



Nazarbayev proposes CIS modernisation, notes need for EAEU digitisation at Sochi summits

By Aigerim Seisembayeva

ASTANA – Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev proposed measures to modernise the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) organisation during the Oct. 11 CIS Council of Heads of State meeting in Sochi, Russia.

Nazarbayev also proposed during the Supreme Eurasian Economic Council (SEEC) meeting a gathering in 2018 to discuss digitisation of member states and noted the importance of the Eurasian Economic Union's (EAEU) digital agenda.

During the CIS summit, the heads of state and government discussed strengthening cooperation as well as deepening trade and economic ties among member states.

Tajikistan presented its agenda for its chairpersonship of the organisation and Turkmenistan shared ideas to develop the organisation. The results of the work within the CIS Interparliamentary Assembly were also presented.

President Nazarbayev stressed the CIS' role in developing trade and economic relations among the member states.

"Free trade in services in the CIS will open new opportunities for our businesses and bring our countries' trade and economic cooperation to a new level. I propose to instruct the Council of Heads of Government and the Executive Committee to intensify work on the



Photo credit: akordal.kz

draft Agreement on Free Trade in Services and to adopt it in the near future," Nazarbayev said.

The CIS heads of state signed documents on combating corruption and legalisation of proceeds from crime. They also considered humanitarian measures to expand ties in culture, education, science and tourism. They also adopted a statement supporting family and traditional family values.

Nazarbayev attended the SEEC along with Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan, Belarusian leader Alexander Lukashenko, Moldova's President Igor Dodon, Russian President Vladimir Putin, Kyrgyzstan's Prime Minister Sapar Isakov and Chairman of the Board

of the Eurasian Economic Commission (EEC) Tigran Sargsyan.

Meeting participants discussed cooperation within the EAEU and heard a report by the EEC. They also noted the EAEU's positive impact on the member states' economies and the importance of enhancing integration processes.

The sides expressed confidence that the implementation of the agreements reached at SEEC meetings would enhance cooperation among EAEU countries to a higher level.

The specifics of the documents signed at the CIS Summit were decided upon during the Oct. 10 CIS Council of Foreign Ministers meeting attended by Kazakh Foreign

Minister Kairat Abdrakhmanov and other CIS foreign ministers.

Ministers at the CIS Summit also agreed to develop proposals presented by Nazarbayev at the 2015 Summit in Burabai to improve the organisation's efficiency. At the 2016 meeting in Bishkek, the leaders also adopted measures to modernise the organisation that were based on Kazakh proposals.

The foreign ministers discussed international issues and approved an action plan for 2018-2020 to implement the Programme of Support and Development of National Sports and International Youth Cooperation Strategies and Development of Cooperation in the Field of Tourism.

Inflation to remain in 6.9-7.5% targeted corridor in 2017, says NB governor

By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – Kazakh National Bank Governor Daniyar Akishev said during an Oct. 3 government meeting that inflation is projected to remain in the targeted corridor of 6.9 percent to 7.5 percent until the end of the year.

Akishev noted inflation reached 4.2 percent in the first nine months of 2017 and that Kazakhstan seeks to slow down the growth of inflation at 4 percent by 2020.

"All these monetary policy measures, which are part of inflation targeting, are undertaken to accomplish these goals. National Bank base rate is held at 10.25 percent, which stimulates the flow of bank's available resources to the real sector of the economy and at the same time ensures the stability at financial, but most importantly, currency market," he noted.

Though the National Bank continues its policy of a floating exchange rate, which means the market is regulated by demand and supply forces, it still reserves the right to some market interventions to maintain stability at foreign exchange market.

In August and September, the bank had to undertake such measure and sell foreign currency, according to Akishev, seeking to stabilise the

market amidst rising devaluation expectations.

Akishev also outlined certain risks that drive inflation rate growth, where the government's increasingly strong fiscal policy is one of them.

"First, despite common consensus about the lack of money supply, fundamental inflation tension stems from the stimulating fiscal policy. In 2016, pensions and social benefits saw a 16 percent increase, salaries from the national budget grew 18 percent, with inflation rate at 8.5 percent," he explained, referring to the example of Russia that did not adjust social benefits to inflation rate changes allowing for a faster achievement of mid-term inflation rate objectives.

Increasing number of loans also contributes to the rising inflation rate. "Since the beginning of this year, the volume of loans grew 11 percent or 270 billion tenge (US\$788.4 million)," added Akishev.

Yet, he noted the influence of structural features of the economy on the nation's progress in achieving its objective of a lower inflation rate. "This includes insufficient depth of durable goods market, weak competition, presence of trade margins and intermediaries," he said, emphasising the need for a stronger coordination and interaction between all competent bodies.

President Nazarbayev congratulates Kyrgyz president-elect

By Aigerim Seisembayeva

ASTANA – Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev congratulated via telegram Sooronbay Jeenbekov on his election as President of the Kyrgyz Republic, the Akorda press service reported.

Nazarbayev said he believes

Jeenbekov's presidency will be good for the Kyrgyz Republic and that Kazakh-Kyrgyz Republic cooperation will continue under Jeenbekov's leadership.

"I believe that Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan's relations based on cooperation will continue to develop for the benefit of both of our countries. I wish you health and

success in a responsible post, and I wish peace and prosperity to the entire brotherly Kyrgyz people," the telegram reads.

Jeenbekov won 54 percent of the votes in an Oct. 15 election, according to the preliminary results. His main rival, Omurbek Babanov was second with 34 percent of votes. Turnout was 56 percent

of three million eligible voters. The official outcome will be announced Nov. 7.

Jeenbekov served as Kyrgyz Prime Minister from April 13, 2016 until Aug. 21, when he resigned after having been named a candidate for presidency from the Social Democratic Party of Kyrgyzstan.

Russian FM visits Kazakhstan, participates in MGIMO alumni forum

By Aigerim Seisembayeva

ASTANA – Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and his Kazakh counterpart Kairat Abdrakhmanov discussed preparations for the Nov. 9 14th Interregional Cooperation Forum in Chelyabinsk and attended the 4th International Forum of Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO) alumni during Lavrov's Oct. 6 visit to Kazakhstan.

Abdrakhmanov said the interregional forum and the cross-border cooperation between Russia and Kazakhstan is a good platform to test Eurasian Economic Union's economic freedoms related to the movement of goods, services, capital and labour. He also said Lavrov's visit is an opportunity for Russia to get acquainted with Kazakhstan's large-scale modernisation process.

The Kazakh foreign minister also praised the countries' cooperation within international organisations such as the United Nations Security Council, the General Assembly, the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), among others.

"We have similar positions on the



Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov (L) and Kazakh Foreign Minister Kairat Abdrakhmanov (R).

most pressing issues, including countering terrorism, strengthening the non-proliferation regime, achieving sustainable development goals and many other issues," Abdrakhmanov stressed.

The ministers also discussed Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev's 2015 proposal to optimise non-core functions of the Commonwealth of Independent States to make the organisation "less cumbersome and more efficient." They also addressed the Astana Process on Syria and the situation on the Korean peninsula.

Lavrov also noted a 40 percent increase in bilateral trade from January to July and attributed the increase to the Eurasian Economic Union integration process. He credited Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev with the idea of creating the Union and praised both presidents for maintaining close bilateral relations, which began 25 years ago.

"We can see the traditionally intensive development of our interaction, strategic partnership and alliance. First of all, this is due to the good personal relations between Russian

President Vladimir Putin and the President of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev," Lavrov noted at the end of the meeting.

Earlier on the same day, the two foreign ministers spoke at the opening ceremony of the MGIMO Alumni Forum. Lavrov is an alumni of the class of 1972.

Speaker of the Senate (upper chamber) of the Kazakh Parliament Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, himself an alumni, read an opening statement from President Nazarbayev in which the Kazakh leader stressed the importance of such gatherings.

Lavrov also delivered a welcoming speech and read out President Putin's address, which said Astana is considered a centre of multilateral diplomacy, international economic cooperation and the Eurasian integration processes.

Abdrakhmanov in his remarks said he hoped that MGIMO alumni would make an intellectual contribution to the global dialogue.

The forum included discussions on world trade, EXPO 2017 lessons, the Eurasian integration processes and cooperation in the field of education and culture.

Digital trends in education transform approaches to teaching

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – The electronic journal system is being widely used in more than 4,000 schools nationwide, said Minister of Education and Science Yerlan Sagdiyev at an Oct. 3 government meeting. "There are plans to ban the printable teacher grade books in those institutions that intro-

duced electronic journals. Our goal is to prevent duplication and significantly reduce paperwork," he said.

The education system concept includes three main directions – educational process digitalisation, digital educational content and education management digitalisation.

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President briefed on Baiterek project at Baikonur

Staff Report

ASTANA – Kazakhstan President Nursultan Nazarbayev was briefed on the latest in Kazakh-Russian cooperation on the Baiterek joint project at the Baikonur complex during a recent trip to the Kyzylorda region, according to the Akorda press service.

"As part of our agreements with Russia, the strategic directions for the development of the complex are determined. The work is coordinated by a specially established intergovernmental commission and the governments of the parties, concrete steps are being taken," President Nazarbayev said.

He also stressed the need to improve environmental safety in the region.

The President was also briefed on prospects to develop the city of Baikonur and improve his quality of life.

"The city has a great prospect. The necessary infrastructure is being developed, gasification of the city will be ensured, construction of housing complexes and social facilities will be carried out, and joint enterprises should be created to provide employment for the local population," President Nazarbayev added.

The Baiterek project, a joint project between the counties, started in 2004 with the aim of creating more eco-friendly carrier rocket launches at the Baikonur Cosmodrome. Funding for the Baiterek project will start in 2019-2020, when draft design and working design documentation will also be developed. Development and manufacture of equipment, construction and installation will launch in 2021-2023. Autonomous, integrated flight tests are slated for 2024-2025, with the first launch within the Baiterek project slated for 2025.

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NATION

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 18, 2017

President visits manufacturing plants in Aktobe

Staff Report

ASTANA – Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev was briefed on the operations of a rail beam plant operating under the State Programme for Accelerated Industrial and Innovative Development (SPAIID) during a recent visit to the Aktobe region, according to the Akorda press service.

President Nazarbayev learned about the plant's exports to Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan and wished the plant's employees success. The plant has an annual production capacity of 430,000 tonnes and supplies

the Kazakhstan Temir Zholy national company.

The President also visited a greenhouse, which uses the Ultra-Clima system and produces 6,000 tonnes of vegetables per year. The facility was built as part of SPAIID with the support of KazAgroFinance.

The President also visited the transnational company Kazchrome's ferroalloy plant. The facility produces 440,000 tonnes of ferroalloys per year and exports to China, Europe and the U.S. It is one of the leading ferrous metallurgy enterprises in Kazakhstan and includes four smelting shops, a converter department, a slag processing shop, and auxiliary shops.



Healthcare minister reviews ongoing advances in his sphere

By Frol Leandroer

ASTANA – Healthcare Minister Yelzhan Birtanov recently reported on the results of the Densauyk state health development programme for 2016-2019.

The first nine months of the year showed a 2-percent decrease in overall mortality compared to 2016, specifically in infant mortality (10.2 percent), maternal mortality (4.9 percent), malignant neoplasms (4.9 percent), accidents and injuries (9.1 percent) and tuberculosis (17.1 percent).

Paediatric service has been restored to improve the quality of medical care for children under six and reduce the burden on general practitioners. Twenty-three such services have been opened in the country this year and another 84 are scheduled to open by Dec. 31. With next year's class of interns and paediatricians, 230 paediatric services should start, complimented by more than 500 annually from 2019-2024. The services should satisfy 100 percent demand in paediatric areas by 2024.

A disease management project is also being executed based on ac-



Healthcare Minister Yelzhan Birtanov.

tive management of patients with chronic diseases. The effort was implemented this year in all 16 regions, doubling the number of patients participating in the programme.

A differentiated approach is anticipated to provide emergency and urgent care to improve emergency services and solve problems in NSR service work. Calls are optimised by urgency and grouped by symptom. Plans are also underway to introduce emergency department doctors, a new specialty to provide timely emergency care, such as initial resuscitation and other measures to stabilise patients.

As part of the national drug policy, 53 long-term contracts have been concluded to date, including 24 this year. The share of domestic producers by a single distributor was 75 percent in physical terms, 30 percent in monetary terms. Prices have been reduced by 23 percent for 175 drugs items. At the outpatient level, about 2.5 million patients are provided with medications, with plans to increase the figure to 3.8 million patients in 2018.

The compulsory medical insurance programme began July 1 with contributions from employers and entrepreneurs. Considering the barrier reduction for private sup-

pliers, measures are being taken to procure medical services for 2018. A healthcare database was established identifying 1,519 providers, 686 of which are private.

In conjunction with the regions, the ministry is also developing a single perspective plan to develop the health infrastructure, which calls for transforming the network, updating the infrastructure and training medical personnel regarding the rational use of resources.

To date, long-term plans to develop the infrastructure in Astana and the Aktobe, Atyrau, Karaganda, Mangistau, West Kazakhstan and Zhambyl regions have been considered. Work on the unified prospective plan together with investment plans should be completed in the first ten days of November. Adopting and implementing a single long-term infrastructure development plan will provide an 11.2 billion tenge (US\$33.2 million) savings for 2017-2025.

To increase the level of the medical teaching staff, the Centre for Transfer of Innovative Technologies was established at Karaganda State Medical University to further enhance teachers' capacity and revise training and development programmes.

The second stage involves implementing the strategic partnership between domestic medical schools and leading foreign universities. Seven foreign specialists from France, Italy, Poland, Sweden and Turkey were invited to manage positions and serve as professors and plans are underway to attract three additional specialists by the end of the year. New standards for training medical personnel in all fields have also been approved.

Birtanov reported medical information systems are being introduced aimed at digitally modernising healthcare and transitioning to a paperless work format. A pilot project is being planned for next year in the Akmola, Karaganda and Kostanai regions to switch to paperless management. According to the results of the first half of 2017, 74.4 percent of healthcare organisations are computerised compared to 34.3 percent in the beginning of the year.

Fifty-three percent of the country's medical organisations have Internet access, an increase of 6 percent since the start of 2017. By 2020, all medical organisations at the NEA (rural medical outpatient clinic) level will be connected.

New prisons will burden budget, official says



Minister of Internal Affairs Kalmukhanbet Kassymov.

Staff Report

ASTANA – Kazakhstan has abandoned plans to build new prisons as part of the public-private partnership (PPP) due to the high cost of the project, said Minister of Internal Affairs Kalmukhanbet Kassymov during a recent Mazhilis government hour.

He addressed "measures taken by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and local executive bodies to implement the comprehensive strategy for the social rehabilitation of citizens who have been freed from prisons and are on the probation service record in the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2017-2019," noting they will cut previously-planned costs in half.

"We worked out the option of building a new prison using the public-private partnership mechanism in cooperation with the Ministry of National Economy, but even on private capital terms, the project was not examined by the concession scheme. It turned out to be very expensive and burdensome for the country's budget," he said.

Kassymov noted in conjunction with the Ministry of National Economy, the PPP centre developed a government-approved proposal that envisions repairing or replacing existing residential buildings at correctional facilities with a proportional content from alternative PPP mechanisms.

"The implementation of this proposal will require 50-percent less cost compared to the construction of new correctional facilities from scratch and we already have such an experience. For the past four years, the Ministry of Internal Affairs has managed to almost completely rebuild one prison in Kyzylorda, an investigatory isolation ward in Almaty and also to reconstruct two prisons in Uralsk and Almaty region, which today allows keeping more than 2,600 convicts," he said.

In 2002, Kazakhstan ranked third in the world behind the United States and Russia in the number of prisoners, but now is 68th. The country's prisons currently house 35,500 inmates, a significant reduction from the 57,000 detained six years ago, but Kassymov stressed holding that many individuals seriously burdens the state budget.

"Based on the experience of many European states, by adopting the new criminal procedural and penal correction codes, the law 'On Probation' and some other legal acts, Kazakhstan is moving towards humanising criminal legislation and expanding the scope of criminal sanctions not related to isolation from society," he said.

Digital trends in education transform approaches to teaching and management

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The unified system of higher education management integrates institution's information systems and allows observing up-to-date data on the status of each student. Applications for all types of science fellowships, receiving reports, registering articles and the electronic address database are also digitised.

Approximately 80,000 films and interactive lessons in three languages improving teaching and learning have been introduced in schools as part of the digital educational content. This year, 7,082 schools received access to these resources, which are available in

There are plans to ban the printable teacher grade books in those institutions that introduced electronic journals.

online and offline mode. Teachers are able to use video materials to explain new courses, eliminating the need to look for additional lesson resources.

Big data centred on all educational databases will be created in terms of the unified management system.



Minister of Education and Science Yerlan Sagdiyev.

"The ministry plans to integrate intradepartmental educational databases by the end of 2017 and integration of our data with databases of government agencies is planned in 2018," said Sagdiyev.

Minister of Information and Communications Dauren Abayev spoke about the ministry's tasks to introduce digital education in information.

"The Digital Kazakhstan state programme developed by the ministry also includes human capital development. The programme intends to build a creative society by developing the skills and competencies of the individuals necessary to expand opportunities to take advantage of digitalisation to train specialists in the field of information and communication tech-



Minister of Information and Communications Dauren Abayev.

nologies for the economy," he noted.

The Ministry of Education and Science implements eight economic sector programmes for specialists in information and communication technology. The direction will provide opportunities to establish contacts between the education system and employers and strengthen the role of educational institutions to boost economic growth.

The two governmental bodies are collaborating to transfer the Ministry of Education and Science's information systems to virtual servers, said Abayev.

Prime Minister Bakytzhan Sagintayev set the task of developing a plan in cooperation with the akims (local governors) to connect regional schools to high-speed Internet.

NATIONAL NEWS IN BRIEF

A new oil pumping station with a maximum capacity of 67 million tonnes per year began operation Oct. 12 in the Atyrau region. The expansion was completed by Caspian Pipeline Consortium (CPC). "This is an important event for the large companies, too. The shortest, economically-profitable and reliable route for Caspian oil transportation to world markets has been developing. The CPC will reach its designed capacity very soon," said CPC General Director Nikolai Gorbunov.

A new transport hub will open in the western region of Kazakhstan in 2020, reported khabar.kz. Two highways connecting Atyrau with Aktobe and Atyrau with Russia will be reconstructed as part of the Nurly Zhol programme. "This will open the road from Atyrau to the Western China – Western Europe highway. As a result, the city will become a major transport hub," according to the akimat (regional administration) press service. The 80 billion tenge (US\$238 million) investment will have economic effects next year, involving approximately 1,500 workers in construction and attracting local transport companies. Transport and logistics centres, vehicle service stations, hotels, shops and petrol stations will also be created.

The Kazakh documentary film festival featuring 10 entries created by acclaimed young filmmakers opened Oct. 12 as part of the Rukhani Zhangyru programme, reported Kazinform. "Due to the fact that the documentary cinema is not at the box office, this is a unique opportunity to watch films on topical issues of modern society made by local directors in the past two years," said Kazakhstan Documentary Films Production Association head Asset Yernazarov.

South Kazakhstan region industrial enterprises produced 510.1 billion tenge (US\$1.5 billion) in goods in the first eight months of the year, according to Kazinform. Manufacturing concerns generated items worth 353 billion tenge (US\$1 billion). "There are plans to implement 135 projects in the amount of 1.2 trillion tenge (US\$3.5 billion) and create more than 17,500 jobs in 2015-2019. Currently, 49 projects worth 47.7 billion tenge (US\$143 million) have been launched and more than 1,900 jobs created. There are plans to launch 17 projects for a total of 37 billion tenge (US\$110.7 million) this year," said entrepreneurship, industrial-innovative development and tourism department head Batyrkhan Kurmansait. The goods are exported to more than 15 countries including Britain, Germany, South Korea, Russia and Turkey.

Aktobe, Almaty, Astana and Shymkent will become smart cities by 2025, with smart status to be introduced in regional cities and towns by 2050. In preparation, 150 national standards have already been developed and up to 80 percent of public services will be provided online, increasing labour productivity by 15 percent. "New jobs will be created with the digitalisation of the economy. More equipment and people will have to serve the IT department. For example, up to 120,000 new jobs will be created by 2030 with gross domestic product growth of 5 percent," said Zerde project manager Alzhan Abdrakhmanov.

Twenty projects presented at EXPO 2017 will be introduced in the Pavlodar region, said region head Bulat Bakauov at an Oct. 2 Central Communications Service briefing. "We plan to introduce blue coal technology developed by Polish scientists to help cut emissions. A German wind power plant with a capacity of one megawatt has been launched as a pilot project in the district. We will purchase biomass-based boilers for the needs of the municipal economy developed by Natural Systems, a Polish company," he said. Pedestrian crossings with piezoelectric materials will also be introduced as one of the essential elements of the smart cities. The Invest in Pavlodar exhibition is still operating in the capital, where the akimat (administration) has met with representatives of 112 companies from 22 countries.

EURASIA&WORLD

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 18, 2017

EXTERNAL NEWS IN BRIEF

Oct. 10 marked the start of filming of the "Composer" music drama, the first film to be shot in the framework of a new co-production treaty between China and Kazakhstan. Filming started in Yenan, a city in Shaanxi province in north-west China. "As a part of realising the project 'Modern Kazakh culture in the global world,' our countries were able to enter a new level of cultural and humanitarian cooperation. It is necessary to establish mutual translation and publication of books and works by well-known Kazakh and Chinese writers and poets; ensure dubbing and screening of feature, documentary and animated films on central television in both countries; organise regular tours and concerts of Kazakh and Chinese artists, as well as of the so-called 'Cinema days,'" said counsellor of the Embassy of Kazakhstan in China Manarbek Kabaziyev.

On Oct. 9, analytical agency TourStat identified Shymbulak as the most popular ski resort in the Commonwealth of Independent States. The rating was based on the analysis of the data of online booking systems for accommodation facilities for tourists during the winter season of 2017 to 2018, the agency said. The Altai Alps in the East Kazakhstan region also made it to the top 10 of the rating. According to the results of the TourStat study, the cheapest ski resort in the region is Chimgan and the most expensive one is Shymbulak. The cost of recreation, including accommodation and meals, reaches \$65 per day in Chimgan and more than \$100 per day in Shymbulak.

In an Oct. 12 meeting in Beijing, Kazakh Ambassador to China Shakhmat Nuryshev and Deputy Secretary of the CPC Xi'an International Trade & Logistics Park Li Pingwei discussed the implementation of agreements reached during the visit of Prime Minister of Kazakhstan Bakytzhan Sagintayev to Shaanxi province in July 2016, including prospects for cooperation between the Xian international inland port and the Kazakh business community. During the meeting, parties reached an agreement on organising e-commerce courses for representatives of Kazakhstan's small and medium-sized businesses in the framework of Kazakhstan's Nuryly Zhol economic stimulus programme and China's One Belt, One Road initiative.

Askhat Orzabai, Kazakhstan's ambassador to Indonesia, inaugurated the launch of the Indonesia-Kazakhstan Friendship Club, which seeks to strengthen people-to-people relations and build stronger cooperation, including in trade, culture and tourism, on Oct. 11. "Our people don't have much information about Indonesia; similarly Indonesians don't have much information about Kazakhstan due to the lack of interaction in the past. We want to fill this gap and try to build relations in different segments of society," Orzabai said during the club's first meeting in Jakarta. The club aims to facilitate and expand the interaction between people and businesses from the two countries and will be coordinated by the Kazakh embassy in Indonesia.

Within the framework of the conference of the national delegates of the Muslim Student Organisation of India, the Embassy of Kazakhstan in India organised a special session dedicated to Kazakhstan. Representatives of the Embassy of Kazakhstan in India, as well as over a hundred members of the Muslim Student Organisation of India, including teachers, experts, academics and students took part in the session called "Kazakhstan: Home of Peace." During the event, research papers on topics like "Kazakhstan and its role in ensuring global peace," "Kazakhstan's initiative on nuclear disarmament and its proposal to Central Asian countries to declare the region as free of nuclear weapons," "Relations between Kazakhstan and India" were presented.

Cultural similarities, international cooperation unite Kazakhstan, Serbia, envoy says

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – Serbian Ambassador to Kazakhstan Vladan Matic in an exclusive interview with The Astana Times highlighted that Kazakhstan and Serbia are both hub-countries where various cultures overlap. This enables citizens of both states to be sensitive to and have understanding of various other cultures, more so than those who live in defined mono-cultural societies, he said.

He noted that there have been many high-level meetings in recent years between the leaderships of the two nations, including the visit of President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev to Serbia in 2016 and the visit of President



Serbian Ambassador to Kazakhstan Vladan Matic.

organisations for many years. For example, during Serbia's chairmanship of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in 2015, Kazakhstan supported Serbia on the issue of Kosovo and Metohija, and Serbia in turn supported Kazakhstan's bid to become a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council last year, he said.

"Bilateral trade figures depend very much on whether you include the purchase of oil from Kazakhstan or not, but they are nevertheless much more active on Kazakhstan's side. With oil, the highest recorded figure was \$1 billion; without, \$200 million."

of Serbia Aleksandar Vucic to Kazakhstan during the opening of EXPO 2017 in June.

The ambassador said that the two countries have been cooperating very well in international

"Bilateral trade figures depend very much on whether you include the purchase of oil from Kazakhstan or not, but they are nevertheless much more active on Kazakhstan's side. With oil, the highest recorded figure was \$1 billion; without, \$200 million," Matic said.

"Serbian exports are a modest \$25 million. However, in spite of the Serbian sale of goods being modest, our presence in Kazakhstan has been persistent for many years in areas such as construction and agriculture. Serbian agricultural institutes have been establishing grain seeding stations in Kazakhstan for more than 40 years, and companies such as Energoprojekt have been involved in various construction projects for more than three decades now," he added.

"One of the big projects, for which the ideal moment has, alas, passed, was the much-discussed at the time pipeline from Constanza,

Romania, passing through Serbia and onwards to Trieste. The ideal moment was at the time when Rompetrol was owned by Kazmunaygas, and oil was more in focus than today, when gas is on the political agenda everywhere. We are now planning on expanding our presence in construction," Matic said.

The ambassador said that relations are being further developed by the involvement of Kazakh partners in the privatisation of Serbian spas. This is supporting growth in tourism in both directions. Kazakhstan and Serbia have also established cooperation between their universities, academies of science and cultural programmes.

Matic is discussing various cultural events for the next year with some Kazakh museums right now, as well as planning the celebration of the Serbian National Day. Culturally, the countries overlap, the ambassador was surprised to discover. Serbia has a tradition of oral poetry performance, with long epics recited by bards, just as it used to be and it is in Kazakhstan with famous bards of the past such as Dzhambul Dzhabayev. Serbian poems are accompanied by instruments that even look similar to Kazakh national instruments, he said.

"I was the head of the Russia and Eurasia Department in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for three years, so I had to follow the agenda of all of the countries in this area very closely. Apart from this, I travelled extensively in the wider area of Caucasus, Southern Siberia, and Kazakhstan in 1993 and 1994. In this period, I visited Pavlodar and Shymkent several times. Astana in this period did not exist, and it is like a sci-fi dream compared to what I saw in the 1990s," he said.

Kazakhstan, Poland discuss UNSC cooperation



Kazakh Deputy Foreign Minister Yerzhan Ashikbayev (L) and Head of Poland's National Security Bureau Pawel Soloch.

By Aigerim Seisembayeva

ASTANA – Delegations led by Kazakh Deputy Foreign Minister Yerzhan Ashikbayev and Polish Deputy Foreign Minister Joanna Wronecka recently discussed cooperation within the United Nations Security Council at a meeting in Warsaw.

According to the Kazakh Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the sides discussed agreements reached during a Sept. 6 meeting in Astana between the countries' heads of state. Ashikbayev also briefed his Polish colleagues on Kazakhstan's priorities for its 2017-2019 non-permanent membership on

the UN Security Council and its plans for chairing the council in 2018.

Wronecka said Poland is interested in using Kazakhstan's experience in the main UN body and spoke on Poland's priorities as a non-permanent UNSC member in 2018-2019.

The sides also discussed Kazakh-Polish interaction on international issues, such as the Middle East, Africa, Afghanistan, Ukraine, nuclear non-proliferation, UN reform and conflict prevention.

The Kazakh delegation also discussed cooperation on the UN Security Council agenda with Head of the National Security Bureau Pawel Soloch.

Kazakhstan-EU Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement expands interaction spectrum

By George D. Gleboff

BRUSSELS – The 21st meeting of the Berlin Eurasian Club, held in Brussels Oct. 4 under the title "The Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (EPCA) between the Republic of Kazakhstan and the European Union (EU): Achievements and Goals," gathered diplomats, experts, business and media representatives from the nation and the continent. The event focused on the political and economic partnership perspectives between Kazakhstan and the EU, especially in light of the agreement.

Choosing the EPCA as the main theme was not coincidental. The agreement, applied temporarily and in part since May 2016, has brought relations to a new level.

The economic impact is one of the document's most important and extensive components, as the EU is Kazakhstan's largest trade, economic and investment partner. After two years of decline, the trade turnover between the nation and EU countries showed a 27-percent increase in the first seven months of 2017 compared to the same period last year. The EPCA's ratification by the remaining 12 EU member states and full entry into force will further expand and strengthen that interaction.

Speaking at the meeting, Luc Devigne, European External Action Service (EEAS) Managing Director for Russia, Eastern Partnership, Central Asia and OSCE (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe), noted important achievements in Kazakhstan-EU cooperation, stressing relations have never been at such a high level.

He indicated Kazakhstan's importance as the EU's political and economic partner in Central Asia



underscored the country's favourable investment climate, which has allowed European investors to work in the Kazakh market and increase their investments. Devigne added the EU welcomes the wide-scale support to develop the green economy in Kazakhstan stimulated by EXPO 2017.

Devigne also praised Kazakhstan's international activity in maintaining peace and security and declared EU's readiness to cooperate more actively in the sphere of non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

Commending Kazakhstan's commitment to developing a conflict-free and prosperous Central Asia, Devigne argued the example that the nation has successfully built equally strong and mutually-beneficial relations with the EU and its largest neighbours—Russia and China—can serve as a model for others of an effective foreign policy. He also noted the importance of continuing democratic reforms in Kazakhstan and the

mutual interest of the parties in continuing the dialogue on human rights and civil society.

Highlighting the upcoming 25th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Kazakhstan and the EU, Kazakh Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Roman Vassilenko gave high marks to the constructive dialogue between them in trade, energy, transport, environmental protection, customs cooperation, justice, human rights and international and regional security.

He argued the EPCA, which became the first such agreement between the EU and the countries in the region, serves as an additional impetus to further expand and develop all aspects of multilateral cooperation. He also addressed the ratification process, which is proceeding at an exceedingly rapid pace. Only a year and a-half since the signing, the document has already been ratified by 16 EU member states, indicating the EU's great interest in developing

comprehensive cooperation with Kazakhstan.

Vassilenko pointed to the positive dynamics of bilateral trade and the importance of intensifying cooperation to reduce trade barriers, such as in metrology and standardisation, as well as the importance of enhanced cooperation between customs authorities. He spoke extensively about cooperation in visa facilitation, which would give powerful impetus to expanding economic and investment cooperation between Kazakhstan and the EU.

The event was also attended, among others, by German Economy Eastern Committee Managing Director Michael Harms, staff members of the European External Relations Service, King's College (London) European Centre for Energy and Resource Security (EUCERS) Director Friedbert Pfluger and German political scientist Matthias Dornfeldt.

Pfluger praised EXPO 2017's qualitative preparation and execu-

tion, where German and European companies were widely represented, calling the exhibition "the successful brand of Kazakhstan." He pointed to the nation's growing role and its leadership as an effective peace-maker, drawing attention to Astana's active mediation efforts in resolving the situation in southeastern Ukraine and the Syrian conflict.

"The Minsk accords could rightly be called the Astana accords, taking into account the contribution of the country and its President to their accomplishments," said Pfluger, adding the Syrian talks have not only given impetus to the difficult process of settling the multi-year conflict, but some hope for its cessation.

He stressed Kazakhstan's historic role in voluntarily renouncing nuclear weapons and the global processes of disarmament and non-proliferation. He also underscored the country's course of a "multi-vector foreign policy" and reforms that yielded positive results in terms of economic growth and regional stability and peace.

The event included detailed discussions among politicians, experts and business circles on the meaningful aspects of implementing the EPCA. The prospects for strengthening cooperation are timely and relevant, especially against the backdrop of Kazakhstan's foreign policy initiatives, non-permanent membership on the UN Security Council and hosting the Syrian peace talks and EXPO2017.

Established in 2012, the Berlin Eurasian Club was initiated by Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev as a unique dialogue platform between Kazakhstan and Europe. The meeting was organised as part of economic diplomacy promotion by the Kazakh Embassy in Germany in cooperation with the German Economy Eastern Committee.

ECONOMY

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 18, 2017

Kazakhstan to export 5 billion cubic metres of gas to China

By Aigerim Seisembayeva

ASTANA – China recently agreed to a deal with KazTransGas to import 5 billion cubic metres of Kazakh natural gas during one calendar year, according to KazTransGas press service.

The deal was signed between KazTransGas, which stands to earn \$1 billion from the deal, and PetroChina International Company Limited with shipments to the Khorogos border point beginning Oct. 15. The gas will come from deposits in western Kazakhstan and KazTransGas' underground storage reserves.

The contract was preceded by



an intergovernmental agreement between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan allowing gas to be supplied from western Kazakhstan deposits to the southern regions through Uzbekistan. The government agreement is meant to ensure a steady supply to southern Kazakhstan as well as allow exports to China.

"Kazakh gas transit and export routes" diversification and an increase in the volume of its export are important strategic tasks set by the President of Kazakhstan. The head of state noted that "in order to fully reveal the country's transport and transit potential we need to ensure freedom of transit of goods and create new transport

corridors," Vice President for Gas Transportation and Marketing at KazMunayGas Kairat Sharipbayev said.

The gas export agreement is in line with Kazakhstan's efforts to develop a new Eurasian logistics infrastructure.

KazTransGas is Kazakhstan's main gas-energy and gas transportation company, representing the state domestically and abroad. The company manages a centralised infrastructure to transport gas through pipelines and distribution networks, provides international transit, sells gas on domestic and foreign markets, develops, finances, builds and operates pipelines and gas storage facilities.

ECONOMY NEWS IN BRIEF

Moody's Investors Service has assigned Baa3 long-term and P-3 short-term local and foreign currency issuer ratings to Baitekere National Management Holding, moodys.com reports. The outlook on the ratings is stable. Moody's has also given Baitekere an Aaa.kz National Scale Issuer Rating. The holding's ratings reflect the sovereign ratings of Kazakhstan. According to Moody's, Baitekere is a financial lever of Kazakhstan's government and plays an important role in promoting Kazakhstan's economic development.

Transport, housing construction, food, tourism and other industries in Almaty are becoming more attractive for foreign investors, 24.kz reports. The prospects of the metropolis were discussed at the annual Almaty Invest international forum, which this year was attended by more than 500 participants from 28 countries. Almaty is now cooperating with Sweden and Turkey in the field of medicine and plans to start a partnership with Japan. Next year, a plant to produce third-generation German electric buses as well as a sorting complex with Italian technology will open in the city. These two projects will be implemented using the legacy of EXPO 2017 in the development of green technologies.

The second quarter turned out to be less profitable than the first one for trade enterprises – profit in the industry decreased 0.8 percent to 174.5 billion tenge (US\$520.7 million), finprom.kz reports. In this case, the situation with profit taking for large and small market participants was different. For large and medium-sized enterprises, the quarter was as usual more profitable than the beginning of the year – 12.8 percent more profit was earned in April-June compared to January-March. However, despite quarterly growth, the second quarter for such market participants ended less successfully compared to the second quarter last year: down by 17.1 percent.

Six foreign investors expressed their desire to set up production in the Aktau Sea Port special economic zone (SEZ), khabar.kz reports. At present, the SEZ includes 34 registered companies, 17 of which are already operating. Three more plants will open later this year: a steel centre, a vegetable storehouse and a transformer manufacturing plant. They will create more than 200 jobs. "To date, more than 88 billion tenge [US\$262.59 million] was invested in the territory of the SEZ. Production worth 241 billion tenge [US\$719.14 million] has been manufactured. More than 1,000 permanent jobs have been provided," Director of the Investor Relations Department of Aktau Sea Port Aigerim Moldabekova said.

Large-scale construction in Kazakhstan requires more construction materials. Growth in the industry is noted in almost all commodity items, except mortar and mineral wool, according to energyprom.kz. The production of refractory products and bricks grew 13 percent, concrete products by almost 17 percent and finishing stone manufacturing increased by 40 percent. Almost 7 million square metres of housing were put into operation over eight months of 2017 in the country. This is 8.5 percent more compared to the same period last year.

Kazakhstan's machine builders are working to consistently increase the level of local content in their products, khabar.kz reports. The plant plans to produce 6,000 cars, having already increased the share of machine building in the region's budget by 2.5 times over the past seven years. Robotic workshops and automated lines allow the production of export-oriented products, and the first exports have already left the country. The plant has already concluded one long-term contract with Tajikistan, and more than 20 vehicles have already been shipped there for export. Until the end of the year, the volume of initial supplies is planned to increase five times. Another memorandum was signed with Uzbekistan.

Kazakhstan exports products to 110 countries

By Aigerim Bulambayeva

ASTANA – Kazakh goods are being exported to 110 countries, said Minister for Investment and Development Zhenis Kassymbek during Nur Otan party hearings on realising the government programme for industrial development.

"As of today, Kazakh products of the manufacturing industry are being exported to 110 countries and new commodity markets have opened for some of the items. Cars manufactured by Asia Auto have been exported to China and the UAE (United Arab Emirates) – 672 units over the first six months. In cooperation with China, we started exporting cars that were manufactured in Kostanai to Tajikistan. For the first time, agricultural machinery was exported to Russia. There is an increase in the range of exported processed goods from 777 to 876. We have set up production and export of locomotives to Tajikistan and Azerbaijan and we have already exported 40 locomotives. This list can further be expanded," he said.

Manufacturing industry exports amounted to \$8.7 billion and increased by 27 percent compared to last year, he noted, in addition to an increase in the share of manufactured products among exports. As the results for the past seven months indicated, the manufacturing sector's



Minister for Investment and Development Zhenis Kassymbek.

segment was more than 32.7 percent.

"The manufacturing sector became more competitive; thus, the productivity of labour in manufacturing doubled from 2010 to 2016, reaching the equivalent of \$38,900 [per person]," said Kassymbek.

He emphasised the important role of the industrial development programme, noting the country's economic and industrial structure has changed as a result.

"The contribution of the manufacturing sector to economic development increased from 11.3 percent in 2010 to 12 percent in the first seven months of 2017. This implies that, indeed, the industrialisation programme affects the economic structure of Kazakhstan. The share of the manufacturing sector increased from 30.5 percent in 2010 to 41.1 percent in the first seven months of 2017," he said.

Energy Minister explains recent petrol price hike, gets reprimanded

By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – Over the recent weeks, people in Kazakhstan have been witnessing an increase in prices for petrol that resulted in heated public discussions. Kazakh Minister for Energy Kanat Bozumbayev explained the petrol shortage and the subsequent hike in prices during an Oct. 10 government meeting, citing declining import volumes of Russian petrol and launch of maintenance works at Kazakhstan's major oil refineries as key reasons behind it.

In the first nine months of 2017, petrol prices grew 8.7 percent across the nation with the highest 10.6 percent increase recorded in the West Kazakhstan region.

"I am drawing attention to the situation with petroleum. There is a shortage in regions, where it is sold at limited amounts and somewhere it is sold based on coupons. As a result, prices went up," noted Kazakh Prime Minister Bakytzhan Sagintayev.

Yet, there is no petrol shortage, said Bozumbayev, emphasising that the total volume of A-92 petrol, most popular type of petrol in Kazakhstan, as of Oct. 9 equalled 138,000 tonnes.

The increase in the prices for the Russian petrol that Kazakhstan imports, adding the declining value of tenge against dollar, resulted in the decrease in imports of the Russian petrol, added the minister.

"If in first five months of this year we imported 90,000 tonnes every month, in summer, the volume of imports totalled 35,000

– 50,000 tonnes. The price of imported petrol [from Russia] rose from 160,000 tenge (US\$474.24) to 196,000 (US\$580.94) per a tonne, which shows a 22 percent increase," said Bozumbayev, adding that this contributed to the rising petrol prices across the nation.

In January, the price for A-92 petrol, on average, was 135 tenge (US\$0.4), according to the minister, and reached 155 tenge (US\$0.459) in October for an 11 percent increase.

The launch of maintenance works at the nation's key oil refinery in Pavlodar and Atyrau with the subsequent decrease in production contributed to the worsening situation in the market, noted Bozumbayev.

Initially, the maintenance works were scheduled to start in June, but were postponed until September following the request from Kazakhstan's KazMunayGas national oil and gas company.

"We asked to postpone the maintenance works from spring to fall only in Pavlodar, because we did not want to suspend the production two times, first for planned repair works and second for the completion of modernisation," noted Chair of the Board of Kazmunaygas Sauat Mynbayev, explaining the company's request.

Yet, petrol prices in Kazakhstan are contingent not only upon the import volumes, but also upon petrol prices in neighbouring countries, according to Mynbayev.

"New export markets will open next year, which implies potential export to Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. If we want to develop an adequate policy regarding prices [for petrol], then it should be similar to prices in neighbouring countries. The issue of 100 percent petrol supply in our domestic market is not an issue of prices, rather an issue of economic security. There should be one price corridor with neighbouring countries," added the Kazmunaygas chair.



Minister for Energy Kanat Bozumbayev.

Sagintayev was not impressed with the explanations, however. He instructed the government to issue a resolution firing Vice Minister of Energy Asset Magauov, which was done promptly, and proposed to President Nursultan Nazarbayev to issue a reprimand to Bozumbayev, which, too, was announced Oct. 11. In addition, Vice President of KazMunayGas Daniyar Berlibayev was relieved of his position.

The government was instructed to work harder to find solutions to the shortages with petrol sooner rather than later.

S&P expects Kazakhstan's GDP to grow 3 percent in 2017-2020

By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – Kazakhstan's real GDP growth is projected to reach 3 percent in 2017-2020, according to the recent S&P Global Ratings report. The implementation of government infrastructure development programmes and expanding oil production at the Kashagan oilfield, one of the world's largest fields discovered in the past 40 years, are cited as main drivers of the nation's economic growth.

The real GDP per capita growth is estimated at 1.4 percent on average in the period of 2011 and 2020, which, according to experts, stands near a lower end of the range (1-4 percent) pertaining to countries with a similar level of development.

"The ratings of Kazakhstan remain constrained due to highly centralised decision making process which decreases predictability [of future policy responses]," the report reads.

The report also noted an increasingly effective monetary policy car-

ried out in Kazakhstan underpinned by a declining dollarisation of the economy.

Yet, dollar denominated deposits accounted for 50.3 percent of the total volume of deposits in the economy in August, according to a Sept. 27 report published by the Kazakh National Bank, a 3.7 percent increase since July, in total making 8,886.2 billion tenge (US\$25.75 billion).

The agency also assessed the Kazakh government's debt servicing costs as worsening, though remaining at a modest level. "It remains modest, slightly over five percent of the budget revenues on average in 2017-2020. The government, however, still holds a strong position as a net creditor," the agency stated emphasising the potential of a new tax code to allow increasing budget revenues by approximately three percent of the nation's GDP, which demonstrates a significant fiscal flexibility of Kazakhstan unlike other economies with a similar level of development.

Investments in livestock sector grow

By Dana Omirgazy

ASTANA – The focus of investment interest in agriculture is increasingly shifting towards livestock, as the investment growth rate in cultivating seasonal crops has slowed compared to the previous year, reported finprom.kz. Investment in livestock has hiked almost 15 billion tenge (US\$44.49 million), or 51 percent, since January.

"Over eight months of this year, 162.4 billion tenge (US\$481.67 million) was supplied in the development of enterprises and other participants in the agricultural market, or 7.2 percent more than in the same period last year," noted the report.

The largest share of investments in the industry has traditionally supported crop production, namely the cultivation of seasonal crops. The inflow amount was 99.3 billion tenge (US\$294.5 million).

The investment growth rate in

the area, however, is slowing. The figure increased 1.3 billion tenge (US\$3.85 million) this year compared to January-August 2016, when the increase was 41.2 billion tenge (US\$122.19 million). The investment flow in cultivating perennial crops dropped 8.4 billion tenge (US\$24.9 million) to 3.5 billion tenge (US\$10.38 million).

Investors are increasing financing in livestock, although the volumes are noticeably less than in crop production. During the first eight months, 43.7 billion tenge (US\$129.6 million) was directed to livestock enterprises and farms.

The amount is the sharpest increase in the last five years. As a result, 26.9 percent of all agricultural investments were directed to developing the livestock sector.

Investments in livestock mainly come from private funds, which this year have hiked from 17.1 billion tenge (US\$50.7 million) to 38.7 billion tenge (US\$114.78 million). At the same time, the volume of funds borrowed from creditors

fell 2.4 billion tenge (US\$7.1 million) to 5 billion tenge (US\$14.8 million).

Enterprises and farms engaged in cultivating seasonal crops, however, have relied this year on borrowed funds and bank loans. From January-August, 18.8 billion tenge (US\$56 million) in loan funds was attracted to the sector, a 3.2 billion tenge (US\$9.5 million) increase since last year.

To improve the effectiveness of state support to industry enterprises, the Ministry of Agriculture presented road maps recently to develop priority agricultural areas and improve state support for the agro-industrial complex. Road maps have been developed in the main areas of seed growing, agro-chemistry, producing plant protection products, intensive technical re-equipment of the agro-industrial complex, fodder production (forage balance), transhumance sheep breeding and developing a network of wholesale distribution centres.

BUSINESS

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 18, 2017

BUSINESS NEWS IN BRIEF

Bank RBK and Qazaq Banki have chosen not to merge, according to the Bank RBK press service. "Bank RBK hereby informs that after consulting and analysing the proposed model of merger with Qazaq Banki, the banks decided to refuse the merger transaction," reads the statement. It is currently more expedient and promising to develop each bank as an independent financial institution, it added. The possible merger, announced in May, was dictated by the desire of shareholders to use new business opportunities in the face of changing economic conditions.

The Kazakh-Hungarian private equity fund, created with the participation of KazAgro and the Eximbank of Hungary managed by CCL Capital, has invested \$12 million with partners to build a high-tech greenhouse complex in the Aktobe region, reported inform.kz. Construction will take place within three years, according to CCL Capital. The project, to be completed in four blocks on 20 hectares, involves erecting semi-closed greenhouses using KUBO Group (Netherlands) technology. According to experts, greenhouse complexes based on Ultra Clima technology are on average 20 percent more efficient compared to traditional greenhouses.

Foreign companies are currently participating in 12 projects in Kazakhstan worth more than \$4.2 billion, according to Kazakh investment committee deputy chairperson Larissa Dzhumagalieva, reported inform.kz. Dutch company Farm Frites is involved in a potato processing plant in the Almaty region. The 24 hectares have been set aside for the \$116 million project. British company United Green will be establishing a \$132 million baby food plant in the same region. Work has begun to produce high-quality lime in the Karaganda region, hydrogen peroxide in the Zhambyl region, tomato paste in the Kyzylorda region, anode copper in the East Kazakhstan region and large diameter steel welded pipes in Almaty. Projects are also underway to construct chemical and metallurgical plants in the Pavlodar and Zhambyl regions, facilities to produce extruded mixed fodders and meat products in the Almaty region and a meat processing plant in the East Kazakhstan region.

Twenty agricultural cooperatives have been established this year in the Tolebi region of the South Kazakhstan region including Lenger Kus, a poultry production cooperative, according to the South Kazakhstan region akimat press service. "The construction of a poultry farm of an agricultural cooperative, which has united 20 members, is being completed. The enterprise, which will be launched by the end of the year, will annually be able to produce up to 200 tonnes of poultry meat. Today, new and fully automated equipment is being installed. Currently, the infrastructure of a poultry farm is located on 2.5 hectares of land. Thanks to the association of peasants in the cooperative, 50 percent of the costs are subsidised by the state," reads the statement.

Plans have begun to build a chemical production plant in Atyrau, according to inform.kz. "Construction of the projected plant for the production of chemical reagents is expected in the southern industrial zone of Atyrau. The plant will produce 1,636 tonnes of demulsifiers per year, 240 tonnes of depressant additives, 3,011 tonnes of corrosion inhibitors and 1,567 tonnes of scaling inhibitors. There are also plans to produce anti-turbulent additives and absorbers of hydrogen sulphide," said Zhayik-Caspian Orhus Centre head Shynar Iztelevova. Prior to construction, a number of public hearings will be held in the region to discuss issues of the plant's location and its possible impact on the environment.

Kazakh IT start-ups to be prepared in Silicon Valley

By Frol Leandoer

ASTANA – Almaty Tech Garden is launching the international Startup Kazakhstan programme, with participants to be housed in the IT Quarter, reported Kazinform. The venture is the country's first large-scale effort aimed at developing domestic and attracting foreign startups, said CEO Sanzhar Kettebekov.

"The financing will be implemented through the joint venture fund Almaty Tech Garden and GVA Capital – GVA Alatau Fund. The amount of investment in start-ups will be up to \$100,000. By 2020, about 500 innovative start-ups will be financed and 50 high-tech, export-oriented companies will be incubated. Last month, Almaty Tech Garden together with GVA launched the first official technology office in Silicon Valley. Thus, the acceleration of Startup Kazakh-

stan participants will partially be carried out in Silicon Valley. Also on Sept. 25, the preparation of the first 10 resident companies of the Free Economic Zone 'Park of Information Technologies (FEZ PIT) will begin there," he added.

The fund plans to help start-ups with alternative sources of financing, including releasing digital tokens. Sometimes called ICO (Initial Coin Offering), using digital tokens is a new method of attracting investments based on blockchain technology which is rapidly gaining popularity throughout the world. To prepare Startup Kazakhstan participants, the programme is planning to launch an ICO incubator.

"Cooperation with leading innovation centres is the basis for the development of start-up ecosystems. The opening of a representative office in Silicon Valley is a necessary window for the development of an

innovative environment and attracting foreign and training Kazakh start-ups integrated into a global network of demand for the latest technologies," said Global Venture Alliance managing partner Laird Kagan.

Significant support in executing these measures will be achieved through the interaction of Almaty Tech Garden and the Astana International Financial Centre (AIFC). The two entities and GVA signed a memorandum on cooperation Sept. 20 to create an ecosystem in Almaty using blockchain technology. The Centre for Technological Development of Intelligent Technologies will be also launched, including intellectual systems in cooperation with IBM, a BIM+ laboratory together with Eco-
Domus and Autodesk and digital industry with IntelliSense.io.

An IT Quarter previously opened in downtown Almaty to place start-ups in the information technology field.

Green Climate Fund to allocate up to \$110 million for green energy investments

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – The Green Climate Fund (GCF) board approved funding of up to \$110 million for the GCF-European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) Kazakhstan Renewables Framework programme to promote renewable energy sources.

"The GCF's contribution includes concessional financing in the amount of \$106 million and \$4 million in technical assistance subsidies. The projects are aimed at supporting the Kazakh government in transition to a green economy, including investments in solar, wind, small hydropower and biogas sources and modernisation and strengthening of electrical grids to broaden the renewable energy sources integration," reported the Ministry of Energy in an Oct. 5 press release.

"Kazakhstan has recognised the need for transition to a green economy. We are contributing to global efforts under the Paris Agreement to address climate change. The country has set an ambitious nationally-determined contribution under the agreement with an emissions reduction target of 15 percent below 1990 levels by 2030. With the support of the GCF and the EBRD, we look forward to scaling up investments in renewable energy and delivering on the country's green economy transition strategy," said Minister of Energy Kanat Bozumbayev.

The renewables framework is an innovative plan to finance construction and operation of renewable energy projects in the Central Asian country. The EBRD Board of Directors approved the €200 million (US\$234 million) programme in 2016.

"The framework builds on eight years of policy and investment work in Kazakhstan. It makes a profound contribution to the scaling up of renewable energy in the country, combined with a strong focus on gender and inclusion and a drive to lay the regulatory foundations for a sustainable renewable energy market in the country," said EBRD Energy and Natural Resources for Russia, Central Asia and Caucasus Director Aida Sitdikova.

The GCF was formed in 2010 by the 194 countries which are parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) as part of the convention's financial mechanism. The fund supports the efforts of developing countries to respond to the challenge of climate change and helps them limit or reduce their greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and adapt to climate change.

EBRD has invested €7.3 billion (US\$8.5 billion) in various areas of the Kazakh economy focusing on non-oil and gas areas and approximately €1.7 billion (US\$1.9 billion) in sustainable energy and resource projects.

Kazakhstan's halal labeled products enter UAE and Middle East market

By Frol Leandoer

ASTANA – KAZAKH INVEST presented Kazakh-produced items at the Halal Expo 2017 international food exhibit in Dubai, reported the company's press service.

Abai, Disada, Eurasia Invest, Golden Food Company, Leninsk Onimi and Rakhat products were displayed in the national pavilion. Representatives of the Dubai government and Kazakh Consul General in Dubai Madiyar Menilbekov attended the opening ceremony.

"We are proud of the fact that there are more and more manufacturers in Kazakhstan ready to offer high-quality products. The companies represented today have significant potential in the market of the Middle East," he said.

Abai products have been available in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) since last year, said compa-

ny UAE meat products representative Oleg Shapovalov.

"This year, we have gained some experience in working in the local market; our meat can already be found in local supermarkets. Now, the company is gaining a client base – participation in the exhibition is an excellent opportunity for this," he added.

In addition, with the support of the consulate general, meetings will be organised for Kazakh companies with representatives of the Emirates Authority for Standardisation and Metrology (ESMA) and RACS quality and certificate to clarify issues related to halal certification, as well as changes in the certification procedure itself. Foods are stamped with the halal label if the contents conform with Muslim dietary laws.

"The UAE market is very attractive for Kazakh producers. Since high-quality products are highly valued here, they are ready to pay

a very high price for them. Today at the exhibition, the companies held meetings with potential buyers not only from the UAE, but also from countries of the Middle East," said KAZAKH INVEST representative Gaziz Abdinabieva.

Kazakhstan's trade with the UAE totaled \$317.3 million for the first half of 2017, a 3.1-time increase compared to the same period last year. Due to increased supplies of copper, exports grew 4.2 times to \$273.8 million. Imports increased to \$43.5 million, a 17.6 percent hike.

DBK updates strategy, seeks expansion of private investment

By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – The Development Bank of Kazakhstan (DBK) announced Sept. 29 immediate changes to its development strategy for 2014-2023 which establish expanding private business projects and private funding sources among its key priorities along with expansion of its lending activities and development of new financial instruments, according to the bank's press service.

Established in 2000 by the decree of Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev, the DBK seeks to enhance state investment activities, support development of industrial infrastructure and manufacturing and attract foreign and domestic investments in the nation's economy. At present, the bank's loan portfolio includes 44 investment and 12 export operation projects.

The bank plays an important role in the nation's economy with a total amount of investments reaching \$6.9 billion as of 2016 and its strong emphasis on the regional development, where 99 percent of loan portfolio account for regional projects in the economy's key sectors.

The changes in the bank's development strategy are in line with Nazarbayev's state-of-the-nation address this year that embarked the nation on the so-called third modernisation meant to enhance its global competitiveness, where the decrease of government share in the economy is one of the priorities.

The relevant changes were presented in June last year during an extended meeting of the bank's Board of

Directors and government officials, representatives of the National Bank and the National Chamber of Entrepreneurs, noted DBK Chair of the Board Bolat Zhamishev.

"Participants of the meeting approved all proposals, including increasing the share of private business funding. The implementation of the initiatives required amendments to the key documents regulating the DBK activities, including the bank's ten-year development strategy," added Zhamishev.

Apart from stepping up lending activities and developing new financial instruments, including a syndicated loan and project financing using public private partnerships, the updated document envisions no less than a 70 percent increase in the share of private business projects in the bank's loan portfolio until 2023 that currently accounts for 57.4 percent.

Seeking to decrease the government share in the bank's structure, the bank's management agreed to expand the share of private funding sources from 58.9 percent in 2016 to at least 80 percent until 2023.

The annual volume of project and programme funding is set to increase from 426 billion tenge (US\$1.23 billion) in 2016 up to 544 billion tenge (US\$1.57 billion) in 2023.

Serving as the nation's development institute, the DBK does not pursue profit maximisation as its main goal, but rather seeks to ensure a break-even of its activities. The change in the bank's target profitability indicators from previous three percent to at least one percent is expected to allow accomplishing the objective.

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EDITORIAL & OPINION

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 18, 2017

Nature of power has never been more complex

Not long ago, it was traditional hard power based on military and economic might that ruled the day. But a global rebalancing – one which has seen power become more diffuse, moving from West to East and from state to non-state actors – means we are living in an increasingly multi-dimensional and interdependent world.

Such rebalancing requires leaders, diplomats, and foreign policy makers to reassess how they achieve their foreign policy objectives. This is especially critical given current uncertainty and geopolitical instability. Many have found that it is now the ability to attract and persuade – rather than coerce – that is most effective.

In other words, soft power.

The term soft power was coined by political scientist Joseph S. Nye Jr. in the late 1980s. Nye describes power as the ability to influence the behaviour of others to achieve desired outcomes. He outlines three ways power can be wielded: coercing with threats, inducing with payments, or attracting and persuading. Soft power rejects the first two approaches. Instead, influence is achieved by building networks, communicating compelling narratives, and establishing international rules.

Nye originally identified three core pillars of soft power: political values, foreign policy and culture. The first two pillars are arguably more difficult to get right, but most nations have a wealth of cultural resources already at their disposal. The challenge is deploying these resources effectively.

France has shown us how to translate culture into impact through its cuisine, cinema, museums and

art. The U.S. has for decades asserted global influence through Hollywood. K-culture diplomacy helped transform South Korea from an aid recipient to a major aid donor. Now, having made significant strides in political reform, economic stability and a multi-vector foreign policy, Kazakhstan can focus on highlighting its own cultural assets.

Earlier this year, President Nursultan Nazarbayev proposed “Modern Kazakh Culture in the Global World” – a project that is part of the Modernisation of Kazakhstan’s Identity programme and that is aimed at promoting Kazakhstan’s cultural achievements on the world stage. It acknowledges the potential of Kazakhstan’s vast cultural reserves, from popular Kazakh artists like conductor Alan Buribayev and singer Dimash Kudaibergen, to the “Kyz Zhibek” and “Birzhan Sara” national operas.

“Modern Kazakh Culture in the Global World” is another string to Kazakhstan’s bow. The nation seeks to be recognised not only for its oil reserves and conflict mediation skills, but for its cultural successes as well. This will be achieved through a more targeted approach in promoting culture abroad; increased state investment in encouraging the creation of cultural assets; and greater use of innovative and technological platforms and channels.

Kazakhstan has set itself an ambitious goal of becoming a top 30 global economy by 2050. The value of “Modern Kazakh Culture in the Global World” in meeting this goal shouldn’t be underestimated. It is with an understanding of soft power – and how to deploy it effectively – that Kazakhstan will continue to achieve its objectives, both at home and abroad.

OECD Eurasia Week to serve as platform for discussing benefits of globalisation

By Timur Suleimenov

Global interconnection between people and nations has become a fact of life. Each country on our planet shares a collective destiny. Economic interdependence is ever more prevalent – prosperity in one part of the world makes a positive contribution to economic growth in another part of the world thanks to increased trade and enhanced investment cooperation.

This reality means that cooperation between nations, whether through bilateral or multilateral platforms, is ever more important. Kazakhstan, as an active member of the international community, has been actively striving to learn from developed nations by partnering with countries and international organisations. Our cooperation with the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) has been especially noteworthy.

The OECD has played an indispensable role in helping nations, including Kazakhstan, to reap the benefits of globalisation by promoting economic growth, prosperity, and sustainable development. Underlining OECD’s importance, today OECD member countries account for 63 percent of world GDP, three-quarters of world trade, 95 percent of world official development assistance and over half of the world’s energy consumption.

Kazakhstan has made sustained efforts to work with the OECD since 2000 and has been particularly active since 2008.

In 2011 as part of the official visit to France, the then Prime Minister of Kazakhstan, Karim Massimov, visited the OECD Headquarters for the first time, where it was officially announced that Kazakhstan intends to become a member of this organization, an aspiration that we continue to strive towards. A number of concrete steps have been taken in this direction. In 2015, Karim Massimov and the OECD Secretary General José Ángel Gurría signed the Country Programme on Cooperation for



2015-2016, which aims to establish possible ways of cooperation, within which Kazakhstan can join a number of the OECD initiatives and participate in the activities of its agencies. Now the second round of the Country Programme on Cooperation with the OECD for 2017-2018 is being implemented.

In addition, the Coordination Council on Interaction of Kazakhstan with the OECD approved the “Road Map on Implementation of the OECD Recommendations” received within the first stage of the Country Programme, in order to implement best practices and recommendations of the OECD. More than half of the 535 recommendations from the road map have already been implemented by Kazakhstan.

Already Kazakhstan participates in 34 working agencies of the OECD. These include various spheres, such as public governance, environment, health and education. We hope that our participation in these committees will contribute to the eventual membership of Kazakhstan in the OECD.

Domestically, as well, Kazakhstan has been implementing a number of reforms to help us reach OECD standards. From 2015 onward Kazakhstan has redoubled its reform agenda, beginning with a 100-step program focused on transparency and efficiency of government. By 2017, we adopted a package of fundamental constitutional reforms that, among others, devolve powers from the President’s office to the parliament.

Economically we have been making progress too. In June this year, Kazakhstan became the 48th country to adhere to the OECD Declaration on International In-

vestment and Multinational Enterprises, signalling our commitment to provide a fair and transparent environment for international investment. The OECD Investment Policy Review of Kazakhstan has noted that we have managed to reduce bureaucratic barriers, streamlined licensing procedures, established agencies to facilitate new business formation and an investment ombudsman to tackle concrete problems faced by investors. Tax reform is also under way, which will result in better tax efficiency and transparency.

Of course we understand that we still have a lot to do if we are to achieve our ambitious goal of joining the top 30 most developed countries. We need to build stronger institutions and ensure better policy coherence and transparency. We will need to prove to investors that these institutions are accountable. We must also continue to strengthen judicial independence and fight corruption, as we understand that these are among the main concerns for businesses operating in Kazakhstan.

Our cooperation with OECD has helped us substantially to make progress in these areas. Going forward we want to continue to develop this partnership further.

Next week, the financial hub of Kazakhstan, Almaty, will welcome political leaders from Central Asia and OECD member-states, as well as experts and representatives of international and regional organizations, civil society and business circles, for the OECD Eurasia Week. Our hope is that this event will further strengthen the relations between the Eurasian and the OECD countries.

Kazakhstan has seen its ups and downs since our independence 25 years ago. But we have managed to build a foundation to continue our development. With the help of the OECD, I have no doubt that Kazakhstan will achieve its objectives and, one day, join the ranks of OECD member-states.

The author is Kazakhstan’s Minister of National Economy.

Kazakhstan: on the way to unprecedented changes in justice

By Mira Beisenova

Kazakhstan has become the first country among the post-Soviet countries to open a Justice Services Centre free to the public one stop. The Centre in Astana represents a real breakthrough in the relationship between prosecutors and the public moving the General Prosecutor’s Office (GPO) from being primarily a post-Soviet law supervisory state body to a modern public service-oriented organisation. The prosecutors can be proud of this quick victory since it took just seven months between considering the innovative idea at one of the GPO Change Programme Board brainstorming sessions to its opening to the public in July 2017.

The main task of the centre is the prompt resolution of complaints, raising the level of citizens’ trust in law enforcement and government bodies, whilst eliminating the administrative burdens and bureaucracy. This centre operates on the principle of a “single window” that breaks with all traditions with use of glass walls and bright colours to provide a comfortable and warm reception to users, located within the prestigious and modern building of the General Prosecutor’s Office national headquarters building. Here visitors can access prosecutors, lawyers, mediators, or other specialists, depending on the nature of the issue.

The use of latest technologies widens the horizon of services



available for the citizens. They can send appeals to the judicial committee or record a video message to the General Prosecutor’s Office in a separate booth. To do this, a person needs to bring an identity card to the barcode reader and then record an appeal. The answer to their inquiries will come to their e-mails or one might just enter the number of the inquiry and find out the answer. The necessary digital signature for this can be obtained there, on the spot.

The Justice Services Centre is a part of the Change Programme announced by the General Prosecutor’s Office in January 2017. The NICO EUCJ project team provided project management training to senior staff in the General Prosecutor’s Office, which has evolved to an organisation-wide transformational change programme being facilitated by the project. The Change Programme’s goal is to provide substantial modernisation and revision of the Prosecution Service and, in due course, other parts of the criminal justice system. This has involved the EUCJ

providing intensive support for the establishment of the change strategy, the change board, an operational team of change agents through the national and regional GPO structure and a support network to ensure the involvement of staff and communities across all oblasts in the change programme. The project team has provided coaching and mentoring support to the Change Programme Board and its members.

The launch of the Justice Service Centre in Astana is a remarkable example of the short-term outcomes of the Change Programme with its truly template breaking inter-agency accessibility in a custom built environment. Throughout 2017, such centres will be established in other major cities throughout the country.

Funded by the European Union (EU), the EUCJ project is aimed at strengthening the rule of law in Kazakhstan. Launched in October 2015, this three-year project has a total budget of EUR 5.5 million and forms a part of the larger programme “Support to Judicial Reform in Kazakhstan,” administered by the EU Delegation in Kazakhstan. The project is implemented by Northern Ireland Co-operation Overseas (NI-CO) in partnership with Ministry of Justice of the United Kingdom, Dutch Probation Service and National School of Judiciary and Public Prosecution, Poland.

The author is EUCJ national expert for stakeholder relations.

FROM THE HEART OF EURASIA

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Visa exemption for Kazakh citizens will save millions of dollars, says UAE Ambassador

By Zhaniya Urankayeva

This year on May 23 Kazakh Foreign Minister Kairat Abdrakhmanov and the United Arab Emirates' Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Abdullah bin Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan signed an agreement on establishing a one-month visa exemption for Kazakh citizens travelling to the UAE. In this connection, the UAE Ambassador to Kazakhstan Dr. Mohammed Ahmed Sultan Al Jaber gave an interview to the Kazakhstanskaya Pravda national newspaper ahead of visa exemption for Kazakhstan citizens, which is presented below in full.

This autumn, Kazakhstan and the United Arab Emirates will start a mutual visa exemption. In this interview, Ambassador Al Jaber answered question such as, How much can Kazakh citizens save by travelling to the Emirates, what did the UAE representatives learn from EXPO 2017 and what type of joint projects will the two countries implement in the coming years?

This autumn, the UAE will start visa exemption with Kazakhstan. Will it bring any changes and what benefits will citizens of the two countries receive?

Intergovernmental procedures on introducing visa-exemption shall be completed in the nearest time. Doubtless, it will make a breakthrough in the development of bilateral relations. Let us refer to the statistics of tourist visits; more than 100,000 citizens of Kazakhstan visit the UAE annually. Therefore, the visa-exemption can save approximately \$10 million a year. The assessment stems from



the calculation of the total number of visits from Kazakhstan's part and the fees for visa processing.

EXPO 2017 ended a few weeks ago. What will you remember from the exhibition? What would you recommend for EXPO 2020 in Dubai from Kazakhstan's experience?

The most significant feature of EXPO 2017 is that the organizers have been successful in attracting a considerable quantity of interested visitors, which helped them to promote the ideas aimed at shifting from traditional energy resources to renewable energy. The experience that we have gained in the exhibition is the valuable knowledge of how to manage such a large-scale event. We hope to learn from Kazakhstan's experience and have already begun making contacts with our Kazakh colleagues; in January 2017 the organizers of EXPO 2020 Dubai and EXPO 2017 Astana signed a memorandum of understanding and cooperation during the Future Energy World Summit in Abu Dhabi, as well as for the development of a variety of mutually beneficial projects, such as Astana International Financial Centre and the development of Islamic banking and green financing. Moreover, I would like to note that the exhibition in Astana has also brought new fo-

cus to our international efforts and achievements in the renewable energy technologies, and to the projects and initiatives, which form part of the integrated concept of the development of our country.

We know the UAE is actively developing renewable energy sources, in particular solar and nuclear power. What are the prospects for cooperation between the UAE and Kazakhstan in the field of renewable energy sources?

Strengthening the international cooperation in the context of new technology transfer and original expertise is a great importance for us. The cooperation established between the UAE Nuclear Energy Corporation and National Atomic Company Kazatomprom exemplifies the synergies between the two countries. In addition to that, recently the two companies signed a memorandum on cooperation in the field of peaceful use of nuclear energy, which is planned to meet our reactor construction needs through raw materials from Kazakhstan in the form of natural uranium, and enriched uranium production.

A similar feature of Kazakhstan and the United Arab Emirates is that both countries are rich in oil and it is its stocks and prices that measure the citizens' welfare. How long do you think the transformation will take? How long will oil-producing countries be dependent on this source of income?

In order to promote a quicker process of moving from the oil-related economy, there is a number of noble goals set by our government:

The first is to improve the legislation. To date, the UAE Ministry

of Economy is already working on a number of laws to improve the efficiency of the country's economy, moreover, to diversify it in favour of the non-oil sector from 70 percent now to 80 percent by 2021. It is worth noting above all, that the UAE spends about 300 billion Dirhams for more than 100 initiatives in such fields as health, education, energy, transport, water, and technology in order to prepare the country for the post-oil phase of the economy.

The second is an innovative vision for the future. By 2050, our goal is to use 44 percent of renewable sources, 38 percent of gas, 12 percent of minerals and 6 percent of nuclear energy.

The third is to implement the most advanced techniques in education. Today, the UAE government is placing particular em-

countries the most? What kind of joint projects are planned in the coming years?

Indeed, there are many joint projects. In the short term, we plan to build the gas and chemical complex with the capacity of 800,000 tonnes of polypropylene per year in Atyrau region. Also, I'd like to highlight another joint infrastructure project in the UAE in the field of transportation, with the participation of the national company Kazakhstan TemirZholly and the national railway company Etihad Rail. In particular, it has to do with the railway construction, with a length of 406 kilometres, which will connect emerging towns and industrial zones in Abu Dhabi and Dubai in the border with Saudi Arabia. It is also planned to develop airport infrastructure in Kazakhstan through the agency

even buy real estate in the Emirates. How does the legislation work regarding housing acquisition by foreigners?

The citizens of Kazakhstan note the attractiveness of the UAE for study, work, leisure and comfortable living. They prefer purchasing property in the emirates of Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Sharjah, Ajman and Ras al-Khaimah. For example, Dubai has developed the transparent legislative framework in the real estate sector. Foreign citizens are able to acquire real estate directly in full ownership in the entire emirate. An excellent incentive for investors who decide to rent an apartment is the absence of taxes on real estate and income.

Modern people have become very mobile and there are many labour migrants in most megacities. Astana, being a young capital, is just gaining momentum in this direction. What can attract labour migrants in the Kazakh capital? How difficult is it for foreigners to earn a living in Kazakhstan?

The EXPO 2017, certainly, intensified the flow of labour migrants to Astana. The UAE and Kazakhstan are very similar in this. There are many business opportunities in the UAE, as well as in Kazakhstan. Today Kazakhstan promotes international cooperation, stressing the significance of the global business environment. There are various business projects now being established in Kazakhstan, which require not as much financial but human resources. Kazakhstan has achieved success in the economic welfare and proved the viability of renewable energy, which has become a significant driver for the economic prosperity of the country.

Intergovernmental procedures on introducing visa-exemption shall be completed in the nearest time. Doubtless, it will make a breakthrough in the development of bilateral relations. Let us refer to the statistics of tourist visits; more than 100,000 citizens of Kazakhstan visit the UAE annually.

phasis on the development of environmental thinking among the younger generation. This will be useful for future citizens to implement energy-efficient technologies, green energy and will help to attain sustainable development.

Bilateral economic relations between the UAE and Kazakhstan have been developing for quite a long time. Considering the last five years, what has united our

of Abu Dhabi Airports Corporation. Another striking example is the cooperation between the Corporation, the UAE nuclear energy (ENEC) and JSC national company Kazatomprom in the field of peaceful use of nuclear energy, which I mentioned earlier.

The UAE deservedly became a favourite tourist destination for the people of Kazakhstan and many of our citizens managed to

'A magic dwells in each beginning'

By Peter Sonnenhol

"A magic dwells in each beginning," – says Hermann Hesse in his poem. Teachers said these parting words to my son and his classmates at a graduation ceremony in Berlin in 2017. The same may be said about the creation of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the beginning of Kazakh-German relations I witnessed 25 years ago.

I clearly remember the early morning of July 14 (national holiday of France) in 1992, when the Tu-154 aircraft was landing over the snowy "celestial mountains" (Tien Shan), and the view of Siberian houses of Alma-Ata, which then was the capital of Kazakhstan. I had just graduated from the diplomatic academy two months before, and it was my first mission abroad.

In a small but decent airport built in Soviet baroque style, I was greeted by the head of the administration of the German embassy, which was under construction at that moment. In his apartment, I had some strong coffee and amazing blinis. Those Russian crepes were baked by Nelly, a Kazakh woman of German origin who spoke fluent German. Later we went to the Hotel Kazakhstan, which had been built for a UNESCO conference in 1970s and stood out against the background of Almaty (Kazakh name of the city).

For the first few months, our advance team occupied several rooms of the hotel. There were tables instead of beds in five or six rooms. The first embassy of Germany was ready!

The reception was also situated in one of these rooms. In the afternoon, after a short rest in a small corner suite (two rooms with a big fridge), I was sitting at the reception with our receptionist. That is when I met my future wife who had just graduated from the Institute of Foreign Languages majoring in German and Eng-

lish. That was when fate took its toll. Three years later, at the end of our stay in Kazakhstan, we got married at the Wedding Palace of Almaty.

As my parents had lived in Turkey for several years, I spoke a little Turkish. When I studied International Relations in the USA shortly before the fall of the Berlin Wall, I heard there were many Turkic peoples living in the Soviet Union who also served in the Soviet Army. There were questions about the consequences of islamisation and the aspirations of many peoples towards independence. Peter Scholl-Latour published perhaps somewhat gruff but interesting books "Allah is with the Steadfast" and "The Sword of Islam," where Middle Asian and Caucasian Turkic peoples of Soviet period were described vividly. I was very interested in this, and in autumn of 1991, when it became clear that the collapse of the Soviet Union

After creating the Eurasian Economic Union and China's "Belt and Road" initiative, old caravan routes of Central Asia became economically relevant again. Everybody is excited about how this will affect its transformation! I remember with pleasure my first trip to Almaty 25 years ago when my professional career began at the German Federal Foreign Office, which also influenced my private life.

was inevitable and everything was leading to the creation of new states, I made a quick decision: I applied for a job in one of the newly created German embassies in this region. Our then Minister of Foreign Affairs Hans Dietrich-Genscher, as is always the case, beat us, and in autumn of 1991 visited Alma-Ata. Apparently, the decision to open the German consulate was taken dur-

ing the official reception with the Kazakh national dish Beshbarmak (five fingers) decorated with a sheep's head. At the same time, he definitely remembered about approximately one million Germans living in Kazakhstan. After the Soviet flag was removed in Kremlin on Dec. 31, 1991, and the flag of a new Republic of Kazakhstan was hoisted in Alma-Ata, it was decided to open the embassy of Germany. In February 1992, the head of the delegation went to Alma-Ata via Moscow and started dealing with the first administrative issues, particularly, preparing workplaces and housing for future diplomats. We all hardly spoke Russian, not to mention Kazakh, which is a Turkic language. Yet, I was flattered by the opportunity to compare my little knowledge of Ottoman Turkish with Kazakh, and later with the Uighur language of a neighboring Chinese region called Xinjiang (with the capital

Almaty and get your personal belongings there? We had not yet had such experience in 1992, and my employer, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, out of long habit relied on its employees' spirit of enterprise. Together with Bonn freight forwarding companies, which shipped things around the world but never to Central Asia, we considered and compared several options: it was possible to rent a Soviet Antonov aircraft (there was an airport in Almaty) but this option was rejected because of its high cost. That left us with rail or truck transport.

Already then, Almaty had connection to the Trans-Siberian railway through Turksib. We were thinking of putting two containers in a way that nobody could open them without permission. But what were we to do when the shipping containers would arrive to Almaty? There were no contacts of logistics companies, which would forward our things from the station to the apartments. We contacted by satellite phone with the head of the administrative department who looked out of the window and confirmed the availability of trucks on the streets of the city. But were the packers there?

Finally, the problem was solved by a German-Polish company, which earlier had been engaged in delivering assistance to Russian Germans in the Soviet Union by instruction of the federal government. It provided us with knowledgeable drivers and trucks, and the Rhine transport company helped us with packing and unpacking.

The last remaining question was how to get there myself. Taking into account my basic knowledge of Russian, a trip across Moscow (arrival at the Sheremetyevo international airport, further flight from the Domodedovo regional airport) to the other end of the big city did not sound so appealing to me (I estimated realistically the support of the Embassy in Moscow provided to young colleagues travelling to Central

Asia). At that time, there were rumors that Türk Hava Yolları airlines started flying to Almaty. The Turkish representation in Bonn had no information on that matter and offered me to buy a ticket only to Baku. Luckily, the then Minister for Economics of Lower Saxony Peter Fischer offered a convenient line to Hannover to a new Kazakh airline that used Aeroflot's flying equipment. That is how I became one of the first passengers who flew directly from Hannover to Almaty. As the flying range of Tu-154 was insufficient, the aircraft reached the east coast of the Caspian Sea (if I am not mistaken, it was either Shevchenko/Aktau or Guriyev/Atyrau), where it refueled, and then we reached Almaty. At the Hannover airport, I bought a box of chocolates, which let me make the first move to my future wife.

The work as a referent on the issues of culture and minorities first in the Hotel Kazakhstan and later in the embassy's building was dynamic and interesting. I was able to accomplish my task on "creating cultural security for German minority" only partly, and this had been clear to me from the very beginning, because the majority of them were packed and ready to leave. At the same time, surprisingly, the German theatre could have been preserved for a long time, not without effort, of course. We also managed to conclude the first German-Kazakh cultural agreement (I think, it is still in force), which led to opening and increasing the number of lecturers of the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) and German language teachers in Kazakh schools. I was especially pleased to cooperate with Kazakh archeologists. For example, in 1994, together with Professor Etmart we managed to hold a mobile exhibition about cave drawings found along the Karakorum road in Central Asia. Visiting the Golden man (full golden garb of a Scythian prince) served as the first step to the full-scale exhibition

"The Scythians' Gold" organised by Professor Parzinger in Berlin.

I remember the tombstone for German soldiers who apparently died as war prisoners in mines of nearby Alatau Mountains at the Alma-Ata cemetery created in cooperation with the Secretariat of the defence attaché and a Kazakh non-governmental organisation. Then there was a trip with my wife to Tashkent, Samarkand, Bukhara, Khiva, Bishkek in 1993. There were helicopter flights, mountain walks through Issyk-Kul and two long trips to China – the first one to Urumqi by Xinjiang airlines and back to the West to the old Silk Road, the city of Kashgar at the foot of Palmira and slightly higher in Karakorum to "Mukhtazh Ata" (Father of the Ice Mountain).

The second trip was to the East to the end of the Taklamakan Desert (if you go there you never come back) through the Dunkhuan oasis with its impressive cave drawings to old Chinese capital Sian, then to Shanghai, where a friend of mine met us.

I am grateful to my stay in Almaty where I experienced the Russian cultural world for the first time. I was able to improve my experience later in Moscow (2003-2006), where I visited the source of the Volga River and Baikal. Now I am convinced that we can learn a lot from intercultural and interreligious experience of peoples who live along the Silk Road, and therefore we have to strengthen this dialogue.

After creating the Eurasian Economic Union and China's "Belt and Road" initiative, old caravan routes of Central Asia became economically relevant again. Everybody is excited about how this will affect its transformation! I remember with pleasure my first trip to Almaty 25 years ago when my professional career began at the German Federal Foreign Office, which also influenced my private life.

The author is a diplomat at the Federal Foreign Office of Germany.

EURASIA&WORLD

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 18, 2017

ATOM Project Honorary Ambassador congratulates ICAN for Nobel Prize win

By Dana Omirgazy

ASTANA – The International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), having played a key role in bringing to approval by 122 countries of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, was awarded the 2017 Nobel Peace Prize on Oct. 6.

As part of the coalition of organisations forming the ICAN, ATOM Project Honorary Ambassador Karipbek Kuyukov congratulated ICAN and all the nuclear disarmament partners it represents for the recent announcement of the award.

“Having recently collaborated with ICAN, I want to congratulate ICAN on its Nobel Prize and thank the organisation for its work with the ATOM Project and other non-proliferation partners to achieve a nuclear-weapons-free world. This award truly brings to the fore the issue of nuclear non-proliferation and the hard work of ICAN members around the world and others who are striving to remove the threat of nuclear weapons,” Kuyukov said.

The ATOM Project has received the support of many anti-nuclear activists in various countries of the world thanks to the cooperation with the anti-nuclear campaign group, which started immediately after Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev initiated the project on Aug. 29, 2012.

“Since then, I have had the privilege of regularly participating in ICAN events – in Oslo, New York, Geneva and other cities around the world. ICAN are real our comrades-in-arms, or rather comrades against arms. I am pleased to realise that our common efforts have finally received a worthy recognition on a global scale. I believe that this award is an opportunity to

remind the world about the tragic consequences of nuclear weapons tests and to encourage the broad international community to take decisive action to finally ban it. This is exactly what our President Nazarbayev and Kazakh people have been seeking to achieve since 1991,” Kuyukov said.

Formed in 2007, ICAN is a Geneva-based global civil society coalition made up of 468 partner organisations, including The ATOM Project, in 101 countries.

In addition to The ATOM Project, other partner organisations include the Institute for Disarmament Policy, Article 36, International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War, Norwegian Peoples Aid, PAX, Peace Boat, the Latin America Human Security Network (SEHLAC), Swedish Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War and the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom.

The Nobel committee awarded ICAN the peace prize for ICAN’s “work to draw attention to the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons and for its ground-breaking efforts to achieve a treaty-based prohibition of such weapons.”

“It is a great honour to have been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for 2017 in recognition of our role in achieving the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons,” said an ICAN statement released Oct. 6. “This historic agreement, adopted on July 7 with the backing of 122 nations, offers a powerful, much-needed alternative to a world in which threats of mass destruction are allowed to prevail and, indeed, are escalating.”

The ATOM Project is an international campaign launched in 2012 to do more than create awareness surrounding the human and en-

vironmental devastation caused by nuclear weapons testing. The ATOM Project hopes to affect real and lasting change by engaging millions of global citizens to permanently stop nuclear weapons testing and achieve a nuclear-weapons-free world.

The ATOM Project was started by Nazarbayev, who shut down in 1991 the Semipalatinsk Nuclear Test Site in the eastern Kazakhstan after the Soviet Union had conducted more than 450 nuclear weapons tests there over 40 years. The tests affected more than 1.5 million Kazakh citizens, including many who, to this day, in the first and the second generations, suffer early death, lifelong debilitating illness and birth defects.

Kazakhstan knows the horrors of nuclear testing and, through The ATOM Project, has become a world leader in the non-proliferation effort.

“Human suffering of victims exposed to radiation, the environmental degradation, and economic loss should never be forgotten. The ATOM Project is an expression of the strength of the people of Kazakhstan: in suffering, they found determination; in despair, they found awareness; in tragedy, they found firm conviction of a better world. While telling the stories of the survivors of nuclear tests, the ATOM Project creates awareness of the human and environmental cost of nuclear testing, and acts as a strong voice for millions of citizens all over the world united in their desire to stop nuclear testing forever and to choose a different future,” said Lassina Zerbo, executive secretary of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organisation at one of the events organised together with the ATOM Project.



ATOM Project Honorary Ambassador Karipbek Kuyukov.

Athens forum emphasises Kazakhstan’s role in Silk Road of the 21st century



By Almasbek Zhumadilov

ASTANA – The Economist and the Greek-Eurasian Business Council brought together over 500 representatives of governments, universities, transnational and logistics companies in Athens Oct. 9-10 for discussions on the development of transport and the commercial flows of goods and services between Europe and Asia during the first of its kind EU-Eurasia-China Business Summit titled “Building Bridges from East to West”.

Speaking at the opening panel session of the event, Kazakh Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Roman Vassilenko noted that due to its geographical position, Kazakhstan is crucial for the success of the Silk Road of the 21st century and was appropriately called by foreign experts a “buckle” in China’s famous Belt and Road Initiative.

Underscoring the interconnection of Nuryl Zhol infrastructure development programme in Kazakhstan and the Belt and Road projects, the Kazakh diplomat informed that over 2,500 kilometres of railways and about 4,000 kilometres of highways were built in Kazakhstan over the years since independence. Among other important developments, according to Vassilenko, are the construction of the modern dry port Khorgos on the border with China and modernisation and expansion of the Aktau port on the Caspian Sea. Vassilenko emphasised that these efforts have created opportunities for new “logistic gates” for the transportation of goods through Kazakhstan to Europe and back and have led to an increase in transit container traffic through the country 100 times in five years by 2016. He added the development of transcontinental transport routes carries an important added value in the form of strengthening the economic potential of the countries involved

and, more importantly, strengthening security in the centre of Eurasia and engaging Afghanistan in these processes.

The Kazakh diplomat called upon international transport and logistic companies to consider cooperation with Kazakhstan and its national companies, including the joint construction of logistics terminals.

The forum was an important event for Greece and European countries, as evidenced by the participation of Greek President Prokopios Pavlopoulos. In his speech, Pavlopoulos noted the enormous potential for developing Europe’s relations with Eurasia and China, as well as the need to support “regional integration schemes in the wider Eurasian region, which should contribute to peace, growth and prosperity of the peoples.”

He stressed that “Greece as a European country at the crossroads of three continents, throughout its history has been open to communication and interconnection of different countries and cultures by land or by sea.” According to Pavlopoulos, Greece plays a key role in the efforts to establish economic cooperation between the EU and the wider Eurasian region.

According to Kazakh Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as part of his trip to Athens, Vassilenko also met with his Greek counterparts, including Minister of Tourism Elena Kountoura; Alternate Foreign Minister for European Affairs and co-chair of the Kazakh-Greek intergovernmental commission for economic and technological cooperation Georgios Katrougalos, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Terens-Nikolaos Quick; co-chairman of the Inter-parliamentary Friendship Group Leonidas Grigorakos, as well as President of the Greek-Eurasian Business Council Spiros Kouvelis.

During the meetings at the Greek Foreign Ministry, the sides dis-

cussed expanding trade and economic cooperation. In particular, Vassilenko invited Katrougalos and Quick to lead business and political delegations to Astana in the near future.

The Kazakh diplomat highlighted cooperation opportunities connected to Kazakhstan’s membership in the Eurasian Economic Union, and that of Greece in the European Union. He called on his Greek counterparts to complete the ratification of the Kazakhstan-EU Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement in the near future, which will open a new page in bilateral relations.

In the Greek Parliament, the sides discussed the importance of building up a political, inter-parliamentary and cultural dialogue. During the meeting, Grigorakos stressed that he was closely following positive changes in Kazakhstan and its multinational and multi-confessional society.

In his opinion, “over the past years Kazakhstan has travelled a significant path to modern thinking, sciences and innovations.” Speaking about the Greek diaspora living in Kazakhstan, Grigorakos noted the importance of strengthening friendship and the “living bridge” that unites our countries. In this context, the Greek parliamentarian expressed deep interest in studying the experience of the work of the Assembly of People of Kazakhstan and ethno-cultural centres.

Vassilenko noted the EU visa regime simplification for the citizens of Kazakhstan would facilitate a closer dialogue between the countries. He stressed that Kazakhstan unilaterally introduced visa-free regime for citizens of Greece and all other EU countries from Jan. 1, 2017. According to the diplomat, such a step would allow to increase cooperation in the field of tourism and bring significant economic benefits.

EU, Kazakhstan launch second dual use goods export control project

By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – The European Union, the International Science and Technology Centre (ISTC) together with the Kazakh Ministry of Investments and Development launched Oct. 12 the second project on export control of dual use goods and technologies, marking another step in strengthening the long-term partnership and cooperation between the two sides.

The EU-funded project seeks to enhance export control mechanisms in Kazakhstan and beyond by building on the positive results of the pilot project EU P2P: Dual Use Items for Jordan and Kazakhstan, that started in 2014, and expanding the geographical scope involving now eleven countries – Afghanistan, Armenia, Georgia, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

Among other positive outcomes, the export control initiative resulted in the establishment of the identi-

fication centre within Kazakhstan’s National Nuclear Centre, ISTC Executive Director David Cleave told The Astana Times, and among other objectives, the new project is meant to raise awareness in the Central Asian region on export control.

“We want to use Kazakhstan’s leading role in Central Asia and utilise this identification centre as a training ground to learn and see how to identify dual use goods and export control techniques,” said Cleave.

Setting up an academic course at universities that can foster the project’s capacity building aspect is among the ISTC long-term objectives as well.

“That will be available for people like lawyers, government officials who can be involved in export control to understand what the risks are, what the areas, products, techniques and technologies are that they need to look out for in order to mitigate problems of dual use,” noted Cleave.

In a long-term perspective, this

will help improve the safety capacity of countries involved in the project, he added.

An Oct. 12 international seminar marked the launch of the programme, bringing the best expertise from EU and countries par-

ticipating in the project, including government officials, together to engage in a thorough discussion of the current legal framework on export control, institutional mechanisms as well as new trends and challenges in the field.

Export control constitutes a “political, multilateral and event-driven” sphere, said former Deputy Administrator for Defence Nuclear Nonproliferation at the U.S. National Nuclear Security Administration Anne Harrington.



Participants of the seminar.

Nation&Capital

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FC Kairat Almaty captures Kazakhstan Cup for seventh time

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Private investors to build glass suspension bridge in Burabai mountains

By Frol Leandroer

ASTANA – A glass suspension bridge is planned to be built in the mountains of the Shchuchinsk-Borovoye resort zone, Kazinform reported.

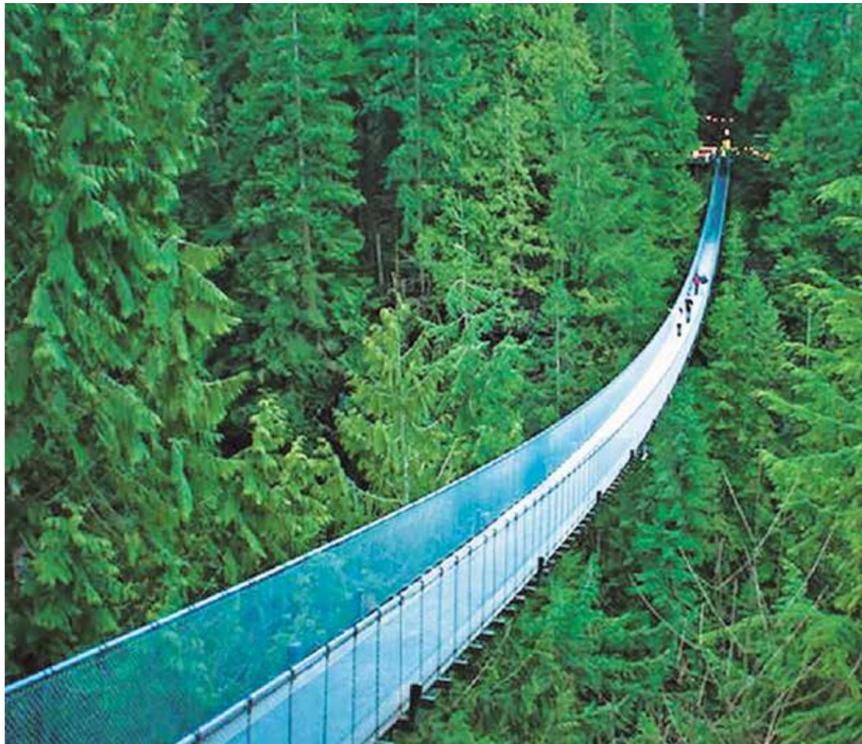
“This project was initiated on the Akmola region level, which will be implemented with the involvement of private investments, not from the state budget. The design and estimate documentation has not yet been developed, so I cannot say anything about the cost. ... We will begin to discuss the details when a potential investor appears. We will also discuss the burden on the environment, and the environmental friendliness of the project. Everything will be taken into account,” Head of the Tourist Information Centre Zhanat Nugumanov said.

The suspension bridge will be stretched from Mount Bolektau to the Rock of Tufelka. The length will be about 230 metres, the tourism department reported.

“According to the experience of building such bridges in other countries, where they reach a length of 500-600 meters, this is quite feasible. There are similar bridges in China and Japan over cliffs, which attract many tourists from different countries,” Nugumanov added.

The project is planned for 2018. Applications are being received from potential investors.

Borovoye, a village built around



a lake of the same name, is Astana’s closest getaway destination and probably its most visited. The area is a getaway both for those who like to relax and look at great views on their vacations and for people who need to burn off energy swimming, hiking or being

otherwise actively engaged in their surroundings.

Lake Borovoye is only one of several lakes close to the village, but it is considered the most beautiful and distinguished by its size. Located 70 kilometres from the city of Kokshetau, the blue waters

of the lake are extremely popular among locals and tourists.

Burabai National Park, the zone of mountains that surrounds Lake Borovoye, is perhaps Borovoye’s major destination. The mountains that ring the lakes offer fun for hikers and climbers.

Central Asia’s largest solar power plant to launch in Karaganda region

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – A solar power plant with a 100-megawatt capacity will open next year in Saran in the Karaganda region. The facility, with 370,000 next-generation solar panels situated on 160 hectares, will be the largest station in Central Asia.

“Seven projects in the green energy sector have been introduced in the region. All the innovative projects were presented at the Nur Alem national pavilion during EXPO 2017. Three of them have already been implemented to solve a number of issues,” said Karaganda region akimat (administration) press service head Aliya Syzdykova.

The projects involve a biogas plant launched in Dubovka village which uses organic waste technology to produce electricity, heat and organic fertilizers. Electricity generated from a small, 570-kilowatt hydropower plant operating at Intumak Reservoir is supplied to the Amangeldy village public networks through the Karaganda Zharyk power system. ABSolut Ecology, an innovative gas cleaning system, was also launched to address energy issues and purify industrial emissions.

“Two more projects are currently under implementation, including the solar power plant in Saran and the hydrodynamic fluid media heater. The heater was developed

by specialists of Karaganda State Technical University. Several experimental installations were developed and produced. They showed that significant energy savings can be achieved during the pilot tests,” said industrial and innovative development department head Galymzhan Zhumasultanov.

The projects using second generation biofuels and aluminium-fumed heaters are operating in test mode. The advanced biofuels were developed by specialists at Buke-tov Karaganda State University using perennial grasses as a raw material. Developers are now seeking investors ready to support the project and bring it to production. Designed for industrial and domestic buildings, the aluminium-fumed heaters have a high coefficient of efficiency.

Zhumasultanov noted universities and development institutes selected the most promising foreign developments among 35 presented at the expo. The projects involve recycling and processing solid domestic waste, energy saving and energy efficiency and alternative energy sources.

“Six companies, including the Kazakhmys Corporation, Kazakhmys Smelting, Eurasian Foods, Dala Mining, Kazgeology and GorKomTrans, expressed interest in launching technologies developed by foreign experts,” he added.

The projects are intended as part of the Business Road Map.

UNICEF highlights Kazakh government commitment to children’s well-being

By Dana Omirgazy

ASTANA – The United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) Oct. 5 roundtable focused on the challenges of providing access to social assistance and special social services for Kazakh families with children.

Representatives of a number of ministries, as well as non-governmental and research organisations, raised important questions about providing such access to families and children who face various social and economic risks.

UNICEF officials presented the results of a study on barriers

to accessing the services in select regions. The research, initiated jointly with the Kazakh Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, examined the obstacles faced by low-income and socially-vulnerable families.

Kazakhstan recently completed a number of initiatives that have strengthened the ability to target and reach the services provided, said UNICEF Representative in Kazakhstan Yuri Oksamitny.

“At the same time, it is important to emphasise that targeting should be carried out not only by strengthening the administrative rules for the assignment of social services and benefits, but also by actively

involving the needy groups of the population in the coverage of services and benefits, which, as a result, will solve the problems of social ill-being,” he said.

He noted the organisation appreciates the commitment of the government and its agencies to improve the well-being of children in the country and implement social programmes and initiatives that take children’s and adolescents’ interests into consideration depending on their age, needs and aspirations.

The UNICEF study in Kazakhstan shows there are still categories of children from socially-vulnerable families who do not have ac-

cess to social benefits and special social services. The factors impeding access include low awareness of government support measures and the role of the social worker, restrictive administrative rules and negative attitudes towards children with limited abilities. Based on the study’s results, further recommendations will be developed to ensure broad coverage.

The participants also discussed introducing new standards for social worker and visiting nurse services using the example of pilot projects at polyclinics in the Kyzylorda and Mangistau regions. The projects have been accomplished with UNICEF support since 2015.

Entrepreneurship helps socially rehabilitated former prisoners and probationers

Staff Report

ASTANA – Some of the actions planned to help socially rehabilitate former prisoners and citizens in probation were reviewed by Minister of Internal Affairs Kalmukhanbet Kassymov during the Sept. 25 Mazhilis (lower house of Parliament) government hour.

The government is not only interested in providing vocational training, but also in employing convicts while they serve their sentences, he said. Enbek, the state enterprise under the jurisdiction of the penitentiary system committee, is currently handling the issue.

“The production and potential of our enterprises are not great; the existing conditions are tough. Today, with a competitive market economy, it is hard to achieve full employment of the convicts. However, this problem is being purposefully solved,” he added.

Kassymov reported entities

Sixty eight percent of the convicts who are able to work are provided with paid positions. This enables them to pay for various claims such as damages, alimony and fines, and send material help to their families.

within the correctional enterprises have mastered producing metalworking and woodworking products, construction materials, garments and other goods. Manufacturing agricultural items has been established in a number of institutions. The production scale

is just enough to meet the needs of the correctional system.

“Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are involved in operations of the enterprises within the correctional institutions. Since last year, 274 SMEs have been transferred to the management of former unoccupied productive enterprise areas, where currently more than 3,000 convicts are employed. Thirty-four convicts have exercised their rights for running a business and became entrepreneurs. Some convicts are engaged in household work and serve at the correctional institution they are in. Currently, 68 percent of the convicts who are able to work are provided with paid positions. This enables them to pay for various claims such as damages, alimony and fines, as well as send material help to their families,” he said.

Developing entrepreneurship in correctional institutions is not the only way business and the institutions are connected. The Ministry

of Internal Affairs developed a plan to introduce electronic bracelets for probation control which is completely reoriented towards Kazakh business. The programme is expected to be realised in 2018 as part of a larger project of partnership between the state and private sector.

“We are planning the introduction and use of electronic monitoring of people who are on probation control. This is about the introduction of so-called ‘electronic bracelets.’ Annually, approximately 6,000 people will be under control via those bracelets,” said Kassymov.

He added the ministry refused to purchase the bracelets due to the expense for the budget.

“We were offered Russian and Israeli bracelets. However, who will deal with post-purchase service and maintenance? Who will do this? We followed a different path. A factory with Japanese equipment was built in Talgar and this programme is going through expertise now,” he said.

Astana Toastmasters Club helps improve public speaking, communication and leadership skills

By Zhazira Dyussebekova

ASTANA – The first registered Toastmasters Club in Central Asia was founded in the capital in 2010 by Samat Panov and Asem Panova. The organisation is devoted to improving public speaking and leadership skills, as well as providing learning experiences for great-

er self-confidence and personal growth, and the Astana Toastmasters Club (ATC) has generated many fellow clubs in the country and beyond its borders.

ATC currently has approximately 40 active members, with at least 15-20 attending meetings joined by ex-members and about 10-20 guests.

Continued on Page B8

THINGS TO WATCH & PLACES TO GO

NATIONAL MUSEUM

September 8 November 20 Contemporary Arts and Crafts of Kazakhstan, Exhibition

PALACE OF PEACE AND HARMONY

October 21 at 6 p.m. Yuri Bashmet and Moscow Soloists, concert

ASTANA OPERA

October 22 at 6 p.m. Sleeping Beauty, ballet

October 28, 29 at 6 p.m. La Bayadère, ballet

BARYS ARENA

October 30 at 7.30 p.m. HC Barys - HC Jokerit

November 1 at 7.30 p.m. HC Barys - HC Slovan Bratislava

ASTANA BALLET

November 4, 5 at 6 p.m. In the Middle, Somewhat Elevated, ballet

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 18, 2017

Dimash Kudaibergen becomes face of national postal company



is a new Kazakh singing star enjoying a tremendous popularity abroad. He is enjoying particular popularity in China, after debuting in January and placing second on a popular Chinese singing contest television programme.

Chair of the Board of Kazpost Saken Sarsenov spoke about Kudaibergen as the company's new face Oct. 9, calling him a "young, talented and very promising" singer.

"We are pleased to inform about our cooperation with Dimash Kudaibergen, a world star, who made incredible progress in his profession in a short period of time and once and for all left his mark in music history. His creativity unites people across the globe and this reflects the main idea of our company – connecting people from different cities and countries and striving for innovation, technological efficiency and high quality service," said Sarsenov.

The cooperation with Kudaibergen is expected to be "fruitful and interesting," noted Sarsenov as he announced the news on his Facebook page.

Kudaibergen, in turn, said he is an active user of the company's services, as he continues receiving presents and letters from fans all around the world.

"I am pleasantly surprised by the level of service and the pace of development of our post," Kudaibergen wrote on his Instagram profile.

Staff Report

ASTANA – Kazakhstan's national postal company Kazpost has signed Kazakh popular singer Dimash Kudaibergen as the face of its brand, according to the company's press service.

Born in Aktobe, Kudaibergen

Bal Tekstil brings country's carpet industry to international level

By Zhazira Dyussebekova

ASTANA – Bal Tekstil has been professionally manufacturing carpets and rugs in Ontustik, the South Kazakhstan region's special economic zone, since 2011. During that time, the company has not only developed its production and implemented yarn-making technology, but has signed a supply contract with IKEA, Sweden's international home furnishings retailer.

"In the world, 95 percent of carpets are synthetic, because they look better; they are more practical and cheaper than natural ones. This is important, as people began to change the interior more often," said Bal Tekstil director and founder Talgat Iskhakov, noting the factory uses polypropylene to produce its carpets, according to forbes.kz.

"Carpets are woven from three kinds of threads. The transverse warp thread is jute, which is produced in Bangladesh, where we buy it. A longitudinal thread is a mixture of cotton and polyester. We import it from India or China.

Pile thread is made from polypropylene, but polypropylene has to be purchased in Russia. We tested trial batches of raw materials in Pavlodar, but their samples did not fit; the fluidity is low and you cannot make a thread for carpets from such polypropylene. Now, they want to build a gas processing plant in Atyrau. If its polypropylene is suitable for us, we will purchase raw materials there which, of course, will reduce the cost of production," he added.

Iskhakov has been involved with carpet wholesaling since 1994. Although he devised the idea of manufacturing in the early 2000s, the concept did not become a reality for nearly a decade. In 2011, together with Turkish company Kartal Hali Tekstil, he registered the new company in Ontustik and began making carpets in October 2013.

"The state has created a special economic zone in South Kazakhstan to develop carpet production as well as other things. The enterprises on the territory of the special economic zone were provided with the road, gas, sewerage and water supply. We do not pay



Bal Tekstil director and founder Talgat Iskhakov.

corporate, land and property taxes and imported raw materials are not subject to customs duties. The six-hectare land was given to us for 10 years rent free; then, we will need to buy it at the cadastral value. In addition, in Shymkent the labour is cheaper and the climate is mild," said Iskhakov.

Bal Tekstil not only manufactures carpets and rugs, but also the necessary yarn, making it the only such facility in the country. Implementing German technology has allowed the company to cut prices by 20 percent. The 20-person design department creates hundreds of classic, national, modern and other patterns and the factory produces more than a dozen different types of carpets.

"We define types of carpets not by pattern, but by density; more precisely, by the number of knots in one square metre, the thickness of the thread and the height of the pile," he said.

Bal Tekstil started exporting carpets in 2015 when the rate was 12 percent. In the first three months of 2016, the indicator reached 20 percent. At the same time, the company started supplying IKEA. The factory was required to complete six checks during an 18-month period to become the first local company to cooperate with the Swedish brand. The first batch of 100,000 square metres was manufactured in April 2016 and the carpets are sent to China, Russia and the United States.

"When choosing suppliers, we are guided by the IWAY code, whose requirements include the conduct of transparent business, compliance with legislation, ensuring proper working conditions for own employees and taking care of the environment," according to IKEA's Russia and Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) press service.



Photo credit: Inq.kz

Photo credit: Kazpost press service

Photo credit: forbes.kz

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CULTURE

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 18, 2017

Almaty hosts I'm a Singer international music contest

By Dana Omirgazy

ASTANA – I'm a Singer, an international vocal competition, is being hosted this fall by the Almaty Akimat (city administration) and Channel 31. The project, aimed at promoting modern Kazakh culture abroad and increasing the city's tourist draw, is part of the Ruhani Zhangyru (Modernisation of Kazakhstan's Identity) programme, and, in particular, its Contemporary Kazakhstan Culture in the Global World project.

The contest features professional vocalists throughout Kazakhstan and other countries, according to organisers. The competition is being broadcast on the main TV channels in Russia's Bashkortostan and Tatarstan, as well as in China,



Photo credit: Tengrinews.kz

Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan, reaching an audience of more than 250 million.

Eighteen-year-old Assylzat Ayap is representing Kazakhstan on the popular show.

"I am happy that I will be able to convey through the music the rich musical heritage of Kazakhstan and introduce other countries and other nations to our culture. It's not for nothing that they say that music is a song of the soul and the history of the whole people," she said.

Aitugan Gaizullin, of Bashkortostan, expressed "great gratitude" to the host nation for the chance to be part of the international show.

"Thanks to this project, I gained a lot of experience and became popular in my country. I met friends and supporters. I believe that by participating in

this project, each of us contributes to the development of the music industry of our countries.

When singing songs, we share cultural values and abilities," he said.

Kyrgyzstan's charismatic contestant Nursultan Raimbekov is making his first foray into the international arena.

"It is an honour for me to participate in this contest. For the first time in my life, I am representing my country in such a large project. The contest gave me the opportunity to acquire not only spiritual, but also cultural affinity. I learned about the most important things in the culture, customs and traditions of Kazakhstan," he said.

The show, involving 18 contestants performing world hits, airs every Sunday at 9 p.m. (local time).

Qazaqstan TV starts broadcast of Silk Way Star contest

By Zhazira Dyussebekova

ASTANA – The national TV channel Qazaqstan has launched Sept. 30 broadcasting of the international music television show Silk Way Star. Artists from nine countries will compete during the 12 weeks until the end of December.

"Here we are making emphasis on the promotion of modern Kazakh art; they [participants] are given the task to perform the best Kazakh hits. Also, they will be performing songs in their own languages and in English," said Chairman of the Board of Qazaqstan

media persons of the participating countries.

Kazakhstan is represented by Aikyn Tolepbergen, who is widely known in the country.

According to Karin, the project is an original work, not a franchise of foreign shows. It is wholly financed by Qazaqstan.

The winner's title will go not only to the most talented performer, but also to the country he represents. Broadcast of the TV show is being held in all participating countries.

It is expected the final show will be a gala concert with the best performances of participants and invited stars.



Radio and Television Corporation Yerlan Karin, according to today.kz.

Professional singers from Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Turkey, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Russia's Bashkortostan and Tatarstan came to Almaty to take part in the production. According to news reports, four episodes have been already shot. One of the conditions of participation is that the singer should be already known in his country. The jury also consists of well-known musicians, composers and

According to the channel's website, the goal of Silk Way Star is to promote the development of the culture and traditions of the Turkic-speaking countries through the music of the peoples united by the Great Silk Road.

"The audience will have a unique opportunity to support their favourites, as well as to feel the culture of other countries. We understand that, at the end of the project, these nine artists will be real stars," commented Adam Media Plus General Producer Dinara Adam.

New television channel kicks off in Kazakhstan

Staff Report

ASTANA – The ON! TV Channel has launched a joint project with Russian channel Pyatnitsa! to air some of Pyatnitsa!'s most popular programmes in Kazakhstan.

"The strategic partnership is starting the renewed brand ON! Pyatnitsa. The audience of the channel will be able to access Pyatnitsa! TV channel's most popular programmes, such as Revisor, With Knives, Food, I Love You, Secret Millionaire, Battle of the Restaurants and many others. The channel will please fans of favourite projects with premieres, as well as numerous shows for any taste that have not aired this TV season yet," the project initiators said.

The ON! Pyatnitsa TV channel airs in major cities of Kazakhstan and is also available through cable and the AlmaTel Kazakhstan satellite network with the ALMA TV trademark.

"The presence of cognitive and entertaining programmes of the TV channel Pyatnitsa! in the country's television will be a challenge for local producers, the answer to which will be the improvement of the quality of their own production and, as a result, the increase of the professional level of specialists. It is extremely important that not only public but also private TV channels evolve in their desire to give the viewer a more modern and high-quality television product," said Gleb Shagun, Russian media manager, the initiator of the collaboration



between one of the first private TV channels in Kazakhstan and the Russian Pyatnitsa!.

According to the ON! Pyatnitsa channel's general director Aida Tatayeva, "shows for travellers, those who advocate for the quality of service, for activ-

ists and contemplators will be launched."

"Cooperation with the most dynamically developing channel of Russia will help us improve, make new demanded local content in the future, and progress for the benefit of the viewer," Tatayeva added.

First Astana Media Week takes place

By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – The first Astana Media Week kicked off in the capital city Oct. 4, bringing major media corporations and production companies together to set up partnerships and draw attention to salient issues in the nation's media industry.

Organised by the Ministry of Information and Communication, the three-day event incorporating talks, meetings and seminars is part of the government's efforts to support the modernisation of Kazakhstan's identity as instructed by President Nursultan Nazarbayev.

Unmatched in Central Asia, Astana Media Week seeks to boost media industry development and promote business interaction within the industry at the regional level.

Minister for Information and Communication Dauren Abayev opened the event calling it a "unique experience" for all participants, including 93 production companies, 15 national and seven foreign TV channels.

"It was a big surprise for us that



Dauren Abayev

so many production companies are working in Kazakhstan," he noted.

"We believe that the week will become a revolutionary event every year playing an important role in building close partnerships between journalists, media holdings, media and various ministries not only in Kazakhstan, but in our

entire region," Abayev continued. "Holding such a large-scale event is a natural consequence of the increasing attention of the state and society to problems in the field of mass communications. It is not only about media, but also informational interaction between authorities and society, the tre-

mentous development of social networks and the internet and the subsequent emergence of new ethical dilemmas."

The event will build ideas and intellectual and creative activities, the minister said, which carry with them the power to drive rapid development in the industry.

The platform is also unique, according to Askar Ashimov, general director of Kazakhstan's major media outlet Qazaqstan TV, as it allows for direct contact between clients and production companies, which previously was not the case.

"Here you can see the products and get to know which product to buy or whether it interests us. I believe we need to continue [the event] further," Ashimov told The Astana Times.

The channel has embarked on a new season, but has set more ambitious goals than in previous years, especially after Qazaqstan TV's recent comprehensive and large-scale rebranding.

"None of the channels did such major rebranding and we were also one of the first to switch to Latin-based spelling," he added.

Astana Opera presents classic romances

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – Astana Opera fans had an excellent opportunity to time-travel to the 19th and 20th centuries, when great romances were created. Talented artists performed the best samples of this soulful genre in the Chamber Hall of the capital's opera house on Oct. 11.

"We are happy to turn to romance once again. This concert will be held within the framework of the 'Bel Canto Musical Salon' series, where, along with the

works of Russian composers, the works of Frederic Chopin, Franz Schubert, Manuel Ponce will be

offered to the public," said Astana Opera's Musical Consultant and International Competitions

Laureate Raushan Beskembirova prior to the concert.

Astana Opera presented the brilliant romances by Mikhail Glinka, who was a major influence on such greatest composers as Alexander Dargomyzhsky, Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov, Pyotr Tchaikovsky, whose works were included in Astana Opera's programme.

"The old romances will be presented and the premiere performance of the magnificent composition by Vladimir Bakaleinikov will take place. Astana Opera could not ignore such popular work as 'Burn, My Star, Burn'

the Chamber Hall is conducive to creativity, any meeting with the audience is a gift for us soloists, and we all look forward to this musical evening," she said.

Yelena Ganzha added that the heartfelt and at the same time passionate gypsy romances affected the finest strings of the soul. Vocal numbers alternated with instrumental music. A promising violinist Meirzhan Kenesbayev presented P. Tchaikovsky's Waltz-Scherzo.

A harmonious combination of beautiful melodies with the inspired poems of the Silver Age of Russian Poetry created the poetic atmosphere of the evening. The host of the concert was musicologist Saule Mauletova.



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NSC to establish antiterrorist headquarters monitoring Caspian Sea

By Yerbolat Uatkhonov

ASTANA – Kazakhstan's National Security Committee (NSC) plans to expand the network of anti-terrorist headquarters in the country by establishing an operational naval headquarters controlling the Caspian Sea. The draft law has been presented and is expected to come into force in early 2018.

"To date, all headquarters that operate in the state cover only the terrestrial territory. We do not have staffs on the sea side. Therefore, legislatively, we want to consolidate the possibility of carrying out anti-terrorist measures at sea," said National Security Committee Deputy Chairperson Daulet Yergozhin at a briefing.

He noted the need to give appropriate powers to domestic border



Photo credit: Zhanara Karimova

services or representatives of corresponding departments in the field, allowing them to create appropriate headquarters and give matching instructions to state bodies to support the project. The headquarters will be

effective for consolidating groups to counter terrorist acts on offshore facilities or sea-going ships or simply to suppress terrorist activities in the region.

Yergozhin presented the concept

draft during the Sept. 29 Ministry of Justice interdepartmental commission meeting. The document considers the legislative norm aimed at creating a permanent maritime operational headquarters for combating

terrorism, regulating issues to ensure timely responses and suppressing terrorist acts committed against marine economic activities on the continental shelf or naval vessels.

"As of today, such work is completely done by the National Security Committee's Border Service. If necessary, we interact with other law enforcement agencies, as well as with the armed forces. But considering that the threat of a terrorist attack in the world, as you can see, is growing, we need to create the appropriate headquarters to strengthen coordination. There will be a leader and this leader will be empowered to make decisions on the ground; that is, to declare an anti-terrorist operation. Such a leader will be able to use forces and means to eliminate problems that may arise," he said.

At the same time, Yergozhin indicated there is currently no back-

ground linked to committing terrorist attacks in the region. To ensure safety, however, the committee must take all necessary measures, including protecting land and non-terrestrial objects.

"As you know, we have many offshore deposits such as Kashagan and artificial islands. Gas and oil are produced under the conditions of high temperatures and great pressure. These are so-called 'terrorist vulnerable objects' and we must protect them. We must foresee in advance and not decide something in a hurry," he said.

He added the number of people at the headquarters will be determined separately for each individual operation, although financial allocation for staffs is not provided. The bill, according to the NSC plans, is expected to be adopted by the end of the year.

KASE to bring together startups and investors

By Aigerim Bulambayeva

ASTANA – The Kazakh stock exchange KASE will present startups to potential investors in early 2018, said Yevgeniy Mukhamedzhanov, managing director of the stock exchange.

Mukhamedzhanov added that KASE will adopt the practice of other exchanges to create an information system to bring together entrepreneurs, business incubators and investors.

"There are investors who are ready to be officially introduced to the market and show their readiness to invest. However, they are not that many. KASE has experience and expertise, which enables the search of investors and interesting projects to be effective. We do not want to substitute other agents, we want to help development of startups," said Mukhamedzhanov.

Exchanges worldwide are being more proactive in connecting businesses and investors, such as creating startup and crowdfunding platforms. For example, the Thailand stock exchange is expected to launch a startup platform this year. Larger stock exchanges, such as NASDAQ and LSE, have had startup platforms a long time ago. Mukhamedzhanov noted that, as a rule, those platforms attract not only local but foreign investors.

"Our platform will work in

compliance with the single-window system, which will provide investors with the information concerning startups – the sector of their work and the amount of investments to be attracted. Only registered entrepreneurs will be allowed to enter the platform. This excludes a large stratum of those, who have brilliant ideas, but have nothing solid to offer to the investors," Mukhamedzhanov said.

KASE will cooperate with business incubators that have already undertaken project expertise, the Atameken National Chamber of Entrepreneurs and akimats (regional and city administrations). Investors, in turn, will be obligated to receive accreditation from the stock exchange, but it will be given on liberal terms at the initial stage of the platform development. KASE has a commercial interest in the development of startup platform.

"We have a model for the monetisation of this project, but it is deferred for now. The main source of income for such platforms is the accreditation of investors and the percentage from the value of transactions that took place there," explained the KASE managing director.

He added that foreign investors are interested in Kazakh startups due to the proximity to the Russian and Chinese markets, but they are not willing to invest until they see there is a pool of local investors.

Iranian investors to open sausage production plant in Semey

Staff Report

ASTANA – Iranian producers are set to open a plant for non-waste meat processing in Semei, according to the press service of the East Kazakhstan region's akimat (administration).

The project was discussed at a meeting attended by Akim (Governor)

of the East Kazakhstan region Daniyal Akhmetov with the leadership of the Agro Portal Kazakh-Iranian company.

The modern plant will be built within the Ondiris industrial zone in Semei and process the meat of small and large cattle, produce canned meat and sausage products.

"The Iranian partner should not

feel uncomfortable, we must create all the necessary conditions to conduct the preparatory work in the shortest possible time," Akhmetov said.

The head of the region said third parties working in the industrial zone may use a railway branch that will be laid under the Business Roadmap 2020 programme. He added that questions of supplying

the enterprise with raw materials are being considered. In addition, the Iranians expressed their readiness to equip their own feeding grounds.

A contract agreement and issues related to land allocation are expected to be worked out by the end of October. State agencies are expected to approve the project in early 2018.

University to produce solar generators in Shymkent

Staff Report

ASTANA – South Kazakhstan State University plans to begin manufacturing mobile solar power generators in Shymkent, University Head Zhumakhan Myrkhalykov announced at a recent government press conference.

"Our mobile solar power installations are designed to provide electricity to remote villages and farms; they differ from common models by the features of a constructive solution," he explained.

The mobile solar power installations were presented at EXPO 2017, where they caught the attention of researchers from the Fraunhofer Institute for Solar Energy Systems (ISE) and other specialised research centres in Germany.

"Soon we will put [in operation] the production of these mobile solar units in Shymkent. Our German colleagues were in the region, at the university, they were studying

the demand for such installations, and memorandums have already been signed that will help to put the development into production," said Myrkhalykov.

According to him, now there are also procedures for the design of the university's project for the contest of the Kazakh Ministry of

Education and Science and international funds.

He has also said that during the expo a number of scientific projects were presented by the university, including the development of technology and modelling of the micro-bubbling biogas treatment process to obtain highly

concentrated methane from renewable energy sources, as well as the production of environmentally friendly thermal insulation material. In general, for all the submitted projects and developments of the university, decisions were taken on commercialisation and further promotion, he added.



Photo credit: primeminister.kz

KazAeroNavigatsia to open training centre for aviation specialists

By Inga Selezneva

ASTANA – KazAeroNavigatsia plans to open a training centre for aviation industry workers in Astana, said KazAeroNavigatsia General Director Azat Bekturov at a recent regional symposium on the training of aviation specialists by the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) organised here.

"Taking into account the modern challenges of civil aviation, we want to expand our capabilities to provide the industry with high-quality specialists, starting work on the creation of an advanced regional training aviation centre in Astana. Its construction is planned to begin next year," Bekturov said. "We plan that the centre will be-

come a regional institute, where aviation specialists from all countries of Central Asia will improve their knowledge and effectiveness of their work. The centre will introduce aviation training technologies based on ICAO courses. Close cooperation with world civil aviation organisations, as well as establishing a partnership with existing recognised institutions in the field of professional training will be one of the factors of the successful operation of our training centre," he concluded.

Deputy Chairperson of the Civil Aviation Committee of Kazakh Ministry for Investments and Development Toty Amirova noted that financing for the centre has not been determined but KazAero-Navigatsia will fund part of the project.

Shoemaker highlights concerns hindering domestic producers

By Aigerim Bulambayeva

ASTANA – Kazakh manufacturer Zhamal-ai has been making footwear for more than 20 years. Company director Zibira Khasanova recently spoke about the obstacles faced by the country's producers, limitations on the domestic shoemaking industry and the firm's plans for the future.

Zhamal-ai strives to create high-quality leather products at reasonable prices, she said, noting domestically produced shoes are superior to those imported from Turkey because of the lower price. The company cooperates with Intertop, one of the nation's biggest retailers in the shoe market.

"We have been actively working with Intertop for two years now. It orders our shoes on a regular basis. We like cooperating with it, yet the scale of the order is not big," said Khasanova.

She added the Kazakh shoe industry is undermined by customer's expectations and suggested

poor marketing practices as a potential reason for the unsatisfactory space allocated for domestic manufacturers.

"We manage to carry out the orders. We are engaged in sales through our dealers here in Astana as well as in Astana, Aktobe, Atyrau and Ozen. However, people in Kazakhstan are used to buying cheap shoes. When they look at our prices, they become unwilling to buy our shoes. They think that if something is domestically produced, it must be sold at a very low price, almost for free. Actually, the prices for our products are not high, taking into account their quality," she said.

Khasanova based her forecast for this year's market on Zhamal-ai's sales.

"Overall, we are at the same level as we were last year. I cannot say that this year's results would significantly differ from the results for last year," she said.

She described the Kazakh footwear industry as "steady," but not necessarily in a positive way.

"Retailers 'taught' Kazakh customers to buy foreign products. It is as if we were invisible to them. The share of the local shoe industry in the market is small. It has not increased for the past years," she said.

Despite the hardships experienced by local producers, Khasanova indicated there are certain advantages to being a shoe producer in Kazakhstan. During the 2008-2009 and 2015 crises, the government undertook a plan to help domestic manufacturers.

"Describing the company's condition during the 2008 crisis as 'hard' is not enough. However, even the crises had their positive sides. It was during the 2008 crisis that the government obliged governmental companies to buy domestic products. Before that policy, we had to compete with international companies that had certain advantages due to the economies of scale. Of course, this policy will not last forever, but it had a strong positive impact

on domestic industry growth," she noted.

Khasanova also spoke about the company's future, including questions of expanding and exporting goods.

"Planning to expand within Kazakhstan's market is already an ambitious plan, let alone exporting overseas," she said.

She added Kazakh footwear exists mainly due to governmental orders. Demand for private orders is low and it is hard for domestic producers to compete with foreign companies. She suggested increasing their competitiveness level may involve enhancing the country's raw materials market for light industry.

"The raw materials market of light industry are not developed in Kazakhstan and it is one of the most compelling issues. We have to import all the raw materials from abroad," she said.

She also noted disadvantageous credit terms offered by the banking sector as a hindrance to growth for domestic producers.

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 18, 2017

Work continues on bill to cut business regulations, costs

By Zhazira Dyussebekova

ASTANA – Relaxing controls on businesses and other changes to a draft law on business activities, “On amendments and additions to certain legislative acts of the Republic of Kazakhstan on improving regulation of entrepreneurial activity,” were discussed at an Oct. 3 government meeting, during which the Ministry of National Economy and the Prime Minister’s Office were instructed to submit the bill to the Mazhilis (lower chamber of Parliament) by the end of the month.

The new system of inspections will differ from the current system in focusing on preventing legal violations without initiating administrative punishments, explained Kazakh Minister of National Economy Timur Suleimenov at the meeting. “One of the main innovations of the bill is the introduction of preventive control. Such reform should radically change the mentality and behaviour of inspectors to the policy of preventing offenses from the current policy of detection and punishment. The principles of interaction between business entities and the state should be effective state regulation of entrepreneurship with a priority of preventing violations.”

A number of control mechanisms



and required supervision identified as redundant or inefficient are to be abolished, and verification requirements are to be reduced.

As Kazakhstan works to deregulate and reduce barriers to business operation, reduce business costs and stimulate entrepreneurship, the bill will impact a number of the state’s larger goals, including reforming state control and supervision activities, developing self-regulation, identifying and eliminating norms that hinder competition, developing business support measures and improving Kazakhstan’s position in the World Bank’s Doing Business rating and others.

In total, the bill introduces about 1,000 amendments to 13 codes and 103 laws.

One of the most significant loads on business is a large number of information tools. According to the results of an inventory, more than 1,600 information requirements for business have been identified, many of which are duplicated by control functions or with forms of state statistical reporting. It is planned to reform the information tools required of businesses and reduce their number by 30 percent, according to a statement on the government’s website.

Work to optimise and simplify the licensing system for businesses continues. In 2016, required permits were slashed by 50 percent, from 708 needed permits to 316. Further changes have been proposed.

Regarding cutting costs, legislators are looking at costs connected with obtaining technical conditions for connecting natural monopoly entities to engineering networks, reducing the rates of certain taxes and fees and meeting environmental regulations. Reducing costs will affect such areas as technical regulation, construction and public procurement. In general, it was noted that work aimed at reducing business costs will continue on a systematic basis.

Also, in order to create a competitive environment, the draft law proposes a number of amendments aimed at eliminating norms that impede competition identified during an audit of relevant legislation.

Kazakh investor developing blockchain smartphone

By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – Sirin Labs company chaired by prominent Kazakh investor and businessman Kenges Rakishev is developing a smartphone and PC running on blockchain technology.

Founded in 2014 by Rakishev together with Israeli entrepreneur and investor Moshe Hogeg and Tal Cohen, the company seeks to become the world’s leader in “secure open source consumer electronics for the blockchain era.”

In 2016, Sirin Labs presented its flagship product – an ultra-secure Solarin smartphone worth \$14,000 and among other features, equipped with advanced hardware and software technology as well as encrypted messaging and calling mechanism.

The second line that is currently in development is named Finney in honour of software engineer and a bitcoin pioneer Hal Finney who passed away in 2014.

The company noted that at present, many smartphone developers

sacrifice data privacy for a better user experience, yet the Sirin Labs team intends to develop a smartphone that will ensure both at the highest level.

The Finney smartphone will operate in an independent blockchain network running on Android and the company’s open source Shield operating system required for a phone to be able to perform blockchain operations and support blockchain applications, including cryptocurrency wallet, secure payments and transactions, decentralised application store and P2P resource sharing module with other Finney smartphones.

With the initial price standing at \$999, the smartphone will come with a 5.2-inch display, 256 GB memory storage, 8 GB RAM and 16 MP camera.

The funding is carried out through a crowdsale event launched in October with an aim to raise \$75 million to develop a smartphone and a PC and additional \$25 million to develop Shield operating system for other consumer electronics manufacturers.

Kazakh TV presents unique show about ethnic musical compositions

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – Kazakh TV starts a unique project “Legends in Music” about ancient art of kui (traditional musical composition) and kuishis, the best musicians of the nation’s folk music. Kazakh songs and music have always reflected the ancient history of the people, its feelings, hopes and dreams, grief and joy. This vast sea of expressive melodies amazes with the beauty, diversity of subjects and genres.

Aikumis Seksenbayeva, the General Producer of Kazakh TV highlighted the uniqueness of Kazakh traditional kuis, saying, “Music is an important part of Kazakh culture. Kui is a song without words and this fact especially makes the perception of the music deeper. So the composition can have a great story behind and you have to use your feelings or imagination to understand the narrative.”

She said that 12 series can show only a tiny part of this cultural phenomenon, as there are hundreds of kuis and all of them belong to different periods of time.

The TV show crew made a great research work. The best musicians of the country participated in the creation of every episode. Talented artists worked on unique illustrations. So every episode is finished by an original kui to provide an opportunity to enjoy the composition.

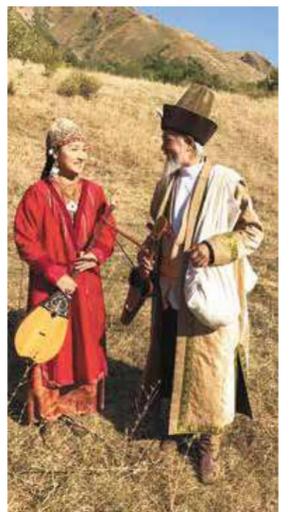
The main task of the show is to acquaint TV viewers with the national music in all its diversity, volume and significance as well as enrich knowledge about the unique creativity of kuishi artists.

In ancient times, music was heard everywhere: in the boundless Kazakh steppe, at noisy fairs and bazaars, in poor and rich yurts (Kazakh mobile houses). Ringing, triumphant music opened celebrations and met the birth of a child, while sorrowful, mournful sounds followed a person to his or her grave.

Before playing kui on the dombra, kuishis talked about its content, ending the narrative with the traditional phrase: “Now, listen to how dombra tells this.”

Fine legends connected with music have survived, retaining remarkable images of antiquity and the names of the authors who created them. Over time, the kuis lost

their words and now only music tells about those amazing events of the past.



Traditional music is the richest treasure of cultural heritage, serving as a monument to the epochs and centuries of the Kazakh people’s history. Kuis reveal the subtle feelings of the human soul and nature, reflecting, as well as possible, the complex spiritual world of Kazakhs.

The project will bring together the sound of the most popular kuis and composers, including Zhappas Kalambayev, Kurmangazy, Dina Nurpeissova, Tattimbet and Kali Zhantleuova.

A kui is not only a melody with a complex rhythm and peculiar musical sound, but also a play – deep in content and form told by the language of music. It reveals the state of the person’s soul and his or her experiences and reflections on the meaning of life. The tradition of the art included an oral narrative. Kuishi described the content of a kui and the occasion for which it was written. Therefore, before playing the performer offered an explanation about the history and theme. Time, however, has separated oral creativity from instrumental performance and only a few performers accompany their play with a preliminary story.

The TV channel aims to promote national culture and show its unique character for viewers around the globe. All episodes of “Legends in Music” are available to watch on www.kazakh-tv.kz.

We celebrate life, learning and success every day, says QSI Astana director

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – With the new school year in full swing, The Astana Times interviewed Quality Schools International (QSI) Astana director Jay Loftin about mastery learning, teaching in multicultural classrooms and why accreditation matters.

Founded in 2005, QSI International School of Astana offers a mastery-learning programme with a curriculum similar to that of U.S. pre-kindergarten-grade 12 public and private schools. The QSI schools in Kazakhstan – Almaty, Atyrau and the capital – provide an English language education for local citizens and expatriates living in the international community.

“Like my travels, I have worked in diverse schools as well. I served private, public, boarding and national schools in Russia and Finland and now I am in my 10th year as a QSI school director. This school by far is the most interesting and rewarding I have ever served. With 37 nationalities and a group of Kazakh students who are above the U.S. average in reading, writing and mathematics, it is a phenomenal experience every year to see students graduate and go to some of the finest universities in Kazakhstan, Europe, Asia and North America,” said Loftin.

An average QSI school operates with only 170 students, as the administration maintains a small classroom size of 15 or less.

“QSI Astana is almost full serving just under 300. We serve all ages and have not only a full secondary programme, but are now an AP Capstone School offering the highest American high school diploma possible,” he said.

The school has 54 full-time faculty, including 24 teachers and paraprofessionals.

“Our teachers come mainly from North America, but we have many people who have more than one home. From Maryland, a professor of physics who is also Filipino; from Virginia, a teacher who was born in Belarus; a former rodeo star and middle school teacher who is from Oregon; a world-class ski instructor who teaches art; one family with fourteen grandchildren, two families with seven children; a kindergarten teacher from New England who is a professional bluegrass musician and QSI teachers who have come from QSI schools in as many as three other countries we serve. We have Kazakh professionals who also teach and serve our school as well as British, Indian and other nationalities in our family,” he added.

One of the school’s main advantages is the Advanced Placement programme, the highest course-

work offered in U.S. high schools.

“Our students actually earn U.S. college and university credit here. We are 77 percent expatriate with a wonderful Kazakh community of 23 percent. One out of four students are native English speakers from the U.S. with a total of 30 percent from English speaking countries. Whilst most of our teachers come from public school experience, they would tell you that the small classrooms, well-defined curriculum and attention to the individual makes us successful,” said Loftin.

The school hosts family events throughout the year including fall festivals, back to school nights, author’s nights and competitions in mathematics, debate, Model United Nations and a wide variety of sports. The school also sponsors organisations that support orphanages and recently worked with youth with Down syndrome. The school is the only one in the capital with an Interact Club, a high school version of Rotary Club, the largest worldwide service organisation.

“International schools hold not only national accreditation, but should also be internationally accredited. We are Middle States Association (MSA) accredited, which is an accreditation body recognised in Kazakhstan and many international schools. We partici-

pate twice annually in MAP testing with 1,400 international schools, with our students scoring above the U.S. average at every grade level. We are also the SAT testing site,” he noted.

The school building, situated on five hectares, includes classrooms, computer labs, two science labs, two libraries with 14,000 volumes, a cafeteria, an auditorium and a large gym with two basketball courts, indoor climbing wall and numerous playgrounds.

“I have had the privilege to work in Russia, Finland and Central Europe as well as my home state of Mississippi. Coming from a hot climate, I have lived now for over 15 years in cooler and very cold climates. Astana is by far the coldest but also the brightest, bluest sky of any place I have lived. It is a fantastic and very large country. I have only begun to explore and there is so much to see,” said Loftin.

“Families find QSI the best choice because of our mastery learning approach and small classrooms,” he added. “We have very strict criteria for new students and though we are the hardest school many students have ever attended, we are usually considered the most caring. Beyond the classroom, every teacher contributes an hour weekly for an afterschool club, sports, music, arts and chess. We have a bright and beautiful campus and we start the morning with music in the great hall. We celebrate life, learning and success every day.”

Loftin noted failure is something they do not accept, because if a student is unable to do the work, her or she will be placed at the level where the individual can succeed.

“Failure is not an option. That’s why our motto is ‘Success for All’ and its model is based on a methodological and practical approach. We have U.S. students who find our school very challenging and we have Kazakh students who are superior to students who come from the U.S. We are a better school than American schools and that’s something that sometimes surprises our students from the U.S. We celebrate Kazakh culture through language. While many do go abroad and study, we are preparing Kazakhs to lead Kazakhstan and bring the world home,” he said.



Jay Loftin (R) and QSI students.

NATION&CAPITAL

TOURISM

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 18, 2017

Taldykorgan – city with rich history and bright future

By Aigerim Bulambayeva

ASTANA – Taldykorgan, the administrative capital of Almaty Region, is a city on the rise. Individuals representing nearly 70 different nationalities and ethnicities live in peace and harmony and its rich history and bright future make it an interesting location for residents and visitors.

Originally a hamlet inhabited by Russian and Ukrainian immigrants, Taldykorgan was officially established in 1868 as Gavrilovka. Its history, however, dates to the ninth century as evidenced by the remnants of settlements and burial grounds. Taldykorgan is Kazakh for “a willow hill” and their presence blocks extreme winds, alleviating its sharply continental climate and making the city a pleasant place to live. In addition to their practical function, the trees also have an aesthetic role, as the first thing tourists notice is the prevalence of green.

Culture

Some buildings in Taldykorgan are dating to early 20th century, including a regional literary museum

named for Iliyas Zhansugurov, a famous Kazakh poet born in the region's Aksu volost (district). Built in 1907, the wooden structure with a remarkable green colour is now an architectural monument and protected by the state as a historical heritage.

The city also has a drama theatre, regional library, the Almaty regional museum of local history, several parks and two cinemas.

Sports

There is a cult of healthy lifestyle among the locals with Zhastar Sports Complex, Zhetysu Stadium, five swimming pools and more than 30 gyms offering various choices for physical activities. The sports complex, known for its distinct architecture and functionality, holds national and international competitions. A comfortable hotel, numerous sports facilities, 14 gyms, martial arts practice halls and rooms for dancing and aerobics are at the athletes' service.

Getting there

The most convenient and, consequently, the most popular road to Taldykorgan is through Almaty.



City administration building.

One can take a taxi from the latter for approximately 2,000 tenge (US\$5.80) and enjoy a two-hour ride observing the region's picturesque nature.

The airport in Taldykorgan, built in 1946, was reconstructed in 2004. Though this is the fastest route, the options are limited to Scat, the only carrier in the territory, which operates flights to Astana and Almaty.

Taldykorgan also has a railway station, but train travel only runs

between the city and Almaty. The station was built in the mid-19th century and is soon slated for renovation.

Several bus routes connecting Taldykorgan with other cities and smaller towns are also available.

Future

Taldykorgan experienced a rapid and continuing decrease in population during the difficult years of the 1990s. Factories were closing and unemployment was rampant,



The Kapchagai reservoir as seen from the Almaty-Taldykorgan road.

leaving locals with few options. Some immigrated abroad, while others moved to bigger cities like Almaty. The population of 124,500 dropped to 97,996 by the end of the decade.

The situation has changed dramatically as Taldykorgan is continuing to grow and develop. In just a few years, new micro-districts and residential complexes have been established, such as Zhastar district and Karatal micro-district along the river of the

same name. Taldykorgan's rise as an emerging regional centre is due to its convenient geographic location and transportation links and housing and market basket prices are low in contrast to those in Almaty. The recent trend has resulted in an increase in the number of families moving to Taldykorgan not only from the regions, but also from larger cities like the southern capital, expanding its population this year to approximately 172,000.

Expedition to Zhetysu's sacred places documents history, promotes tourism

By Aigerim Bulambayeva

ASTANA – To raise awareness of the sacred and cultural sites of the Zhetysu region – and the tourism potential they represent – an expedition travelled one by one to

the significant sites in the region between Sept. 18 and Sept. 23.

“The rector of Zhetysu State University Kuat Baimyrzayev proposed to organise a joint project aimed at introducing and exploring sacred places in Almaty region. Thus, in the period from

Sept. 18 to Sept. 23, the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan in cooperation with Zhetysu State University, conducted a scientific and educational expedition under the theme “Zhetysu – a sacred place with a strong spirit.” Gabit Tursynbai, one of the organisers

of the event and head of the Almaty Secretariat of the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan, explained.

The decision was made at a regular meeting of the scientific-expert group of the region, he said.

The House of Friendship, a municipal government agency that is part of the assembly, funded the expedition. The expedition group consisted of 40 participants, among them the management and staff of the aforementioned university, as well as members of the assembly and the House of Friendship, university scholars and students, chairs of ethnocultural unions, media reporters and directors.

The ultimate goal of bringing together this group of experts and enthusiasts is to promote Zhetysu region.

“The main objectives of this expedition are the identification, study and account of the sacred places of the Zhetysu region; collection of oral stories and legends; implementation and clarification of the main provisions of the presidential programme [to modernise Kazakhstan's identity] to the population of Almaty region; preservation of cultural and historical objects; strengthening

of unity and social harmony; and education of youth in the spirit of patriotism,” explained Tursynbai.

The route map of the expedition was drawn around sacred sites of the region identified by historians and geographers at Zhetysu State University. It started in Taldykorgan, followed by Kerbulak, Panfilov, Sarkand, Alakol and Aksu regions.

Similar expeditions have taken place in the area, but Tursynbai explained that this event was both inclusive and deeply local.

“Every nation and civilisation has its own sacred sites that are common for each individual within the community. Those sites are the sources of spiritual traditions. The uniqueness of this particular expedition is that in a course of one week, participants were able to see first-hand beautiful sacred places with rich history located in Kerbulak, Panfilov, Aksu, Sarkand and Alakol regions, such as Genghis Khan's Hill, Akbastau Springs and the healing mineral spring Naizatapan, as well as to meet and talk to local people,” he explained.

The expedition is long-term and consists of two phases. The first was held in September; the second one is planned for 2018. The second stage will also be week-long.

As the first phase of the expedition came to its end, it brought some tangible results.

“The first phase of the expedition ended with satisfying results as the participants visited all sacred places, historians and scientists kept diaries and records on the roads of their ancestors. Based on the results of the scientific and educational expedition, a book, which will consist of two volumes, and a map of sacred places are being prepared for publication. They are expected to attract both local and foreign tourists to the Almaty region in the future,” Tursynbai shared.

Although the first phase of the expedition was quite successful, the expedition group experienced some difficulties during their exploration, including technical breakdowns.

“The participants had a 1,200 kilometres-long ride through the Altyn Emel and Koilik passes and Kapal Mountains. However, despite those conditions and physical fatigue, the participants enjoyed the trip. Having visited revered religious objects as well as sacred places, associated with historical personalities and events, each participant discovered something new and amazing,” said Tursynbai.



Photo credit: advanour.com

Improving guest services should entice more travellers from China

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – The Eurasian Tourism Association recently announced plans to launch Salem China, a unique international project to entice tourists from the nation and promote the friendliness and hospitality of locals, reported Kapital.kz. Kazakhstan has defined that country, India, Iran, and Russia as focal markets to attract visitors.

“The project aims not only to adapt the tourist market to the needs of tourists, but also to instruct local tourism industry employees on how to behave with Chinese tourists, how to promote Kazakhstan's tourist potential in China and attract tourists to the country,” said Eurasian Tourism Association President Rysty Karabayeva.

The plans include introducing Chinese menus in restaurants, Chinese cable TV channels and newspapers in hotels and informational signs in the language.

Kazakhstan and China signed an ADS memorandum in 2015 to

simplify and facilitate delivering group tourism visas to the country. The document provides countries with the status of recommended destinations for Chinese tourists.

“This makes it possible to significantly increase the flow of tourists from China, but, of course, not immediately,” she added.

Kazakhstan sponsored a number of events in China highlighting its tourism potential. Karabayeva noted the Journey through Kazakhstan's Great Silk Road festival to be held in November in Almaty and Almaty region as well as Zhambyl and South Kazakhstan regions. The fair is aimed at attracting representatives from the Kazakh and Chinese tourist industries and reporters and business delegations from Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Uzbekistan and other Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) countries.

According to China's National Tourism Administration, the number of citizens visiting other countries exceeded 135 million in 2016. The nation occupies first place in the number of outbound tourists and its travellers set a re-

cord \$261 billion in global tourism spending.

“There's been a positive trend of a gradual increase in the flow of tourists from China to our country for several years. It's much better than the sharp rapid growth of the tourist flow, as we are now able to monitor the situation and offer the necessary comfort. A 72-hour visa-free regime during EXPO 2017 positively increased tourism activity,” said Karabayeva.

Several forums dedicated to tourism development involving government agencies and tourist industry representatives were sponsored in both countries.

“The Kazakhstan-China Tourism Forum was held with the participation of more than 300 people in Astana in 2016. The annual tourist forum was also held in Beijing this May. Chinese provinces presented the tourist potential of the regions at the expo. This year, Kazakhstan held several road shows in China. Such events are already becoming a good tradition and contribute to the development of relations between our countries in the field of tourism,” she added.



Photo credit: expo2017.astana.com

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 18, 2017

Barys fifth in Eastern Conference following one third of KHL season



By Ilyas Omarov

ASTANA – Following two games played last weekend, HC Barys Astana has completed 22

matches or more than one third of the scheduled matches of the regular Continental Hockey League's (KHL) Championship.

Barys had an impressive start this season and even occupied the

first position in the KHL's Eastern Conference for some time. Then the team slowed down slightly, losing points in home games against Dynamo Moscow and SKA Saint-Petersburg.

Barys then went to the season's longest away run of six games, from which the Astana club brought 10 points. In Omsk, Barys defeated the East's leader HC Avangard 4:3 even playing without its leaders, the team's captain and forward Nigel Daws and the most experienced defender Kevin Dallman as both had minor injuries before the match.

Back home to Astana, Barys in its shortest home series defeated Kunlun Red Star in overtime – 4:3 and lost to Amur Khabarovsk – 1:3.

As of today, Barys is placed fifth in its conference. With 67 goals, Barys is the highest scoring team in the East, and the roster's captain Nigel Daws has scored 18 goals in 18 games.

This autumn, Barys is led by a new manager Yevgeny Koreshkov who is not afraid of experiments, in particular, trying new squad combinations and entrusting younger players with more play time. All this is encouraging for the Astana club's fans.

Barys plays its next game on Oct. 18, against Admiral Vladivostok, which will round up the Kazakh club's shortest home series of this season.

Team Kazakhstan finishes last in FIFA World Cup qualification group



Photo credit: Kazinform

By Anuar Abdrakhmanov

ASTANA – Team Kazakhstan will not be advancing in the 2018 FIFA World Cup qualifying campaign. The team, which ended their quest with a 3-1 away loss to Romania and a 1-1 home tie with Armenia, finished at the bottom of its group with only three points. Poland earned a direct ticket to the final tournament in Russia next year and Denmark will head to the European zone's play-off.

The first match, contested Oct. 5 in the central Romanian town of Ploesti, turned out to be especially challenging for Kazakhstan. Due to a number of injuries and suspensions for yellow and red cards from previous matches, manager Aleksandr Borodyuk had to make a few forced changes in the national team's line-up. Arguably the most notable was the absence of goalkeeper and captain David Loria, who was replaced by Stas Pokatilov.

The Kazakhs started actively, delivered a few attacks, won more challenges and tried to control the ball. The hosts, however, proved superior. Midfielder Constantin Budescu struck first, capitalizing on mistakes by his opponent's goalkeeper and defenders. Kazakh team forward Roman Murtazayev then tripped an opponent in his own penalty box and Budescu doubled the lead.

The visitors tried to cut the deficit in the second half, but to no avail. It was the Romanians, however, namely striker Claudio Keseru, who celebrated the next goal following his team's stringing counterattack. Eight minutes before the final whistle, midfielder Baurzhan Turysbek headed the

ball following a volley from the right flank for the Kazakhs' only score.

"I have no complaints as to [my players'] determination and fighting spirit. There were individual mistakes, of which we are aware, and the mistakes led to missed goals. Of course, we will need to work hard on them. We had a few good moments, but we did not play well for 90 minutes," said Borodyuk.

Facing Armenia Oct. 8 at Astana Arena, the hosts started well and had a number of good chances. Murtazayev and midfielder Azat Nurgaliyev shot from advantageous positions but lacked accuracy. The Armenians responded with several dangerous strikes of their own from outside the penalty area. Loria made some good saves, but he was helpless when Manchester United midfielder Henrik Mkhitaryan had a one-on-one with the goalkeeper to make the score 1-0.

Kazakhstan attacked more in the second half. Some tactical changes introduced by the team's coaching staff seemed to have worked, as Turysbek soon equalised the score after a pass from Murtazayev. All the other efforts by both teams, however, were futile.

"I think the match was good and featured quite a few scoring chances for both teams. I would like to thank our fans, because we were criticised a lot recently. So, it was important to please those who came to the stadium to cheer for us and make them proud. Judging by the way they saw us off, we could say they were glad and this is the most important thing for us. Although we did not win, we brought some joy to our fans and this is what we play for," said Loria.

FC Kairat Almaty captures Kazakhstan Cup for seventh time

By Anuar Abdrakhmanov

ASTANA – Football club Kairat Almaty claimed the Kazakhstan Cup for the seventh time in front of 10,400 spectators on Oct. 14 at Aktobe city's Central Stadium with a 1:0 win over FC Atyrau.

Kairat were recognised as firm favourites ahead of the match. They began justifying those expectations by dominating the pitch from the earliest minutes. Kairat's main star player, attacking midfielder Andrey Arshavin made a dangerous long ranger, but the ball passed above the net. Atyrau's forward Sikimic Predrag responded with a threatening strike, handled well by the opponents' goalkeeper. Before the half-time whistle, Kairat's forward Gerard Gou took advantage of the Atyrau players'

mistake and went one on one with goalkeeper Zhasur Narzikulov, who, however, showed his saving skills.

In the second half, Kairat continued to have the upper hand. Midfielder Magomed Paragulgov made a long ranger that tested the goalkeeper's vigilance. Almaty players eventually scored once be-

fore the end of the game. Gou took advantage of the Atyrau defenders' howler and scored – 1:0. Kairat continued to pressure and had a few more chances to consolidate their advantage, but the score never changed.

"I want to congratulate my players. I also want to congratulate the Atyrau team, because they have

come a long way to the finals. We expected that we would control the ball and lead but also expected counterattacks from Atyrau. After we scored, they got more active. We also had some more chances, but could not turn them into goals," said Head Coach of FC Kairat Carlos Ferrer.

"First of all, I would like to thank my players for their dedication. I think they played very well. We made an individual mistake, but I would not dwell on that. We failed to use our chances. Kairat took advantage of theirs. I want to thank our fans who came here and cheered for the team. We felt their support. We wanted to give the cup to Atyrau as a present on the City Day, but unfortunately, it did not happen," said Acting Head Coach of FC Atyrau Kuanysh Kابدulov.



Photo credit: fc.kairat.com

Kazakhstan hosts second round of Confederation Cup

By Anuar Abdrakhmanov

ASTANA – The qualifying stage for the second Confederation Cup tournament draw was held Oct. 13 in Kazakhstan. The uniqueness of the tournament is due to the fact that it concurrently hosts competitions in four kinds of sports: Greco-Roman as well as freestyle wrestling, taekwondo and judo.

Qualifying stage of group A, which included teams from the Almaty, Pavlodar, Akmola and West Kazakhstan regions, took place last week in Taldykorgan. Those regions seek to identify the best ones in Greco-Roman and freestyle wrestling, taekwondo and judo. Competitions in these sports were held concurrently. Representatives of the Confederation of Combat Sports and Power Sports and the Almaty region management participated in the opening ceremony of the tournament.

"I consider this as a celebration of sports. Representatives of various sports gathered together to demonstrate their skills to the fans. The format of the tournament is interesting and, I think, Confederation Cup has a bright future," noted bronze medalist in taekwondo at the 2008 Olympics Arman Chilmanov.

Almaty regional teams in the Greco-Roman and freestyle wrestling and taekwondo left competi-

tors from other regions no chances of winning when competing at home and, thus, won the tickets to the semi-final stage of the Confederation Cup 2017. It is worth noting, though, that Almaty regional team in Greco-Roman wrestling included members of the National Team of Kazakhstan in the classical struggle – a silver medalist of the 2017 World Cup Demeu Zhadyrayev and a two-time winner of the Asian Heavyweight Games Nurmakhan Tynaliyev.

Within the framework of the 2017 Confederation Cup, entrepreneurs and sports enthusiasts presented a new car to a new world champion Demeu Zhadyrayev.

Judo competition was accompanied by an acute struggle as well. Pavlodar and Atyrau regional teams fought to make it to the finals. In the end, Atyrau region representatives celebrated victory. The score of the meeting was 3:2.

Earlier on Oct. 7, the qualifying stage of Group D, which included teams from Zhambyl, Akmola, Kyzylorda regions and Almaty city, took place in Taraz.

The Confederation Cup established last year. The total prize money amounts to 125 billion tenge (US\$374.75 million). The final stage of the Confederation Cup is planned to be held on Dec. 2-3 at Baluan Sholak sports palace in Almaty.

DISCOVER KAZAKHSTAN WITH A NEW APP

A unique digital product – "Kazakhstan - Land of the Great Steppe" – is one-of-a-kind high quality interactive application, presenting multimedia on the most representative geographic, political, touristic, historical, economic facts about Kazakhstan. It contains hundreds of high quality unique photographs, videos, 3D objects, panoramic tours, interactive charts, and innovative maps. It should be of interest to anyone who wants to learn about the world's ninth largest country, including tourists, students, and business people. Available in English, Russian, and Kazakh.

Mobile device versions are available in AppStore and PlayMarket. Also available in Windows and as a web version.

You can run an application webpage by following the link: <http://bit.ly/28PkZza>

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 18, 2017

First pictures of light rail train system revealed



LRT train.

By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – The construction of a new light rail transport (LRT)

system in Astana is underway and LRT Construction company, a subsidiary of the Astana city administration running the project,

presented Oct 3, the first pictures of the LRT design.

The construction of the LRT is part of a comprehensive moderni-

sation of the capital city's public transport system along with the introduction of new buses and new ticket payment system.

With the LRT in place, the Astana city administration seeks to bring the city's transportation system to a new level modernising the infrastructure and introducing advanced international technologies against the background of the city's growing population that this year grew 13 percent and totalled 1.1 million.

The first stage features the construction of 22.6-kilometre light rail line that will connect the airport and new train station with 19 trains passing through the city's 18 main sites, including Nazarbayev University, Abu Dhabi Plaza currently being built near the Baiterek Tower. Yet, at this stage, the LRT will service only the left bank of Astana.

With the maximum speed reaching 80 kilometres per hour, the LRT capacity stands at 146,000 people per day. The trains will be adapted to harsh weather conditions in Astana, especially in winter, according to the company's press service.



LRT near the city's new train station.

The project's cost is estimated at \$1.9 billion that Kazakhstan borrowed from the Chinese Development Bank for the construction of the LRT for a period of 20 years

at 2.5 percent per annum. All contractors are from China as well.

The first stage of the LRT is scheduled to be commissioned in December 2018.

Five new public gardens, one park to open by end of year

By Dana Omirgazy

ASTANA – Five new public gardens and one park will be created in Astana by the end of the year. At least 962.5 million tenge (US\$2.82 million) was allocated this year for the construction of parks, boulevards and public gardens in Astana, according to representative of the city Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Management

Nuraly Yelibayev, the press service of the city akimat (administration) reports.

"This year we are completing the construction of one park along Zhalayiri Street in the territory of the Almaty district. It is planned to build public gardens on Birzhan Sal Street, along Zheltoksan Street and Suvorov Street, a public garden along Tayelsizdik Avenue and along Koshkarbayev Street," Yelibayev said.

He added that the reconstruction

of the public garden on Seifullin Street has started.

The budget for city improvement for the next year has not yet been approved, but the park plans are expected to be included. In 2018, a park in the Koktal residential complex with an area of 15.4 hectares and 11 facilities, namely three boulevards and eight squares, will be built to replace dilapidated housing.

"In accordance with the akim's (mayor's) order, public gardens

and boulevards will be built in the places of the dilapidated housing, two boulevards will be in the Almaty district, another one will be in the Saryarka district," Yelibayev concluded.

Last month, city residents cleaned up parks, squares and public gardens on 3.7 million square metres and planted 9,571 seedlings of trees, such as red willow, Tatar maple, pine, birch, oak, Lombardy poplar and mountain ash.

Astana tests Finnish environmental monitoring system

By Zhazira Dyussebekova

ASTANA – Kazhydromet has been testing an innovative environmental monitoring technology which Finland presented at EXPO 2017. If successful, the system might be introduced on all city posts, said weather service laboratory head Dana Amanbayeva during a government press conference.

"The Vaisala sensor was installed July 11 on the automatic air quality control sensor to adapt and compare data with Russian-made instruments currently used to monitor air quality in Astana," she noted.

Kazhydromet has been cooperating with Vaisala Group since 2005. The Finnish partner presented the automatic AQT-420 atmospheric air quality sensor, which automatically measures the concentrations of pollutants such as nitrogen dioxide, carbon monoxide, sulphur dioxide, ozone and PM-2.5 and PM-10 suspended particles, at the international exposition.

The main advantages of the sensor are its size and the fact it can be installed anywhere in the city. There is no need to use a separate plot of land, the common practice for the Russian sensors currently in use. The Finnish models can be installed on a pole or wall or roof of a building. In addition, they have high accuracy with an error rate of 1-3 percent, which is the best indicator for such devices, said Aman-

bayeva. Due to the solar panels, the sensor also has low power consumption.

She noted the importance of having an extra set of meteorological parameters for this type of equipment in addition to air quality sensors. When determining pollution, the direction and speed of the wind and other environmental parameters must be known.

Some shortcomings were also revealed during the test period. The monitoring system does not have sensors to determine hydrogen sulphide and nitrogen oxide, important components for air control in large cities. Vaisala plans to finish developing the sensors by the end of the year.

The enterprise will continue the tests until the spring-summer of 2018. During this period, adapting the sensor to Kazakh weather conditions will be checked, as well as comparing the data received with the data from the current automatic gas analysers.



Capital Park named CIS' best amusement park

Staff Report

ASTANA – Stolichniy (Capital) Park, which attracts 500,000-one million visitors annually, won the Best Outdoor Amusement Park award at the 15th Khrustalnoye Koleso (The Crystal Wheel) contest in Sochi.

"It's a result of many years of hard work aimed at developing leisure and cultural attractions in the capital. This is the first award in the large-scale category and we decided to dedicate this prize to the 20th anniversary of our capital," said city akimat (administration) culture, archives and documentation department head Bolat Mazhagulov.

The contest, the only one of its kind in the region, attracted 162 participants to recognise the en-



L-R: Housing and communal services state fund director Yerken Kassenbekov, Astana akimat culture, archives and documentation department head Bolat Mazhagulov and housing and communal services state fund deputy director Gani Khasenov.

tertainment and leisure industry leaders in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).

"This category included all parks

located in Moscow, Minsk, St. Petersburg, Tbilisi and other major cities except for Sochi Park, which was built in 2014 on the eve of the

Winter Olympic Games," according to the department press release.

Stolichniy Park was recognised for its multifunctional appeal, with a beach, outdoor pool area, and skiroller track in addition to other attractions in the area. The park is divided into a waterside, central alley, four rock shelters with a mosaic interior, fountain and an Olympic area. Entertainment events including sports activities, and non-sporting healthy alternatives were held daily during the summer for children and adults.

The contest was held in a forum format, with entertainment industry representatives from various countries sharing their experiences and attending educational seminars. The event was held at Sochi Park, the largest park in Russia and the CIS with more than one million visitors yearly.

Astana Toastmasters Club helps improve public speaking...

Continued from Page B1

"Club meetings are held every Saturday at 12 o'clock in the American Corner and every other Thursday in the PwC office at 7:30 p.m. The precise schedule is usually provided via social media, such as Facebook and Instagram," said ATC President Kanat Bazaraly in a recent interview with The Astana Times.

Regular ATC meetings usually begin with a prepared speech session, where all orators practice their performances in advance on a topic of their choosing. It is followed by a table topic session, where anyone can answer master questions. The meetings end with an evaluation, where each speaker receives suggestions from other members.

According to the club's website, there is no instructor; instead, each speech and meeting are critiqued by a member in a positive manner,

focusing on what was done right and what could be improved.

ATC's target audience is recent graduates, young professionals and older people who want to improve their public speaking and leadership skills with a good level of English proficiency, said Bazaraly. Toastmasters International suggests members be at least 18 years old.

The local club does not have branches, he noted, but helped open and establish a few other groups such as those at Nazarbayev University and Samruk Kazyna.

"Every Toastmasters club is a part of Toastmasters International, which has around 16,000 clubs in the world. Even today, anyone and anywhere can open a Toastmasters club: Toastmasters International requires only few things, such as having at least 20 members in order to be officially registered," he added.

Clubs have formed in Almaty, Atyrau and Kashagan. Some ATC members have been involved in opening new clubs in Kazakh cities such as Aktobe, Karagandy, Kostanai, Pavlodar, Petropavlovsk, Shymkent, Ural-

sk and Ust-Kamenogorsk, all by request of local American Corners.

"We or Toastmasters International don't open new clubs, we can only help people open their own," said Bazaraly.



He shared his personal experience in ATC.

"My first time in the club left a controversial impression: from one point, I understood that this is about something related to public speaking, yet from the other side

I did not understand what was going on: who are the speakers, why are they speaking, who are all of these people around me and what is the point?? I do remember someone tried to explain to me how it was all working, but for me it was like the first meeting of Robinson and Friday and I was Friday. Yet, I wanted to speak as some speakers and share my ideas with someone. That is why I stick around and continue my journey. Time has passed and ATC has become a consistent part of my life which allows me to meet interesting people who always want to achieve more – more from themselves (but not always for themselves)," he said.

As for the future, the club plans to grow or establish a district club, which, according to Bazaraly, will provide a better understanding of Toastmasters mission, effectively manage the clubs' organisations and allow participation in worldwide Toastmasters competitions.