deductions for themselves,” she said.

The law “On Compulsory Social Health Insurance” stipulates

that delayed transfers are collected by state revenue bodies and are subject to a 2.5-time accrued interest, the official refinancing rate established by the National Bank for each day of delay including the day of payment. The law “On Administrative Offenses” also stipulates a penalty for failure or “improper payments” and contributions.

“Until the end of the year, we are expecting to receive more than \$68 million. Next year, SMIF must ensure a minimum required balance in the National Bank accounts of at least \$148 million,” said Orazaliyeva.

According to SMIF estimates, on average the fund will need \$151 million a month next year to finance medical services as part of its programme.

“Considering that from January next year we will have income from other categories of payees, we will have enough funds to ensure the uninterrupted financing of medical institutions within the Mandatory Social Insurance System (MSIS),” she said.

“Currently, SMIF is working with medical institutions to clarify the conditions for the provision of services within MSIS and the conclusion of contracts with SMIF. Private medical organisations are involved in ongoing activities.

Continued on Page B4

## EXPO 2017 welcomes three-millionth visitor

By Zhazira Dyussebekova

ASTANA – Kazakhstan’s major event, EXPO 2017, welcomed its three-millionth visitor on Aug. 25. He turned out to be a 38-year-old resident of Moscow, Yuri Shurygin.

“I liked the Kazakhstan pavilion. Now I need to visit the Russian pavilion. Of course, we would like to see an event of such a scale to take place in the Ural region. There is a possibility of expo taking place in Yekaterinburg in 2025. We really hope it will hap-

pen,” said Shurygin on the day of his visit.

At the same time, Chairperson of the Astana EXPO 2017 National Company Akhmetzhan Yessimov decided to personally congratulate him and present special gifts.

Yessimov has also said that the

number of people attending the expo is increasing every day. According to him, 15 percent of visitors are foreigners, most of them are from Russia.

“One of the main aims of the exhibition was to increase the tourist flow into the country.

Continued on Page B5

## Reviving and reliving nomadic past at Huns ethno village near Almaty

By Dmitry Lee

ASTANA – The Huns ethno village is an ideal place for those willing to relive the nomadic past of ethnic Kazakhs. The village, about 35 kilometres from Almaty in the Talgar district, is also a great way to escape to the mountains for a breath of fresh air, horseback riding and adventure.

Built from the outside as a tiny fort, the Huns offers vast views of the mountains and a mix of traditional Kazakh yurts and Soviet-looking hubs.

“They recommend pre-arranging a local show with the administrators of the village, as local actors and staff will happily demonstrate all the traditions and customs of the Kazakhs along the given scenario,” Khalid Jamal, a guest from Jordan who recently visited the Huns with his friends, told The Astana Times.

“My friends arrived for EXPO 2017. I am from Astana and I wanted to show them the rest of Kazakhstan and we wanted to travel the country and ended up in the mountains of Almaty,” he explained.

“They welcomed guests atop horses in the traditional armour of nomads and spears and showed us

around the village. They started with the tradition called shashu – showering guests with candy like Kazakhs do at weddings. Then the candy is picked up and kept for good luck. Kazakhs believe these sweets then bring luck,” he added.

As the guests proceed, they witness other traditions such as tusau

kesu, which is meant to bless the child, barely starting to walk, and progressing into the next stage of life. The youngster’s feet are tied with a black and white silk rope – the symbol of inconsistency and challenges in life – and the honoured guest of the event must cut and burn it.

Visitors are also shown felt craftsmanship and get the chance to closely study the yurts. They witness horse games like kyz kuu – chasing a girl to kiss her on horseback and, if the man fails to, she whips him, and atpen audaryspak – wrestling horseback.

The tours are followed by dances, traditional music and a meal. Prices range from \$15-20 per person.

Those willing to spend some time with nature can request special horseback riding tours into the mountains with or without guides, depending on experience and the wish of the guests. Such walks take about an hour and a-half and cost approximately \$3 per person.

The Huns can simultaneously accommodate up to 60 guests with overnight stays or up to 600 per day, according to the administrators. The cost per night at the cottages starts from \$40-\$55 and the large felt yurt costs \$75-\$80 for up to 10 people.

“We were offered the option to stay in cottages for up to four persons. They looked like yurts,” said Jamal.

The Huns have a Facebook page, www.facebook.com/bazaotdyhagunny, and a website, hunny.kz, or can be reached at +7 (707) 044 3737.



THINGS TO WATCH & PLACES TO GO

ASTANA OPERA

**September 6 at 8 p.m.** Falstaff, Opera by La Scala  
**September 7 and 9 at 8 p.m.** Symphony, Concert by La Scala

EXPO 2017

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

NATIONAL MUSEUM

**June 9 - September 10** Terracotta Army, Exhibition  
**July 3 - September 20** Ancient Weapons, Exhibition

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 6, 2017

# Globalink Kazakhstan: from humble beginnings to infinite opportunities

By Dmitry Lee

ASTANA – Soon after the collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s, the entire Central Asian region became uncharted territory. Many young, ambitious entrepreneurs faced the challenge of exhausted markets in the then-volatile area, while investors were particularly sceptical about starting new ventures.

One man with his own vision, however, dared to found a transportation and logistics company that later turned into one of the largest in Eurasia. The Astana Times sat recently with Siddique Khan, one of the earliest industry investors in Kazakhstan, in the hope of understanding the secret of his success.

“I established Globalink in 1993, when I was 24 years old. I had a vision of the future of the transportation and logistics industry, particularly the development of the East – West, North – South and cross-Caspian Sea mobility corridors, connecting landlocked Central Asian and Caucasus republics with China, Europe and the Middle East into a seamless transportation and logistics network,” he said.

After investigating all the USSR breakaway republics, Khan settled in the Kazakh capital and established Globalink Logistics.

“Fundraising at the age of 24 for a start-up based on a future vision that no one ever heard of or believed in was not an easy task, but family and friends came through with seed investment which helped me launch the Globalink Logistics project,” he said.

Choosing Kazakhstan as a start-up base was not a “popular deci-



Siddique Khan

sion in 1993,” he added, as the majority of foreign investors were entering the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) market through Russia.

“Today, I can say we are truly privileged to be titled as the very first international transportation and logistics company in Kazakhstan. We have operations in nine locations in Kazakhstan, more than 28 locations in the CIS and as a company we are represented in 51 countries and growing steadily,” he said.

Surviving the first two-three years is crucial for any business and his company was no exception.

“In 1995, after we proved that, yes, we can sustain our growth and are able to cover our operating costs, we opened three more locations. In 1996, we launched two more offices and then we just kept on expanding in the region and beyond. In 24 years’ time from the date of Globalink establishment, we expanded our business from China all the way to Europe, across the Black Sea, the Baltics,

the Balkans and Eastern Europe, connecting to Turkey, Iran and the Middle East, further going into India and Pakistan and now eyeing east Africa for expansion. We truly created a multimodal transportation ‘land-bridge’ between Asia, China, Europe, the Middle East and the CIS like no other private sector logistics company has done so far,” said Khan.

Today, Globalink Logistics is one of the largest multimodal transportation and logistics companies not only in the Eurasia region, but in the world market, he noted.

“Together with our long standing partner Kerry Logistics, we have merged our businesses and now operate under the umbrella of our Hong Kong stock exchange listed company. I continue to be one of the proud shareholders of the company and serve as CEO for Eurasia and Middle East. Under the umbrella of Kerry Logistics Network, we own and operate more than four million square metres of warehousing and terminal space, have more than 1,000 service points and employ 25,000 people in 51 countries worldwide,” he added.

Although Kazakhstan is neither one of the biggest contributors of global revenues nor the global headquarters of Globalink Logistics, Khan considers Kazakhstan his second home. His entrepreneurial achievements, however, were not the best outcome of living in the country of the Great Steppe.

“Some of the best things in my life happened in Kazakhstan. One of my best achievements in Kazakhstan is my family. I met my wife in Almaty in 1994. We got married and have three beautiful children. The best outcome of my

life in Kazakhstan is much more than business achievements. I met some of my closest friends in Kazakhstan. I met some great people in the early 1990s and we kind of grew together and became part of the new business face of Kazakhstan. We have so many great stories to share of our personal and business lives in post-Soviet Kazakhstan. If given a chance, I will do exactly the same again, without regrets,” he said.

Khan shared some key points why Globalink is among the leading transportation and logistics companies in Eurasia.

“For Globalink Logistics, every customer is a unique case study and source of learning. While we have many small and medium-sized businesses as our loyal customers in the CIS, the majority of our biggest revenue generators are the Fortune 500 companies having well-established global best practices that we focus on. Rather than modifying their logistical systems and standards region by region, we adjust our operating model to complement theirs. Rather than a one-size-fit all style, we always take a boutique approach and customise our service methodology to adapt to the needs of our customers. We thoroughly investigate our customers’ internal and external needs in regards to their supply chain, logistics management and compliance to develop fitting service solutions. Our backbone is our IT system – the one-stop-solution concept and our Global Network, which means we have technical, commercial and human resources on the ground in every major global market and trade centre of the world to serve our customers with utmost care,” he said.

“Our small and medium sized customers take enormous advantage of our adaptable, self-learning business model. We transfer general knowledge on best practices that we attain from our large-scale global customers to our local SME clientele to make their business model more efficient. The transfer of knowledge, localisation and education has indeed played an important role in our business development process. If you investigate Globalink as a start-up, we had mostly expatriate management, but today 99 percent of our workforce consists of national talent in every country we operate in,” said Khan.

Betting on the new talent, he believes, is the key for the future of Kazakhstan.

“Grooming and harnessing the talent is so important for businesses and governments alike. Change is the only constant in the world and the only way to cope with it is to develop a progressive education system, executive education programmes and a national talent pool that will face the future challenges with full confidence. If you want to focus on the future, the key is to have well educated younger policy makers, whose worldview is based on not only present but future realities. We must not dismiss the wisdom of the old school, but at the same time we need the inspiration of the new generation. I can already see the young akims (governors and city mayors), ministers and deputy ministers being appointed who hopefully will help realise the dreams of the President and the people of Kazakhstan,” he added.

The Kazakh government is continuously learning and taking steps

to improve the country’s “ease of doing business” index managed by the World Bank Group, noted Khan. The government is also trying to enhance the competence of the national workforce. It’s a constant improvement cycle for which there is no short-term solution.

“Looking back some 24 years ago in Kazakhstan history, and this is coming from a person who has spent many of these years in the region, I can say that it is a real treat to see young entrepreneurs of Kazakhstan sitting in the lobbies of five-star hotels, working on their laptops and making business deals – we have come a very long way. We should stop here for a moment and be proud of what the people of Kazakhstan have achieved in such a short time. While we are aiming to have much more, which is a natural human desire, we must also ask ourselves, ‘which way do we go from here?’ And this is where I want to emphasise that improvement is a never-ending cycle,” he said.

Khan noted the Western China – Western Europe transportation corridor is a great opportunity for Kazakhstan which will help improve the business environment in the regions. This greatest opportunity must be inclusive, where private sector participation should be encouraged by the government by developing public-private partnerships and funding institutions.

He added the Nurdy Zhol and Belt and Road initiatives are truly complementing one another. Both go far beyond logistics to focus on the overall development of infrastructure, transportation corridors and industrialisation.

“It is a win-win cooperation,” he said.

## Almaty entrepreneur develops indoor gardening

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – Sometimes, starting a business in an unknown industry means instead of competitors, you develop collaborators. Citygarden Company head Diana Kemel and her team want to bring gardens indoors, but in growing their business, they’re also helping grow an industry.

“I saw a large vertical wall at Singapore Changi Airport in 2017 and I was very impressed. I began to study this wall and decided to be engaged in vertical landscaping,” Kemel told The Astana Times. “At that time, I could not find information about the technology. When I was on maternity leave I paid more attention to this topic. I found a course for teaching vertical landscaping. I passed an annual training course and I launched the project.”

The Citygarden Company provides vertical landscaping and roof gardening services. The company’s mission is to bring nature closer to the life of citizens, to improve the urban environment and to create aesthetic and progressive urban gardening.

“We offer a wide range of services. Recently we were asked to create a mini-garden in a private house. We offer clients various options that we can do and suggest which are most suitable for the conditions of a particular room,” she said.

An experienced team of specialists and RaStenia patented technology allow the company to take into account all the nuances of a given project and choose the optimal solution for its implementation using high-quality materials. Living plants and moss are used in creating plant walls as well as hydroponics, which ensures cleanliness and safety.

“There were more than 1,500 requests for vertical gardening at Google Analytics when I started the project,” Kemel recalled. “There was no competition in the market. Now there are more companies working in this area. They are more like partners for me, as we all popularise vertical gardening in



Diana Kemel

the country. I support them and give advice if necessary, because the technology is new enough for us and many people can make mistakes at the initial stage.”

The company’s specialists are often invited to help fix shortcomings in designs created by other companies.

“For example, some plants cannot be combined. It looks beautiful, but these plants have different requirements for lighting, humidity and watering, and over time, one of the types of plant will die. I’m ready to support companies working in our direction because they should provide high quality services. Customers should not think that vertical gardening is nonsense, as the plant dies a month later,” she said.

Kemel said that a shortage of plant designers is a big challenge for the industry.

“We have plant scientists who know the plants well, but they are not designers. And there are designers without experience in working with plants. We are the only company in the country that deals with high quality plant design. Sometimes we offer our clients a simple design project, not the whole project, and invite other companies to implement the project if they wish. Because we can guarantee a quality living green wall project that no one can offer,” she said.

The level of humidity and light; the location of heating and ventilation systems, windows and doors; and the choice of plants are among the factors affecting the price of a project. The rate starts from 130,000 tenge (US\$392) per square metre.

“The most expensive project cost 650,000 tenge (US\$1,959) per square metre when we used exotic plants, which were purchased at European auctions. Unfortunately, we do not have indoor plants production. We specialise in interior landscaping and all interior plants are imported from Europe. This leads to higher prices. It would certainly be great if we opened a local production,” she said.

The entrepreneur is looking for an investor to help them launch a greenhouse for indoor plants worth approximately \$3 million.

“I want to open a greenhouse to reduce the price, and to save costs for the consumer. I also plan to launch training in vertical gardening because there are queries from regions where there is a lack of greenery. Vertical landscaping is only gaining momentum, people are just beginning to learn about it,” she said.

The company offers different variants of plant walls – semi-automated and fully automated, which do not require human intervention to care for plants. Periodic inspection is necessary.

“We earn almost nothing on production and installation of plant walls, but our main earnings come from after-sales service, for which customers pay between 2,500 and 10,000 tenge (US\$8-30) per square metre,” she said.

“I am often asked about time management,” the entrepreneur said. “I honestly admit that I do not have time. It’s necessary to turn off perfectionism and the desire to effectively manage your time, otherwise it will lead to a nervous breakdown. It is necessary to set your priorities right. At some point you just need to relax and focus on what is important at the moment. Interpersonal communication skills and networking are very important in success.”

## Bike for Peace activists visit Astana on Int’l Day against Nuclear Tests

By Dana Omirgazy

ASTANA – Six riders with the international organisation Bike for Peace (BfP) started a tour along the Bishkek-Almaty-Astana route Aug. 20 in advance of the Building a Nuclear Weapon-Free World international conference in the capital. This year’s 10-day peace initiative united five Norwegian riders and Ukrainian writer and activist Anastasiya Odnoroh.

“For a long time, I was engaged in public activities. Gradually, I began to study the experience of international peacekeeping organisations and thus learned about the activities of the Norwegian organisation Bike for Peace, which through sport carries the idea of peace and nuclear disarmament,” she said in an interview with The Astana Times.

Tore Naerland, the organisation’s permanent leader, has been conducting races in different parts of the world for the past 40 years. Any volunteer, sportsperson, activist, public figure or concerned individual can participate in the rides.

“Thus, we remind the world and ourselves that despite conflicts, everyone wants peaceful coexistence and a peaceful policy based on non-violence. All these years the motto of the organisation remains unchanged: A World without Nuclear Weapons,” she added.

Odnoroh is the author of ‘Farewell to Arms or Three Ways to solve conflicts Without War,’ a book where she raises issues of peace without violence.

“I became interested in this topic with the beginning of military operations in the east of Ukraine. Trying to find the answer to the question of whether it is possible to achieve peace by nonviolent means, I discovered for myself a very interesting topic of the philosophy of non-violence, which was not known to the general reader,” she said.



She is working on her doctoral dissertation on the topic and studying the experience of the international peacekeeping movement to understand how it is possible to solve conflicts in international hot spots without using weapons and violence.

“To some, such an approach may seem idealistic, but it turned out that world history knows enough examples when a non-violent way was used to actively and effectively solve various issues, including military conflicts. I wrote my book because I want as many people as possible to learn about this ‘ordinary miracle.’ I believe that the philosophy of non-violence must necessarily be studied in schools and universities,” she added.

This year’s BfP tour was organised in cooperation with the Kazakh Embassy in Oslo.

“The tour started in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, where we visited the villages of Kokzhar, Chong-Kemin and Rot-Front. Then, in Almaty we visited the Medeo Skating Rink and EXPO 2017 in Astana on Aug. 28. The next day, we participated

in the International Nuclear Disarmament Conference with the participation of President Nursultan Nazarbayev,” said Odnoroh.

The trip is BfP’s third to Kazakhstan since the launch of the campaign against nuclear weapons in 1977. Naerland is inspired by Kazakhstan led by Nazarbayev and his action to rid the country of all nuclear weapons. It is a great message to the nine countries known to possess nuclear weapons, he noted.

“Since its independence in 1991, Kazakhstan could have become a country with the world’s fourth largest nuclear arsenal, but it destroyed all 1,500 nuclear weapons after the Budapest agreement. BfP admires the country that made this choice and the nine nuclear powers should follow this example. The aim is to establish international law prohibiting such weapons,” Odnoroh added.

Naerland and Odnoroh are joined on this year’s tour by Kare Jonasmo, Terje Karoliusen, Trond Myhre and Berit Marie Fraas Tveit.

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 6, 2017

# Astana Opera star wishes nation well on Constitution Day

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – Young artists of the Astana Opera presented Aug. 26 at the Astana Opera chamber Hall “Our Song Is for You, Kazakhstan!” a festive concert in honour of Constitution Day.

“Our concert is dedicated to one of the most important holidays of our country – Constitution Day. On this day, I have sung Dudar-ai folk song and Tugan Zher vocal work by contemporary Kazakhstan com-

poser Alibi Abdinurov. We have been preparing this programme for about a week. Young professional soloists who are working in the classical music genre have put all their heart and soul into the performance. We would like to congratulate all fellow citizens of Kazakhstan with this splendid holiday and wish prosperity to our country,” said mezzo-soprano singer of the Astana Opera Malika Minisini in an exclusive interview with the Astana Times.

The young generation of tal-

ented trainee soloists who have joined the opera company of the Astana Opera House are international competition laureates: Nazym Sagintai (soprano), Malika Minisini (mezzo-soprano), Shyngys Rasykhan (bass). They prepared an unforgettable musical evening for the audience. International competition laureates Aigerim Amanzholova (soprano), Almat Izbambetov (tenor), Azat Malik and Altynbek Abilda (baritones) took part in the concert as well. They were joined

by talented instrumentalists, also participants and winners of many international competitions: flutist Zhibek Sapargaliyeva and Dolce violin ensemble, piano player Raushan Beskembirova.

Popular songs, romances, famous arias and duets from operas by Akhmet Zhubanov, Mukan Tulebayev, Yevgeni Brussilovskiy, Gaziza Zhubanova, Yerkegali Rakhmadiyev, Tles Kazhgaliyev, Serke Mukhamedzhanov and others were performed. The full house gave the performers long-standing ovations.



# Jackie Chan says he wants to make film in Kazakhstan

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – Chairperson of the Kazakhstan Television and Radio Company Yerlan Karin recently announced that Chinese actor and star of American cinema Jackie Chan plans to make a movie in Kazakhstan.

“After his trip to Astana, Jackie became even more fired up by the idea of filming one of his films in Kazakhstan. He even told me about one of his ideas. And he again shared his impressions of the trip to our country. He said that he was amazed by the views of Astana, the hospitality of Kazakhstan people and the kind attitude of his fans,” said Karin.

Chan took part in the Kazakh-Chinese Film Festival. His visit was organised by Kazakhstan Ministry of Information and Com-



Jackie Chan in Astana.

munications and Chinese partners of the festival and was dedicated to EXPO 2017.

Astana Akim (Mayor) Asset Issekeshiev met the 63-year-old actor at the airport and noted that pub-

lic money was not used to fund Chan’s trip. The actor was not paid any fees and flew to Kazakhstan in a private plane. He did not provide any riders, refused the service of a luxury car and asked for an ordinary minivan to see the city with his associates. Local Astana restaurateurs were excited to see the actor and refused to receive payment from him.

It was planned that Chan would stay in Kazakhstan for a couple of days, but he couldn’t because of his schedule. He said that he liked the country and promised to come again soon.

“More than 10 years ago, the Kazakh Ambassador in Hong Kong once told me about all the rich resources that Kazakhstan possesses. And five years ago, the ambassador told me about the country again and I always had a dream to come to the state and film here. Unfortunately, I had a lot of work to this day and this dream has not been realised. In the future, I plan to come to Kazakhstan again and do it,” Chan said.

He also said that he was impressed by Kazakhstan’s natural environment.

# World renowned jazz musicians perform in festival in Astana

By Frol Leandroer

ASTANA – Internationally-recognised jazz performers gathered in Astana for the Aug. 15-17 JAZZIA 2017 International Jazz Festival. The festival was part of EXPO 2017.

“JAZZIA is three days of performances by world-famous music groups from different countries who share the main values of the exhibition, which is the sustainable development of mankind in harmony with nature through the responsible use of resources and the collaboration of talents in order to create the spiritual energy of music,” the press service of the event reported.

The first day of the festival opened with the EAST DRIVE professional band. The Bill Evans Band also performed on the first day of the festival. Bill Evans is a famous American jazz saxophonist.

The second day of JAZZIA 2017 was no less intense. At the Energy Hall stage, two bands performed. The trio of musicians from Israel – Shai Maestro Trio also performed.

The legendary American drummer Billy Cobham performed in

Astana as well. He gained fame in the early 1970s, becoming one of the founders of the fusion movement, and after concerts with Miles Davis, John McLaughlin

JAZZIA is three days of performances by world-famous music groups from different countries who share Expo’s main values: sustainable development of mankind in harmony with nature...

and the Mahavishnu Orchestra, Cobham became a superstar.

The final day of JAZZIA 2017 music festival included performances by two groups on the Energy Hall stage. Each of the two have been nominated for Grammy awards. The audience had the opportunity to listen to the legendary Marcus Miller. At the closing ceremony of the festival, famous guitarist Lee Ritenour performed.

# Almaty Drama Theatre brings innovative performances to EXPO 2017



By Dana Omirgazy

ASTANA – The Lermontov Russian State Academic Drama Theatre from Almaty presented two of its most exciting and innovative stagings of the year in Astana Aug. 22-23 under the EXPO 2017 cultural programme, according to the theatre’s press service.

The unique performances, based on Russian classics known to every student, caused a stir in the theatri-

cal circles of Almaty last spring. The premieres of “Masquerade” and “Woe from Wit,” directed by invited masters from Germany and Russia, were triumphant.

Now, Astana residents and guests of the expo have had the opportunity to enjoy these works on the stage of the Astana Ballet Theatre.

“The repertoire policy of the Lermontov Theatre is aimed at implementing the programme

of modernisation of public consciousness initiated by President [of Kazakhstan] Nursultan Nazarbayev. The choice of these two works is dictated by the need to give the Russian classics a new, modern sound,” the theatre representatives explained.

Director of “Masquerade” Dmitry Bilov is already familiar to Almaty theatre-goers for the performance “Andalusian Curse.” In Europe, he is known also as a successful artist, and has had exhibitions in the Louvre. The show’s artistic director is honoured worker of Kazakhstan and State Prize of Kazakhstan laureate Vladimir Kuzhel. The costume designer is Lubov Vozhenikova.

The tragicomedy “Woe from Wit” focuses on deep and serious topics: internal emigration, the conflict of fathers and children and the tragedy of a lost generation. “Woe from Wit” was directed

by Gulnaz Balpeisova, one of the most fashionable young directors in Moscow and a student of one of the most talented film directors of our time, Rimas Tuminas. For the “Woe from Wit” production, the theatre purchased modern lighting equipment and invited lighting designer Narek Tumanyan, who has extensive experience in the Bolshoi Theatre of Russia, to work his magic. The production designer is Sergey Melzer, and costumes were designed by Lubov Vozhenikova.

The performances featured honoured figures and artists of Kazakhstan Marina Gantseva, Sergey Ufimtsev, Valentina Zinchenko, Anatoly Krezhenchukov, Mikhail Tokarev and Dmitry Skirta, and young actors Victoria Pavlenko, Roman Zhukov, Kamila Ermekova, Irina Kelbler, Rauf Habibullin, Arlan Kassimanov and others.



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WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 6, 2017

## Astana-Pavlodar highway to be toll road in 2018



By Inga Seleznyova

ASTANA – The Astana-Pavlodar highway, where construction started in 2014 under the Nury Zhol national programme, will begin operation in mid-2018. The route, an important part of the Centre-East transport corridor, will be a toll road in the future.

The 1,016-kilometre transport corridor has been under repair since 2011, said KazAvtoZhol Deputy Chairperson Temirkhan Mendygaliyev. The highway was divided into 15 reconstruction sites and three have already been put into operation, reported Kazpravda.

Each portion of the road must pass national inspection, which specifies the construction period

and contractual obligations. The toll will eventually be one tenge per kilometre. As the distance between the cities is 470 kilometres, the charge will be 470 tenge (US\$1.40) for cars and up to 2,500 tenge (US\$35.3) for trucks.

The new highway will reduce the length of the route by five kilometres in bypassing Yereimentau village, thus saving time for travellers.

The road consists of four layers of pavement, including a 30-centimetre primer-mineral mixture and crushed stone and gravel sandblast mixture with 25-centimetre cement. This approach in construction will help withstand the projected traffic loads and ensure uninterrupted and safe travel throughout the site. Although the contractual warranty for

the highway is five years, its operational period is approximately 25-30 years.

Constructing one kilometre usually requires a month to six weeks. In addition to the main route, contractors are installing 70-kilometres of snow-blocking fences built in two rows. The fences will reduce operating costs in the future and protect the surface from melt water and snow drifts. Contractors guarantee five years of operation without breakdowns.

The construction season lasts, at best, from April-October, when crews must finish the main portion of the work. The time period can be expanded depending on conditions, but it is absolutely impossible to work in winter. Contractors use the time to prepare materials and equipment.

The contract was originally awarded to an Iranian firm, but issues arose, said Mendygaliyev.

“DENA Iranian construction company won a tender for the reconstruction of 115 kilometres of the highway in 2015, but failed to fulfil its own obligations. We replaced them with domestic contractors and they are using materials made in Kazakhstan for the reconstruction. Correspondent measures have been taken to recover the bank guarantees, advance payments and enforce the contract and penalties have been assessed on the Iranian company,” he said.

## Kazakhstan to switch to electronic customs declaration

By Zhazira Dyussebekova

ASTANA – Kazakhstan will completely switch to electronic customs declaration, according to the draft code “On Customs Regulation in Kazakhstan” presented at the Aug. 22 government meeting, reported inform.kz.

“Speaking of new things [in the code], one of the main [things] is the fundamentally new approach to customs regulation, which is about the automation of business processes at customs. Priority of electronic declaration is to be introduced. There is no need to attach any supporting documents. All the necessary information is indicated in the declaration. Declaring on paper will remain only in certain cases, for example, during technical failures,” said Kazakh Minister of National Economy Timur Suleimenov.

The draft law also provides the possibility of using the single-window system.

“Now, the customs authorities will not request documents that can be obtained from information systems of state bodies within information interaction,” he added.

Implementing these two provisions will allow goods to be released automatically. The innovations will significantly simplify the declaration process and reduce corruption risks.

“That is, the information system



of customs bodies issues a declaration without the participation of officials if there are no potential violations. Thus, the legal significance is attached to the issue without the participation of a person,” he said.

The draft code consists of eight sections – general provisions, customs payments, customs operations, customs procedures, movement peculiarities of certain categories of goods, customs control, persons engaged in customs activities and final and transitional provisions. The new code would also permit postponing customs duties and taxes.

“The code has a number of opportunities that allow participants in foreign economic activities to optimise their costs; for example, to receive a delay in customs duties and taxes. If for any reason the declarant cannot immediately

pay customs duties, the state gives him the right to use a deferral for a month with interest payments,” said Suleimenov.

In some cases, delays are provided up to six months without paying interest.

“This is, for example, when delivering supplies under international treaties, when importing agricultural machinery, planting materials or pedigree animals or in cases when the damage caused to the payer is a result of a natural disaster, technological catastrophe or other force majeure circumstances,” he said.

The new code also provides a two-fold reduction up to five days to clear customs goods.

Under the states’ agreement, the document will come into force Jan. 1, 2018, simultaneously with the Eurasian Economic Union customs code.

## Social Medical Insurance Fund will have sufficient budget to finance medical institutions

Continued from Page B1

It should be noted that today, up to 30 percent of them are still providers of medical services as part of the guaranteed free medical care as the main performer or as co-executor for certain types of services. Among them, for example, are such medical centres as DostarMed, Centre ECO, Mediker Astana, Multiprofile Medical Centre and Meiririm.

“The law ‘On Mandatory Social Health Insurance’ provides that the state will transfer contributions to SMIF for children, the unemployed, mothers with more than three children, people with disabilities and other ‘socially vulnerable’ citizens, some 14 preferential categories, and that’s some 10 million people,” she added.

According to SMIF estimates, on average the fund will need \$151 million a month next year to finance medical services as part of its programme.

In the amendments to the law “On Mandatory Social Health Insurance” signed June 30 by President Nursultan Nazarbayev, “other persons” were determined as a new category of payees.

“These are so-called ‘non-productive self-employed’ and there are about 2.3-2.5 million such individuals. Their contributions are determined at the level of 5 percent of the minimum wage, which in the next year when they begin to make contributions will be approximately \$4; thus, they will be able to independently implement these deductions and participate



Zabira Orazaliyeva, SMIF managing director for medical care users.

in the health insurance system,” said Orazaliyeva.

She also explained the automation system being implemented as part of the programme.

“The SMIF automation is carried out in stages. In the first stage, the existing information of the Ministry of Healthcare is being adapted for the SMIF activities to conclude contracts, monitor the quality of medical services and collect statistics for health service planning, forecasting and risk analysis. Also at this stage, the creation of the main accounting system of the SMIF is planned; the corresponding competition has already been announced through a single operator on the portal of the Ministry of Finance,” she noted.

“During the second stage, the implementation of integrated automation is planned. Currently, the Ministry of Healthcare, in conjunction with SMIF, is completing the preparation of the concept for the creation of an information system for subsequent coordination with interested bodies in the public-private partnership model.

“With regard to access to medical services, both free care and in the future within the MSIS, the existing health information systems will be involved, including an attached population register that will allow the citizen, after getting listed, to confirm the status of the insured and get the service by simply showing an identity card at any medical centre,” she added.

## Local companies will be obliged to report greenhouse gas emissions

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – Domestic industrial enterprises will be obliged to provide online data on greenhouse gas emissions, said Kazakh Vice Minister of Energy Gani Sadibekov at the Aug. 18 interdepartmental commission meeting.

The proposed amendments to certain legislative acts on environmental issues in greenhouse gas and ozone-depleting substances regulation were presented at the Ministry of Justice. The draft concept provides for expanding the conceptual base of the Environmental Code and amending certain legislative acts in connection with adopting obligations under the Paris Agreement.

“We have some experience in the system of trading greenhouse gas emissions quotas. There is a need to improve the enterprise cadastral systems that have an industrial impact on the environment. This is primarily the emission of greenhouse gases. All subsoil users will be required to provide information in this cadastre and register in a single format online,” said Sadibekov.

The transition to an electronic reporting system will improve the quality and pertinence of the



Photo credit: Kapital.kz

data provided to make timely decisions.

“The draft amendment aims to improve the quota trading system and to make the necessary changes and regulations in the relevant legislation. We are also introducing a new concept as an adaptation to climate change,” he added.

The draft amendment suggests introducing amendments and additions to the Environmental, Land, Entrepreneurship Codes and the Code of Administrative Offenses.

About 170 large enterprises par-

“We assume that we will determine the market, its needs and the surplus of quotas and our enterprises will have the opportunity to sell surplus quotas on the domestic market. There will also be the possibility of its implementation in foreign markets in 2018,” he said.

Kazakhstan has accumulated approximately 100 million tonnes of solid waste.

In cooperation with the World Bank, the Energy Ministry launched a project to develop an electronic reporting platform for greenhouse gas emissions. The cadastre is expected to be introduced by the end of December. According to the World Bank, the need for accurate and reliable data on greenhouse gas emissions is becoming more relevant, as countries are working to implement the Paris Agreement to achieve the goal of preventing climate change by 2020.

The need for accurate and reliable data on greenhouse gas emissions is becoming more relevant, as countries are working to implement the Paris Agreement to achieve the goal of preventing climate change by 2020.

## New children’s vaccination method proposed

Staff Report

ASTANA – Kazakhstan is considering making children’s vaccinations mandatory only for dangerous infectious diseases, Minister of Religious Affairs and Civil Society of Kazakhstan Nurlan Yermekbayev announced during a recent government meeting.

“We are currently considering the issue of mandatory vaccination provided for dangerous infections, parasitic diseases that can be transmitted from one child to another,” he said.

The announcement came during a press conference on preventing religious extremism and radicalism within the framework of the

fifth priority of the address of the head of state, “Third moderniza-

tion of Kazakhstan: global competitiveness.”



The minister also noted the majority of those who refuse to vaccinate do so not for religious reasons.

“If someone is not vaccinated, he can not only get sick himself, but also infect others. This is already a violation of the rights of other people, which we should not allow, which is now being decided. Indeed, a large part of the population refuses to vaccinate, but this happens not on religious, but on other grounds,” the speaker concluded.

The ministry considering introducing fines for parents who refuse to vaccinate their children.

The proposal will be submitted to Parliament for consideration in October.

# EXPO 2017

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 6, 2017

## Prime Minister praises EXPO 2017 in Eurasian Week opening remarks

Staff Report

ASTANA – Kazakh Prime Minister Bakytzhan Sagintayev praised EXPO 2017's contribution to economic growth and regional integration in his opening remarks to the Eurasian Week forum on Aug. 24.

"It is very symbolic that the Eurasian Week forum is held within the international EXPO exhibition, the achievements of which will contribute to a harmonious transition of our economies to a protective, innovative, resource-saving type of development. I am convinced that the forum platform will promote both the development



Bakytzhan Sagintayev

of contacts and further development of existing relations between the public sector and the busi-

ness community. I am also confident that the forum will become an important tool for developing the economy of the investment and export potential of EAEU," Sagintayev said.

The head of the government believes that the scale of the event will also assist the integration processes.

"For example, Kazakhstan represents about 80 export-oriented companies in various sectors, which will help our countries to develop new mutually beneficial contacts. Today in Kazakhstan, more than 8,000 joint ventures are working with the EAEU (Eurasian Economic Union) countries, which I think is a good indicator, support-

ing integration by entrepreneurs. We will be glad to further expand this list of enterprises," the prime minister said.

Sagintayev also said numerous agricultural agreements are likely to be signed during the forum.

"On the margins of the forum it is proposed to sign a number of documents that contribute to the international development of the agro-industrial complex within the framework of the EAEU, including measures aimed at export development. I would also like to note that the national economies of the members of the union were able to favourably adapt to the new realities," Sagintayev said.

## Qatar's new energy horizons reflected at expo pavilion



By Dmitry Lee

ASTANA – The Qatari pavilion is hard to miss, for its glaring steel heads fidgeting in the wind attract the attention of many from afar. It is nearly impossible to pass without taking a picture.

The nation of 2.8 million on the Arabian Peninsula is 235 times smaller than the size of Kazakhstan, yet it boasts some of the world's largest natural gas and oil reserves.

"As you well know, the theme of EXPO 2017 is Future Energy," said pavilion director Mohammed Saeed Al-Bloschi in an interview with The Astana Times. "The theme of our pavilion is New Energy Horizons, but we also wanted to show visitors the history of Qatar."

The pavilion is divided into three parts – past, present and future.

"In each part you will see different information about Qatar. The welcome area shows our hospitality, where visitors are greeted in 16 languages, including Arabic. In the second part, visitors will see how we used energy in the past. Then the story highlights when our country discovered oil and everything started to change, especially from 1950 until the 2000s when we started to switch to natural gas."

Today, Qatar is the world's top exporter of liquefied natural gas (LNG), with Japan and South Korea being the country's largest importers.

"The pavilion then tells the story of how we use the three energies, wind, solar and clean energy. We are building a stadium for the football 2022 World Cup using only solar energy and clean energy. We are also building two cities right now – Lusail city and Energy city. These two cities are being built with clean energy us-

ing only natural gas; there will be no pollution in these two cities," said Al-Bloschi.

According to the pavilion guide and official information provided, "Lusail City extends across an area of 38 square kilometres and includes four exclusive islands and 19 multi-purpose residential, mixed use, entertainment and commercial districts. It is a comprehensive arena with leisure spots, residential buildings, commercial towers, avenues and public marinas. The city of the future can accommodate 200,000 residents and 170,000 employees; it will also welcome over 80,000 visitors. The total estimated capacity of Lusail will eventually reach 450,000 people. The city also includes numerous residential units, office buildings of various sizes and 22 hotels with different international star ratings, making it an element of attraction for investment in Qatar."

Al-Bloschi, who noted the visit wasn't his first time in the capital, said there are many cultural commonalities between the countries. "There are many similar cultural things between Qatar and Kazakhstan. You have nomads and we have Bedouin people. You have a yurt and we have a Bedouin tent; it's a different shape, but the idea is the same. You have berkutchis and we have falcon hunters; there are so many related cultural things including the musical instruments. I also like Astana; it is a clean and new city – like a part in Doha – the New Doha, it has more buildings made of glass," he said.

The Qatari pavilion hosts approximately 5,000 visitors on weekdays and up to 11,000 on weekends. At press time, approximately 450,000 guests had toured the pavilion since the beginning of the exhibition, said Al-Bloschi.

## EXPO 2017 welcomes three-millionth visitor

Continued from Page B1

We reached the projected mark. EXPO 2017 justified our expectations completely. The exhibition increased not only the number of jobs, but also increased incomes. Everyone felt the multiplication effect for small and medium-sized businesses. The hotels occupancy has doubled. The same dynamics can be observed with restaurants and public catering points of the city," said Yessimov.

On Aug. 24, Kazakhstan's national pavilion, Nur Alem, registered its one-millionth visitor.

Earlier it was expected that during three months the exhibition will be visited by two million peo-

ple. That goal was reached on Aug. 4. The lucky visitor was a 34-year-old businessman from Uralsk Gaisa Zhumaliyev.

The future of the exhibition has become interesting object for many people. Yessimov has stated that President Nursultan Nazarbayev has approved the plan of post-exhibition use of its facilities. After Sept. 10, maintenance works will take place, after which the main facilities will start working again as three legacy projects are to take shape – the Astana International Financial Center (AIFC), the Future Energy international center for the transfer of green technologies and investment projects and the international IT start-up hub.



Akhmetzhan Yessimov (R) and Yuri Shurygin.

## Italy presents latest innovations in renewable energy at Venetian week



By Dana Omirgazy

ASTANA – The Italian region of Veneto brought its best energy solutions to the capital as part of Venetian week at EXPO 2017. The region's scientists offered a unique experience in generating solar energy and producing energy from biofuel, including processed materials from vineyards, reported inform.kz.

"Visitors and participants of the exhibition will witness the best achievements of the region that managed to fulfil the Energy Efficiency Directive's tasks in a short period of time," said regional Parliament President Roberto Chambe, adding 40 percent of the region's energy is produced from renewable sources.

Venetian week also featured leading electricity and heat power companies, as well as electricity generation.

The University of Padua Giorgio Levi Cases Centre on Economics and Technology for Energy opened Aug. 22 with a presentation on electrochemical energy storage systems.

The project was designed to ensure the continuity of energy generated by photovoltaic and wind systems.

The next day, the Italian pavilion hosted the region's innovation, enterprises and start-ups in energy. Regional start-ups and SMEs presented their technology and business partnership proposals, such as geo-batteries for thermal diffusion, built-in household batteries to store energy from renewable energy sources, electricity distribution systems and heating systems with heat recovery and energy recycling.

The region's innovative wine production systems were presented at the Identity, Innovation, Sustainability: the Energy of Conegliano Valdobbiadene Prosecco Superiore Docg seminar.

A session on stationary and mobile storage for boosting renewable energy sources was held Aug. 24 to demonstrate scientific and technological innovation in energy storage.

Italian scientists are convinced the accumulation of renewable energy sources is one of the main

tasks related to the competitive use of environmentally-friendly energy sources for industry, logistics and transport and, in particular, electric mobility.

Venetian days ended with the transfer of the Venetian symbol – vases styled from Murano glass – as a gift to the National Museum of Kazakhstan. They were exhibited during Venetian week at the Alessandro Volta hall in the centre of the pavilion.

The Italian pavilion is among the largest at the expo. The building is divided into four oval areas, each

dedicated to a particular theme and named after one of the Italian scientists who left his footprints in history. Video materials projecting on the pavilion's high walls demonstrate the history of the nation's energy development.

The Veneto region's official presentation with the participation of Italian Ambassador to Kazakhstan and its country's expo commissioner Stefano Ravagnan was held Aug. 20. The ceremony featured a live performance by Rovigo Conservatory musicians Giovanni Angeleri and Cecilia Francini.



# TOURISM

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 6, 2017

## Time to create platform for international cooperation, one common, multi-lateral tourist product: Tourist Silk Road

By Jacek Palkiewicz

Kazakhstan has recently been in the news because of the prestigious international event, the Future Energy-themed Astana EXPO 2017.

"It will become a model for future sustainable living," notes Margulan Baimukhan, Kazakh ambassador to Poland. "It will certainly play an important role in raising awareness of international audiences about the culture and heritage of Kazakhstan."

This is a great opportunity to showcase a new look of the 25-year-old independent nation, which, thanks to positive changes and achievements, wants to join the group of 30 most developed ones by 2050. They call it the Central Asian snow leopard, and its rapidly growing capital city of Astana, which has grown from scratch in the steppes, with its stunning architecture, is often compared to the Dubai region.

### Great hopes of a great country

Kazakhstan, the world's ninth largest country, which is still not very well known, intends to enter a new phase of economic development. One of the key catalysts is going to be tourism or rather the tourism industry. It is auspicious that a newly formed committee within the Ministry of Culture and Sports is called so, is and led by an experienced diplomat, Mainyura Murzamediyeva.

"We have a unique potential that has not been used until now," says Shokan, a journalist specialising in economic issues, "Now the government decided to develop tourism using foreign and domestic investments on a partnership basis between private and state sectors while emphasising support for private initiatives. It wants to develop almost all forms of tourism. From sightseeing, related to the visiting of various cultural-historical and leisure facilities, through adventure, ecological or agritourism, extreme expeditions, incentive tourism, business tourism, and spa activities. There is also an interest in hunting and fishing."

To expand this neglected branch of the economy and create good conditions for tourists, the government wants to restore historic buildings, build infrastructure, train specialists, develop craft (to preserve rich folk traditions) and marketing, and form a tourist image of Kazakhstan.

"Today we are facing new challenges in the global economy, so it's a good time to start an ambitious project," Deputy Foreign Minister Roman Vassilenko told me in Astana. "I believe in success, since we have many tools to



use for that. Our country is good for sightseeing, strong cultural diversity, and the climate is attractive at any time of the year. We have recently made a fundamental step in abolishing the visa requirement, which has led to the increased presence of foreign guests."

Traditions draw special attention in Kazakhstan. Since ancient times, the contemporary Kazakh lands were part of the world's largest nomadic domain of the tribes of Turkish and Mongolian origin. Interaction between the nomadic civilisations with the agrarian ones ensured the strength and prosperity of the Silk Road. Thanks to the nomads, ideas and resources wandered, and thanks to the communities that settled in cities – civilisation and culture developed. The nomadic heritage and spirituality of migrant peoples shaped the identity for many generations of the Kazakh people. Tradition is strongly cultivated here; local people often talk about their roots and love everything that reactivates their past.

### Pearls of the landscape of Kazakhstan

The largest landscaping attraction of Kazakhstan – the Sharyn

Canyon – is compared to the Grand Canyon in the United States. Not far from it is the village of Saty, a mountain base, for example, to Lake Kayindy, which was created only a hundred years ago because of an earthquake. It stuns you with an extraordinary picture of the forest rising from the water. According to government estimates, in 2020, around one million tourists are expected to visit the Burabay National Park in the north of the country, commonly referred by the locals as the Kazakh equivalent of the natural beauties of Switzerland, with a picturesque mountain landscape, forests, and clear lakes and air.

Internationally, Kazakhstan is viewed as an exceptionally stable state, where there are no conflicts with neighbours or domestically, along either ethnic or religious lines. Experts emphasise that a newcomer in this country can count on traditional Kazakh hospitality, which commands treating newcomers with respect and friendship.

The concept of tourism development in Kazakhstan to 2020 stipulates implementation of a number of regional cultural projects, such as Astana – The Heart of Eurasia, Almaty – the Cultural Domain of Kazakhstan, World of Nomads, Caspian Gate, or Revitalization of the Silk Road.

### Bazaars, palaces, temples

"And it must be emphasised that this revived, legendary trading route is a topic in itself," says Andrey Khasbulatov, general manager of the Kazakh Scientific Institute for Cultural Research. "It is a real treasure at your fingertips. More and more frequently tourists visit the route, for example, the historic battlefields of the army of Genghis Khan in Turkestan. We showed it in the popular science film 'The Silk Road of Marco Polo,' which

was successfully demonstrated at a film festival in Milan, as well as received in New York."

I grew up on the Silk Road myth, so I am delighted that in 2014 it has reached a distinction of an elite nature. Due to its unique cultural value for humanity, three sites have been listed in the UNESCO World Heritage List and are subject to special protection. These are the fourteenth century Mausoleum of Khoja Ahmed Yassawi, erected on the initiative of the ruthless conqueror Tamerlane, drawing pilgrims from all across the region, as well as petroglyphs depicting mysterious idols with sun-shaped heads in the Tamgaly archaeological reserve, which has traces of settlement from around 2,000 BC; and above all, the system of routes of the Chang'an-Tianshan corridor. The 5,000-km-long road, stretching through China, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan, features 33 unique tourist attractions: the palace complexes of various empires, ancient trading houses, fortifications, Buddhist temples, navigational towers, and fragments of the Great Wall.

One needs to note the magical ambience of the bazaars. Just as the Silk Road once brought great profits, today trade remains an element of everyday life. I experienced the spirit of the old days in the bustling, lively markets of the sophisticated Almaty; in Turkestan, once an important shopping centre; or in Taraz or Shymkent. They are full of not only fabrics and carpets, but also clothing and electronics made in China, among which Kazakhs mix with the Uzbeks, the Kyrgyz with the Chinese or the Tajik.

The international expedition project New Silk Road 2017/2018 ([www.silkroad-2017.com](http://www.silkroad-2017.com)) is in the advanced stage. Its status is enhanced by the government patronage of countries on the route running from China to Poland and the highest form of support presented

by UNESCO. We want to promote our countries and their achievements and refresh the spirit of the legendary route in reference to the Chinese initiative of Belt and Road.

The latter is an ambitious vision of the transport and communications network linking the Middle East and Central Asia with Europe. Astana has embraced this historical project and intends to actively participate in its implementation. Local analysts predict that this initiative will have a significant impact on the economy of their country in the near future.

The Silk Road, which has played an invaluable role in the development of civilisation and cultural integration in many countries in the past, is one of the world's biggest brands. Today, after catching up on the creation of own statehood, when the process of maturing of societies that define the model of economic functioning goes on throughout Central Asia, the trail reveals many potential benefits for the tourism sector of individual states.

### Time for cooperation

And here lies, potentially, a recipe for success. Starting from the assumption that travellers, easily crossing this part of Asia, usually do not limit themselves to visiting only one country, it would be important to find inspiration and mechanisms for integrating the great historical region. Restore and revive the Silk Road traditions, around which national narration and the process of restoring historical memory would be built.

It is time to create a platform for international cooperation, one common, multi-lateral tourist product: the Silk Road. The attractiveness of the entire region will then be greater than of just one country. Opportunities for cooperation in new fields will wid-

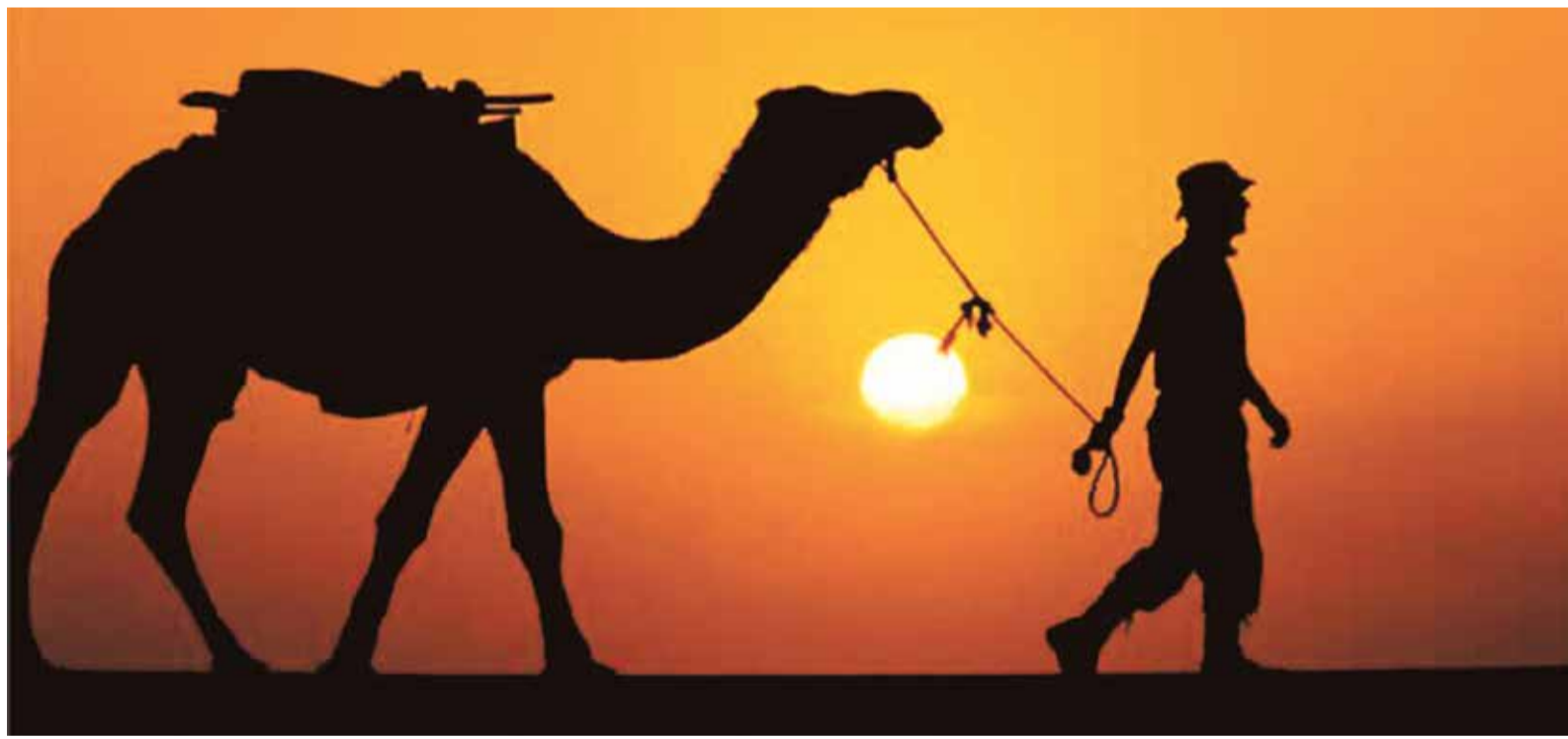
en. This could be achieved through the mutual use of the rich resources of the region, the creation of a favourable investment climate and modern infrastructure, the closer links between cities in neighbouring countries, the removal of various shortcomings, primitive obstacles and archaic procedures at border crossings. It is also time for the promotional TravelPass for international use, entitling one to enter a number of tourist facilities or use of transport, including airplane flights, or family packages, etc. All this would contribute to popularising and developing the tourist image of the Silk Road; thus, increasing its potential.

This idea also has room for Poland. One should recall that at various times our land also served as a crossroad for the transit routes of long-distance trade of bigger or smaller significance. In the pre-Piast times, from the North to the South, the Amber Road, an equivalent of the Silk Road, was created at roughly the same time. This land-water artery, a pearl of the European cultural heritage, led from the Baltic Sea, through Zulawy, the largest centre for the processing of the amber (the "Baltic's gold"), up the Vistula, then Warta, Proсна, Upper Odra, to Klodzko Valley and from there to the Moravian Gate and beyond, through the Alpine and Carpathian Passes to Italy and Greece.

From East towards Western Europe, the Road from the Volga Region, where the Silk Road, frequented by many caravans during Genghis Khan's conquests who did not dare to go from Bukhara to Persia and beyond, but bounced northwest to reach the Volga, it intersected between the 10th and the 13th centuries with another trade route known as From the Vikings to the Greeks and earlier with the Volga Trail, linking Scandinavia and the Finnish Gulf with the Caspian Sea and the Persian Gulf through the network of rivers. The latter route led from the mouth of the Volga River, through Kyiv, Krakow, and Wroclaw, to Magdeburg and further. Goods were also transported from Krakow to Prague and southern Germany.

Recently, the air link between Warsaw and Astana has brought Kazakhstan closer to Poland. My compatriot, Franciscan friar Benedict of Poland (Benedykt Polak), who reached Kazakhstan long before the Marco Polo expedition, had to travel there for many months. For today's traveler, it is a matter of fewer than five hours. Although it will not bring mass tourism yet, it will surely move Kazakhstan up in the coming years in the world ranking for travellers.

The author is Italy-based Polish journalist, traveller, explorer, and propagator of survival skills.



## Korgalzhyn eco-tours provide authentic and affordable travel experience



By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – The Korgalzhyn Nature Reserve, one of Kazakhstan's major attractions, occupies almost 550,000 hectares in two regions about 130 kilometres southwest of the capital. It is included in the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) World Heritage List.

The vast lands of the reserve provide the necessary living space for Asia's largest population of water birds. The wildlife community consists of more than 60 rare species of plants and animals, including flamingos and the Shrenk wild tulip, listed in the IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) Red Book. The pink birds come to this northernmost part of the world once a year and as a result, it has become a desirable tourist destination.

The Pana (Shelter) Guest House in Korgalzhyn village has operated since 2007. Weekend tours are especially in demand, said host Bibinur Amanzholova.

"Many foreign tourists from Germany, Hungary, the Netherlands, South Korea and the U.S. come to visit us. We introduce them to the national customs, traditions and music. We invite the Dudarai folklore ensemble for a concert programme. The season lasts from April-October, as flamingos arrive and tulips blossom," she said.

The guides also organise excursions to the reserve and the museum is across the road. The guest house accommodates up to 20 people and lodging in yurts or small houses with three meals a day costs 10,000 tenge (US\$30).

The Ptichyi Rai (Bird's Paradise), which provides all the necessary information and tours around the reserve, is seeking to become an environmental education centre not only for the local population, but also for visitors.

The centre offers a three-day, two-night ecological route for a maximum of 20 people including excursions to the ALZHIR museum and memorial complex,

Korgalzhyn village and Balmyrza equestrian sport centre in Birtaban. Tourists can also visit the Batygai Mausoleum and Kanykei sacred site. Hotel accommodations with three meals a day are 8,000 tenge (US\$24).

The eco-route is a perfect opportunity to enjoy bird watching at Lake Birtaban. From mid-April to September, many species visit the shores to breed. Flamingos usually arrive in Korgalzhyn for the entire spring and summer.

Swimming in the lake, boating and sailing catamarans are offered by the host and ice fishing is popular in the winter months. A variety of souvenir items made by local craftspeople is available at the kiosks.

All visitors must register at the administration and pay the fee before entering the reserve. Citizens of Kazakhstan and the Commonwealth of Independent States must have a copy of their ID, while tourists from other countries should provide a document proving their identity.

A one-way bus ticket to Korgalzhyn village costs 1,000 tenge (US\$3); taxi fare is approximately 4,000 tenge (US\$12).

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 6, 2017

# Kazakh boxers win gold, bronze and silver medals at world boxing championships in Hamburg

By Anuar Abdrakhmanov

HAMBURG – Kazakh boxers won one gold, two silver and three bronze medals at the Aug. 25 to Sept. 2 AIBA World Boxing Championships in Hamburg.

Kairat Yerallyev, considered one of the nation's main hopes before the championship, triumphed in the bantamweight (up to 56 kg). In the final bout, he fought Duke Ragan of the United States and won 3-2.

"I would like to thank all those who supported and cheered for me. I am also grateful to the National Olympic Committee of Kazakhstan. The achievements of Kazakh athletes are the outcome of great efforts and attention [paid] to us... I am glad that development of sports is comprehensively supported in our country," said Yerallyev.

Abilkan Amankul represented Kazakhstan in the middleweight (up to 75 kg). In the final bout, he lost to Ukrainian Alexander Khizhnyak on points. However, the medal he won at his first world championship speaks about the

young boxer's great prospects for the future.

Another silver medal came from Kamshibek Kunkabayev. He fought in the super heavyweights (above 91 kg) and only gave way in the final bout to Mahommedrasul Majidov of Azerbaijan.

Vasily Levit (heavyweight, up to 91 kg), Ablakhan Zhussupov (welterweight, up to 69 kg), and Zhomart Yerzhan (light flyweight, up to 49 kg) won bronze medals.

"We had chances to win three gold medals in Hamburg, but let us not forget that our team is young. Our guys still have something to work on and continue their growth. They need to do [even more] to improve their skills," commented head coach of the Kazakhstan's national boxing team Myrzagali Aitzhanov.

Cuban boxers topped the informal national team ranking in Hamburg as they claimed five gold and two silver medals. The second-placed Uzbekistan won one gold, three silver and two bronze medals. Boxers from Azerbaijan, France, and Ukraine also won one gold medal each. The next world championships will be in two years in Sochi, Russia.



# FC Astana defeats Celtic at home, but fails to qualify for Champions League



By Anuar Abdrakhmanov

ASTANA – FC Astana secured a 4-3 win over Celtic FC in the spectacular return match of the UEFA Champions League playoffs Aug. 22, extending its undefeated home streak in European club competitions to 15 matches.

The Scots had already virtually secured their berth in the Champions League group stage in the first game at Celtic Park, where they crushed the opposition with a more-than-confident 5-0 win. Astana manager Stanimir Stoilov admitted at a press conference ahead of the return leg that his team had very little chance to cut the deficit. Few, however, expected the players would come so close to working a miracle.

**STOILOV:** "My players showed good football and the fans should have liked that.

If we had scored another goal when we had it 4-1, there could have been a chance.

I am glad we won. If it were not for the mistakes in the first match, we could have been closer to the Champions League."

From the first minutes, Astana started attacking its opponent's goal. Patrick Twumasi had a nice shot at the target, but Celtic's goalkeeper Craig Gordon blocked it. Another attempt came a bit later from Serikzhan Muzhikov, but this time the ball missed the goal-

post. Junior Kabananga had some scoring chances as well, only to be blocked by Gordon. Finally, in the 26th minute, Dmitry Shomko made a long-range shot and the ball ricocheted off the defender's foot into the Celtic's net. The Scots evened the score six minutes later, however, when Scott Sinclair got the ball at the left wing and shot it into the far corner.

Stoilov changed the game scheme at halftime, restructuring into three central defenders and placing Abzal Beisebekov at right flank. The moves proved fruitful at the 47th minute. Srđjan Grahovac made a cross into the penalty area, where Muzhikov confidently sent the ball into the goal. Two minutes later Shomko made an accurate pass to Twu-

masi, who sent a header behind Gordon into the net.

At the 69th minute, after a clear run on goal Twumasi scored his team's fourth of the night and for the first time the chance of overturning the deficit from the first match seemed realistic. The team

needed to score three more goals, but given how confidently they scored the last three it looked like the Celtic players were close to a panic. Astana had at least two more scoring chances in the following minutes, but they lacked a bit of luck.

Playing all attack and a huge desire to score often imply a heightened risk of missing a counter-strike and that is exactly what happened. In the remaining time, Celtic made a few quick attacks of its own and scored two more goals, making it 4-3 and thus dashing the hope of the Kazakh fans.

The Kazakh titleholders still secured a win in the match, but it was Celtic that eventually made it to the group stage of the Champions League. As a result, Astana will now continue in the Europa League, the second most important continental club tournament. On Aug. 25, after a draw in Monaco, they learned that their opponents in Group A will include Villarreal CF, Maccabi Tel-Aviv FC, and SK Slavia Praha.

"My players showed good football and the fans should have liked that. If we had scored another goal when we had it 4-1, there could have been a chance. I am glad we won. If it were not for the mistakes in the first match, we could have been closer to the Champions League. The team will continue growing, but today the Europa League is a good achievement for us, [too]," said Stoilov.

# KazSport TV channel changes name to Qazsport

Staff Report

ASTANA – The Kazakhstan TV/radio company, which includes the only sports television channel KazSport in the country, has rebranded itself. Starting with the new TV season, which the channel starts on Aug. 28, the names of a number of TV channels will be written in Latin. Its

sports TV channel will be now be called Qazsport.

The organisation's website promises the channel will present new and interesting programmes.

"In addition, the channel will broadcast the most important sporting events in the world, including the fights of Kazakhstan's boxing professionals, as well as live broadcasts from various events and special programmes,"

the press service of the company reports.

The channel is available through the national broadcasting system Otav TV and cable operators.

The website of TRK Kazakhstan also notes that the new logo of all TV channels of the corporation are united by one common symbol that combines the main two colours: turquoise and yellow, symbolising the nation's state flag.

# Team Kazakhstan falls to Montenegro, Poland in FIFA World Cup qualifiers

By Anuar Abdrakhmanov

ASTANA – Kazakh national football was dealt two straight 0-3 defeats by Group E in the FIFA World Cup 2018 qualifiers, first on September 1 at home at the hands of Montenegro and three days later away against Poland.

Facing the Montenegrins at Astana Arena, the hosts were in serious trouble almost as soon as the match began. Midfielder Georgy Zhukov had to leave the field due to an injury and Kazakh Manager Aleksandr Borodiyuk sent Maksat Baizhanov instead.

In the first half, team Kazakhstan played on par with the visitors and had a few decent scoring chances but failed to convert them. Montenegro, on the other hand, used its own very well, and Marko Vesic scored in the 31st minute. Kazakhstan soon had a great opportunity to equalise, but Islambek Kuat's shot hit the bar. Montenegro had one more good chance to score before the break, but Kazakhstan's David Loria deflected Stefan Jovetic's free kick attempt.

Two good chances came Kazakhstan's way at the very beginning of the second half: first, forward Roman Murtazayev headed the ball towards the net, but Montenegrin goalkeeper Danijel Petkovic saved his team; then Kuat failed to score after a good cross from Serikzhan Muzhikov. In the 53rd minute, the hosts paid for missing those

chances. Midfielder Marco Jankovic used a free kick to volley the ball into the penalty area, where forward Fatos Beciraj doubled his team's lead with a header. Ten minutes later, defender Marko Simic scored his team's third of the night in similar fashion.

"We lost to a very good, well-organised team. We worked on defending our goal during free kicks but actually missed two of them. I admit [free kicks and corners] are our big problem. We also had good chances and needed to use them. Montenegro is a very serious opponent, which is why they are competing for a berth in the World Cup. We still have a lot of work to do," Borodiyuk commented after the game.

Kazakhstan's next match was September 4 in Warsaw against Poland, the Group E leaders. The White Eagles suffered their own, quite sobering 0-4 defeat at the hands of Denmark in their previous game away, so they were eager to regain their fans' trust against the group's outsiders from Kazakhstan.

Supported by full stands in the red-and-white coloured Narodowy (National) Stadium, the Poles dominated the field from the earliest minutes. They soon opened the score when in the 10th minute Arkadiusz Glik sent the ball into the net following a volley cross into the visitors' penalty box. The hosts had a number of other chances to extend their lead, both in the first and the beginning of the

second half, but failed to convert them.

In the 49th minute, forward Sergei Khizhlichenko sent the ball into the net behind Polish goalkeeper Lukasz Fabianski. Unfortunately, the referee ruled that Kuat had been offside, costing Khizhlichenko, who had a spell in the Polish Premier League from 2013 to 2014 with Korona Kielce, a chance to upset Polish fans one more time. (He had two goals in the previous match between the teams, the 2-2 draw a year ago at Astana Arena.)

The Poles soon had a goal disallowed, too, although replays showed the ball actually crossed the goal line following a free kick from Poland's star striker Robert Lewandowski. But they managed to score again twice, with Kamil Glik sending a header below the bar after a volley cross in the 74th minute and Lewandowski converting a penalty in the 86th minute.

The confident 3-0 victory for the Poles means they have now earned 19 points in eight matches and retain their lead in the group, followed by Montenegro and Denmark, which both have 16 points. Romania comes fourth with nine and Armenia fifth with six. Kazakhstan remains at the bottom of the group with only two points earned in home matches last autumn.

Each team now has two games left. The Kazakhs will play theirs against Romania away October 5 and against Armenia at Astana Arena October 8.

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 6, 2017



## Capital hosts swimming race for children with disabilities

Staff Report

ASTANA – A swimming competition involving children with disabilities took place Aug. 17 in Astana. The Kazakh association of parents of children with disabilities organised the event with the support of Asyl Bala national association to demonstrate children's boundless capabilities.

Children that participated in the race have different diagnoses, including cerebral palsy, spina bifida and sight and hearing difficulties. "Our children have been at-

tending adaptive swimming programme for six months launched by our association together with Space Fitness centre. We have such opportunity thanks to our cooperation. We want to show that our children are capable of everything," Chairperson of the Kazakh association Nurgul Ulzhekova noted.

Focusing on opportunities rather than limitations is essential, according to Ulzhekova, as it helps demonstrate children abilities, promote healthy lifestyle and physical activity and transform common stereotype-based perception about people with special needs.

First Deputy Chairperson of the Astana office of Nur Otan party Bakhyt Saparov joined the celebrations and awarded the certificates to the participants.

Funded by private funds, the association runs two group classes this year – adaptive swimming and adaptive karate providing training to nearly 60 kids.

Children are demonstrating incredible results within a short period, including strengthening their immune systems, improving coordination of movement and memory and learning movement skills.

## Astana to build enclosed pedestrian skyway system

Staff Report

ASTANA – The Astana city government plans to build a system of enclosed pedestrian footbridges connecting buildings two and three stories above the sidewalk, according to the akimat (city administration) press service. The announcement was made during a meeting with the participation of Akim (Mayor) of Astana Asset Issekeshiev.

The system will be similar to the "American Skyway" system in the United States city of Minneapolis. That system connects the second and third floors of various office towers, hotels, banks, corporate and government offices with restaurants and retail stores. The Minneapolis system also includes condominium and apartment complexes, allowing residents to live, work, and shop downtown without having to leave the skyway system, according to online sources.

That system is sometimes called a "city within the city" and its temperature controlled to accommodate the sharp winter and summer temperature changes in Minneapolis.

Astana also plans to commercialise its walkways. It also plans to build ring roads and develop

transport infrastructure, as well as to increase the number of parking lots, streets, bridges, overpasses and traffic interchanges. Light rail transport will be introduced to develop alternative modes of transport. For the successful implementation of the comprehensive plan, the best international experience of such large metropolises as Dubai, Madrid, New York, Hong Kong, Istanbul, Paris and other cities of the world will be used, according to the city's statement.

For the successful implementation of the plan, the best international experience of Dubai, Madrid, New York, Hong Kong, Istanbul, Paris and other cities will be used.

At present, more than 350,000 vehicles are registered in Astana. The number of non-resident cars is 400,000-450,000. The number of public transport vehicles is 1,025.



## Astana first city in CIS to complete first phase of dilapidated housing improvement programme

By Yerbolat Uatkanov

ASTANA – Kazakhstan recently became the first country in the Commonwealth of Independent states to complete the first phase of demolition in a pilot project concerning dilapidated housing. The Moscow city administration has decided to use Astana's experience for its dilapidated housing project.

The project in Astana was called Affordable Housing 2020 and it started in 2013. Now it is integrated into the Nurlu Zher national programme, and seeks to demolish dilapidated housing.

At the first stage of the project, 228 dilapidated houses were de-

molished and 3,500 families were resettled because the houses posed a threat to the occupants' lives. From 2013 to 2016, 117 such houses were demolished and more than 1,500 families were resettled. At the moment, residents are being resettled from 77 emergency houses.

In 2017, the demolition of 111 houses, home to more than 1,800 families, is planned.

The Elorda Damu company was established to implement the pilot project by the Astana administration. The company allocated loan funds from the national budget at the initial stage of the project. In accordance with the terms of the pilot project, the company con-

structs apartments and gives 30 percent of them to the Astana administration for the resettlement

The Moscow city administration has decided to use Astana's experience for its dilapidated housing project.

of the residents of people from dilapidated houses. The company sells 70 percent of the apartments. Proceeds from the sale funds the company to again invest in con-

struction. In such a manner, the company continues to build houses at the expense of its own capital.

The city administration reports that it decided to use land of demolished houses for the construction of parks, squares, sports grounds for people living in these areas, according to vlast.kz.

In January 2018, the implementation of the second phase of the pilot project will begin. It is planned to put into operation an additional 8,500 apartments with a total area of about 600,000 square metres. Reinvestment of the pilot project at the end of 2017 will require 48 billion tenge (US\$144 million).

## WIP Astana – city's new type of public space

By Zhazira Dyussebekova

ASTANA – Probably many passers-by have noticed a stage next to the Keruen Shopping Mall. A special open-air space with the 80 seats and LED screen suddenly appeared in the city during the celebrations of the Capital Day on July 6. Work in Progress Astana, or simply WIP Astana is a new format of public space. It is free multifunctional area for the public, which is offered for the non-commercial events.

"Working in the Urban Centre, I have been a part of the discussions that the city needs more quality public space numerous times. But in fact, we do not quite understand what they should be. What gives it that quality? What is it made of? What functions should public space perform?" said centre's team leader Aigerim Ospanova in an interview with The Astana Times.

So, WIP Astana turned out to be



an experiment in this sense, she added. "It is designed to identify the real needs of urban communities and citizens and to reveal the characteristics of a universal successful public space."

"To this end, for several months now we have been collecting a list of communities and offering them a free site for their activities. Thus, we will establish a communication channel: we will receive

ready-made answers to these questions [listed above]," stated Ospanova.

Astana has a lot of communities and people who care for the city and its inhabitants, she stated.

In addition to the main function of the site, which is for film screenings, it can be transformed to host a variety of events.

"So, for today we have already held master classes, TED talks, poetic and literary readings, concerts, children's social camp, dance nights and sports events and much more to come," she said.

For example, this week WIP is hosting volunteer meetings, Zumba class, screening of the "Boomerang" film, a sign language master class and more.

While the space was designed by the Urban Centre, it was implemented with the support of the city's Yessil district administration and Astana Art Fest and will be open until the end of October.

## David Guetta's EXPO 2017 concert brings down house

By Dmitry Lee

ASTANA – EXPO 2017 has made this summer truly unforgettable for many capital residents, as it hosted multiple world-renowned singers and celebrities. The David Guetta concert on Aug. 29, however, blew the scale completely out of proportion.

Traffic stalled along the streets bordering the expo from approximately 7 p.m. until late night. Thousands of residents charged the gates in the hope of a glance at their favourite DJ.

"The lines for expo tickets started from the entrance to the Mega Silk Way Mall to the ticket office – people lined up in the queue for over two hours and refused to leave," said a capital resident and concert guest.

Guetta fans occupied the entire

expo amphitheatre and anyone with an expo ticket could attend the show. There was no room to breathe and forget any manoeuvring.

"This summer we have witnessed many great concerts, like Steve Aoki and Afrojack. They're all unique and special, but I think this one completely outweighed the others by the size of the crowd," guest Zamira Duyssen told The Astana Times.

According to preliminary data, close to 25,000 people attended the concert, a figure which even surprised Guetta.

"This is incredible! I didn't expect something like this!" he said during the concert. "Thank you for being here tonight, trying to make this concert special. I know that many people came from different countries, but tonight we will be as one because we are together."

The DJ played famous tracks by Rihanna, Swedish House Mafia and Charlie Puth, as well as his own hits "World is Mine," "When Love Takes Over," "Love is Gone," "Without You" and his absolute hit "Titanium."

Although by law loud music is not allowed in Kazakhstan after 11 p.m., the concert went deep into the night until 1:30 a.m. as promised by expo officials. They warned neighbours about the show the day before and expressed hope for understanding.

Hundreds of staff, including medics, police, firemen, general servicemen and volunteers, were on-site to avoid any accidents, according to expo officials.

The international exposition, which opened June 9, will continue through Sept. 10. Officials recently announced more

than three million people have already attended. That figure is

already one and half time higher the estimated total attendance

expected prior to the start of the exhibition.

