



## King Abdullah II awarded inaugural Nazarbayev Prize

By Aigerim Seisembayeva

ASTANA – King Abdullah II of Jordan was awarded the Nazarbayev Prize for a Nuclear-Weapons-Free World and Global Security during his Nov. 1 official visit to Kazakhstan. The Jordanian monarch was decorated for his contribution to “regional stability, global security and steadfast stance against war and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.”

“This award is in recognition of your contributions and manifestation of hope that as conflicts rage you would continue with a peace-making role, which brings people closer,” said Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev.

He specifically highlighted Jordan’s acceptance of up to 1.3 million refugees since the Syrian crisis began more than six years ago, as well as Amman’s involvement in the Astana Process peace talks on Syria as an observer. Jordan’s contribution to peace process between Israel and Palestine was also noted.

King Abdullah thanked the Kazakh President for the invitation, the warm welcome rendered by the Kazakh hosts and expressed gratitude for the award.

He emphasised the trusting nature of the relations between the two countries and highlighted the important role of Nursultan Nazarbayev in the peaceful settlement of international conflicts.

“We value what you do to make this world a better and safer place. Your leadership is important for all of us,” said the king.

He stressed that “this award is for the entire people of Jordan.” His office is reported to have added that the prize money would go to support excellent Jordanian students in public schools.

The leaders of the two countries also tackled international issues, including the war in Syria and the Astana Process, the situation in



King Abdullah II of Jordan (L) and Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev (R).

Iraq, the diplomatic crisis around Qatar, as well as the fight against terrorism and joint efforts to promote religious tolerance and nuclear non-proliferation.

The Jordanian leader visited Kazakhstan the day after the seventh high-level international meeting on Syria concluded in Astana. Jordan participated in the talks as an observer. Nazarbayev stated that the Astana Process helped diminish the level of violence in Syria significantly, as the local population have a chance to return to peaceful life.

The Kazakh President and the Jordanian King agreed to continue developing bilateral ties and cooperating on efforts for international peace.

At a briefing that followed the bilateral meeting, Nazarbayev noted February 2018 will mark the 25th anniversary of Kazakh-Jordanian relations.

He also thanked the Jordanian side for their active participation in the EXPO 2017 international specialised exhibition in Astana and the first Summit on Science and Technologies of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation.

King Abdullah confirmed Jordan’s willingness to continue the close cooperation with Kazakhstan and thanked Kazakhstan and its leader for its contribution to the international community.

“My dear brother, you have brought global vision to today’s most pressing international con-

cerns. Today, Kazakhstan is a champion of global co-existence and cooperation,” he said.

The meeting resulted in the signing of bilateral agreements, including those on extradition of persons, on the transfer of convicted persons, on legal assistance in criminal matters, on cooperation in combating terrorism, organised crime, illicit trafficking in narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances, their precursors and other types of crimes.

The Nazarbayev Prize for a Nuclear-Weapons-Free World and Global Security was established in 2016. Its objective is to urge international actors to pursue more vigorous efforts to rid the world of nuclear weapons.

## Country drops one spot in Doing Business report, shows progress in separate areas

By Aigerim Bulambayeva

ASTANA – Kazakhstan was ranked 36th on the Doing Business 2018 report released Oct. 31, one point lower compared with last year’s ranking. In separate instances, however, it showed definite progress.

Although Kazakhstan’s overall rating dropped from its record high last year, the country was rated first among the 190 countries considered in “Protecting Minority Investors.” The position is due to the policy reform undertaken this year. The nation strengthened minority investor protections by increasing rights and roles of shareholders in major corporate decisions and clarifying ownership and control structures, as well as requiring greater corporate transparency and providing greater access to corporate information during trial.

In addition to protecting minority investors, Kazakhstan ranked

sixth in enforcing contracts. By introducing additional time standards for key court events respected in the majority of cases, the country eased enforcing contracts.

Another significant improvement was observed in “Registering Property” where Kazakhstan is now ranked 17th. Kazakhstan’s business reforms made it easier to transfer a property by improving transparency and the land administration system’s dispute resolution mechanisms.

Several areas must be improved for the nation to provide additional benefits while doing business. One vulnerable area is trading across borders, where Kazakhstan’s 2018 rating is 123rd. An explanation for this is border compliance measured in time to be exported. In Kazakhstan, the indicator is 133 hours in contrast to 12.7 hours in high income Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries.

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## Kazakhstan to switch to Latin alphabet by 2025

№	Написание	Звук	№	Написание	Звук
1	А а	[a]	17	Ң ң	[ŋ], [ɲ]
2	Ә ә	[ə]	18	О о	[o]
3	Б б	[b]	19	Ө ө	[ø]
4	Д д	[d]	20	П п	[p]
5	Е е	[e]	21	Қ қ	[q]
6	Ғ ғ	[ɣ]	22	Р р	[r]
7	Г г	[g]	23	С с	[s]
8	Ғ ғ	[ɣ]	24	Ш ш	[ʃ]
9	Ҥ ҥ	[x], [h]	25	Ҫ ҫ	[ʧ]
10	І і	[i]	26	Т т	[t]
11	Ү ү	[u], [ü]	27	У у	[y]
12	Ж ж	[ʒ]	28	Ұ ұ	[ɯ]
13	К к	[k]	29	Ү ү	[v]
14	Л л	[l]	30	Ү ү	[ɮ]
15	М м	[m]	31	Ү ү	[y]
16	Н н	[n]	32	З з	[z]

The version of the alphabet approved by the Decree.

By Aigerim Bulambayeva

ASTANA – Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev signed a decree Oct. 26 to change the existing

Kazakh alphabet to Latin-based script. The corresponding document was published Oct. 27 on the Akorda website.

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## Latest Syrian peace talks in Astana focus on humanitarian issues



By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – The Oct. 29-30 latest round of Syrian peace talks in Astana, the seventh in what is known as the Astana Process meant to supplement UN-brokered peace talks in Geneva, focused on humanitarian issues and resulted in another joint

statement by the three guarantor states of the process – Russia, Turkey and Iran.

Participants discussed adherence to de-escalation zones agreed-upon in previous Astana Process talks as well as humanitarian issues, primarily the issues of exchange of detainees, prisoners of war and missing persons. Representatives of the Syr-

ian government and the Syrian armed opposition, delegations from Iran, Russia and Turkey attended closed-door negotiations. U.S. Acting Assistant Secretary of State David Satterfield and a delegation from Jordan and the United Nations (UN) also attended.

The UN delegation was led by Milos Strugar, an associate

of UN Special Envoy for Syria Staffan de Mistura, who attended a couple of previous rounds.

During the talks, head of the Syrian government delegation Bashar al-Jaafari called upon the guarantor states to abide by previous agreements, including de-escalation zone agreement.

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## One millionth tonne of cargo shipped from Kuryk port

By Zhazira Dyussebekova

ASTANA – The one millionth tonne of cargo left Kuryk port Oct. 19 for the Azerbaijani port of Baku. The Kuryk port, launched in December, is under its second phase of construction.

“At present, Kazakh grain, coal, oil products, fertilisers and chemi-

icals, as well as transit cargo coming from China, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, are exported via the Kuryk ferry complex. From the beginning of operation to the present day, the volume of cargo has reached one million tonnes,” said port general manager Myrzabek Saktaganov at the ceremony dedicated to the milestone reached.

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## NATION

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 8, 2017

# Association of businesswomen presents gender budgeting project

By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – The Association of Businesswomen of Kazakhstan presented a project to introduce gender budgeting in the nation at the Oct. 25 roundtable involving representatives of the Kazakh National Commission for Women, Family and Demographic Policy, deputies, state bodies, international organisations and NGOs.

Funded by the Civil Initiatives Support Centre and supported by the Kazakh Ministry for Religious and Civil Society Affairs, the project kicked off in April and sought to research and analyse the topic and subsequently form concrete recommendations.

Gender budgeting, devising the budget in a way that equally takes into account the interests and needs

of both genders, is envisioned in the Kazakhstan 2030 Concept on Family and Gender Policy, said association chair and national commission member Raushan Sarsembayeva.

“Gender budgeting is quite a young term; however, the implementation of the concept on family and gender policy very clearly reviews those aspects that discriminate different segments of the population to a varying degree, primarily women and children. In this regard, gender budgeting contributes to decreasing the effect of those factors and improving gender equality,” she noted.

Gender budgeting incorporates the needs of all groups within the population, especially those in a socially vulnerable situation, she added. Fostering gender equality will also bring Kazakhstan closer

to its crucial goal of entering the world’s 30 most developed countries by 2050.

The project revealed several important factors predominant in society and across all levels of government that could impede introducing gender budgeting. The issues include weak political will, poor knowledge of the issue among state bodies and the population, insufficient incorporation of gender statistics and prevailing gender stereotypes within society.

An analysis of the nation’s legislative framework identified the presence of norms directly or indirectly affecting gender, but most do not take into account gender-related indicators that hamper monitoring and control, noted the association.

Specialists involved in the project presented several recommendations.

“Our experts suggested conducting gender-based analysis of the budget, state programmes and legislative framework before endorsing the relevant documents, ensuring broad public discussion involving women NGOs and interested sides and studying international practices in more than 90 countries using the gender budgeting method,” said the association.

Coordinating the state bodies responsible for collecting statistical data should be improved, according to the experts, who suggested establishing a coordinating body within the nation’s Parliament or Presidential administration specifically dealing with gender-related issues. The work should go beyond the government and also reach the public through an awareness raising campaign, they added.

Gender budgeting is a socially-

significant issue, as it affects all segments of the population, said national commission for women, family and demographic policy deputy chair Lyazzat Suleimen.

“But we need to start from small things. Gender budgeting will be efficient when people start to understand and see the benefits of it in their daily life,” she added.

Majilis (lower house of the Kazakh parliament) deputy Serik Seidumanov agreed, adding gender-related issues do not imply only women.

“Of course, it includes issues related to women, but it also concerns men,” he said.

Yet, successfully incorporating gender budgeting into the national budget process requires changes not only in the nation’s legislative framework, but also in society itself, he added.

## NATIONAL NEWS IN BRIEF

Training seminars for high-level Corps A civil servants were held Oct. 30-Nov. 3 in Astana, according to the organisation’s press service. The programme on leadership and transformation initiatives was coordinated by the Astana Civil Service Hub, Nazarbayev University and the U.S. Federal Executive Institute. “We are very interested in the experience of the Federal Executive Institute on such trainings that help civil servants enhance their professional skills and competencies to become visionary leaders who can think broadly and manage strategically,” said Civil Service Hub steering committee chairperson Alikhan Baimenov.

Almaty has become a member of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) Creative Cities Network, according to an Oct. 31 press release. “These new designations showcase an enhanced diversity in city profiles and geographical balance, with 19 cities from countries not previously represented in the network,” said UNESCO Director-General Irina Bokova. The 64 cities from 44 countries joined the network at the front line of UNESCO’s efforts to foster innovation and creativity as key drivers for more sustainable and inclusive urban development. Cities commit to expand and exchange innovative best practices to promote creative industries, strengthen participation in cultural life and integrate culture into sustainable urban development policies.

An electronic labour exchange employment centre has opened in Pavlodar, reported Pavlodarnews.kz. “The transition to the targeted work makes it possible for people to apply to the electronic labour exchange, the centres for public services (TsONs) and the regional city administration. Great emphasis is placed on employers. You can find a jobseeker either in the employment centres or on the Enbek.kz website. It’s necessary to fill in information about vacancies, requirements, salaries and qualification skills,” said Labour Resources Development Centre President Daulet Argandykov. The pilot project was also launched in Astana and Almaty.

The 3.5 million tenge (US\$10,437) Bastau co-working centre was opened Oct. 27 in Uralsk as part of the Rukhani Janghyru programme, according to Tengrinews.kz. “This centre will become a kind of think tank where new ideas and projects will be developed to achieve the basic principles of the programme including pragmatism, competitiveness and preservation of national identity. Young people will be able to realise their potential for the benefit of our country and the region,” said West Kazakhstan region Akim (Governor) Altai Kulginov.

Kazinform reports 44 schools are currently being constructed in the Almaty region. “This significantly solves the student accommodation problem. Nearly 46,000 first-graders were enrolled in the schools this year,” said Almaty region Akim (Governor) Amandyk Batalov. Approximately 77.2 billion tenge (US\$230.2 million) was allocated to implement 82 projects in three years, including 49 billion tenge (US\$146 million) for educational facilities as part of the Nurly Zhol initiative. Constructing 10 schools is also planned for 2018 and design and estimate documentation is being developed with the local budget and government.

The volume of Astana’s industrial and construction waste decreased by 20 percent compared to last year, reported the city administration press service. More than 330,000 tonnes of waste, including more than 274,000 tonnes of solid domestic waste, have been accumulated since the early part of this year compared to the 545,000 tonnes accrued in 2016. The nearly 10,477 trash containers put into operation at 1,842 sites as part of a new municipal waste management programme have resulted in an almost 13-percent decrease in the volume of municipal solid waste.

# Kazakhstan to switch to Latin alphabet by 2025

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“In order to ensure the transition of the Kazakh alphabet from Cyrillic letters to Latin ones, I decree to approve the attached alphabet of the Kazakh language based on the Latin script. The government of Kazakhstan is to set up a national commission to change the Kazakh alphabet to Latin script, organise a gradual switch to Latin script by 2025 and take other measures to implement this decree, including those of an organisational and legislative nature,” the document reads.

The decree, prepared by the working group, went into effect immediately. Control over its execution is assigned to the presidential administration.

The new alphabet consists of 32 letters. Letters of the old Cyrillic alphabet will be replaced by Latin analogues based on their phonetic similarity. Nine characters with apostrophes will be incorporated to signify hissing syllables as well as distinct Kazakh vowels.

Earlier, other versions of the al-

phabet were suggested. The first incorporated digraphs – a group of two successive letters representing a single sound – among other possibilities. The second, as the Akorda reported, took into account the suggestions “received during the public discussions.”

Nazarbayev announced his intention to switch from the Cyrillic-based alphabet to Latin script in April 2012. At the same time, the head of state commissioned developing the schedule of measures needed to implement the language reform by the end of 2017. Books, official documentation and periodicals related to the political and cultural agenda are all subject to mandatory transformation. The process of preparing educational materials and specialists, according to the president, should begin next year.

Kazakhs used Arabic script from the 10th-20th centuries. The Kazakh language was based on Latin script in 1929-1940. The transition to the Cyrillic alphabet occurred in 1940. The Latin alphabet is currently used by most Kazakh diasporas abroad.

# Investigators reopen case into banker’s death in 2004

Staff Report

ASTANA – Kazakhstan’s Prosecutor General’s Office has reopened the investigation into the death of prominent banker Yerzhan Tatishev, who was shot during a hunt in December 2004.

The case was reopened after former business executive Muratkhon Tokmadi’s recent confession in a KTK TV channel documentary to shooting Tatishev during the hunt. Tokmadi claimed in the documentary that Mukhtar Ablyazov ordered the murder. Ablyazov is a fugitive banker who is wanted in Russia and Ukraine and is convicted in absentia in London for the contempt of court with a sentence of 22 months and in Kazakhstan to 20 years in prison for allegedly stealing 7.5 billion euros from BTA bank. A few months after the death of Tatishev, who served as chairman of the board of Bank Turan Alem (BTA) bank, Ablyazov returned to the same lender as its chairman.

Tokmadi, the owner of the KazStroisteklo glass factory, had originally been sentenced to one year in prison for manslaughter by

negligence in relation to the incident that occurred 13 years ago.

“The collected evidence testify to the fact that Tatishev’s death was a result of a deliberate shot in the head. It was not a result of careless handling of weapons. In this regard, the procedural prosecutor, in accordance with the articles 502 and 503 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, sent a conclusion Oct. 25 to the Zhambyl regional court stating there are grounds to annul Tokmadi’s verdict. The prosecutor also sent a petition for resumption of criminal proceedings on newly discovered circumstances,” read the press release from the Prosecutor General’s Office.

The Zhambyl regional court, in turn, sent the case to the Prosecutor General’s Office.

According to the court’s press service, the Oct. 31 decision of the board of criminal cases of the Zhambyl regional court satisfied the appeal by Tatishev’s lawyer and the petition for resumption of proceedings on newly discovered circumstances.

The verdict of the Taraz city court of Sept. 3, 2007, and the decision of the regional collegium for criminal cases of Nov. 1, 2007, were thus annulled.

# One millionth tonne of cargo shipped from Kuryk port

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He noted the event marks the successful execution of President Nursultan Nazarbayev’s instructions to expand Kazakhstan’s presence in the Caspian Sea and develop the country’s transport and logistics potential.

“The existing infrastructure allows reducing the travel time by sea by four hours. The time of the ferry from Baku to Kuryk is 18 hours, while the travel time to the port of Aktau is 22 hours,” he added.

Saktaganov noted the future operation of two railway berths will allow Kuryk to service five ferries a day and handle four million tonnes of cargo each year. The addition of an automobile ferry berth will expand annual transhipment volume to seven million tonnes.

The port water area has been

dredged by excavating 730,000 cubic metres, according to the Kazakhstan Temir Zholy (KTZ) national railway company press service. Work is underway to erect western and eastern fencing malls with reinforced concrete blocks, slabs and tetrapods, and an automobile pier which will simultaneously service two ferries is under construction.

“Port Kuryk is an important link of the Trans-Caspian International Transport route, passing through China, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey. Achieving the number of one million tonnes of cargo is a strategically important step towards the expansion of international transport cooperation and trade ties, as well as the emergence of Kazakhstan as a transport and logistics hub between Europe and Asia,” Kazakhstan Institute

for Strategic Studies research fellow Anna Alshanskaya told The Astana Times.

She noted implementing the Kuryk ferry complex project within the Nurly Zhol state programme will help increase the export potential of Kazakh manufacturing products to European countries via Caspian ports. The time and cost of cargo transit from Kuryk to Baku with the existing maritime infrastructure has also been significantly reduced.

“Consequently, the development of the infrastructure of seaports, on the one hand, will ensure the attraction of foreign trade flows and investments at the expense of reducing transport costs; on the other, it will activate the development of strategically important areas of economic activity in the regions of Kazakhstan,” she added.

# Multilateral strategy to combat corruption discussed at public hearings



By Aigerim Seisembayeva

ASTANA – Public hearings on “Anti-corruption strategy: combining state and social efforts” were held Oct. 13 at the Civil Service Affairs and Anti-Corruption Agency.

The hearings are the result of more than 70 roundtables and other large-scale events sponsored across the country in the last few months to discuss the anti-corruption strategy implementation plan for 2018-2020.

Citizens had an opportunity to contribute ideas for combatting corruption by proposing an event to be included in the plan and more than 500 suggestions were submitted. Parliament deputies, in excess of 200 representatives of the non-governmental sector, business community, political parties,

ambassadors and heads of international organisations’ missions in Kazakhstan attended the public hearings.

Elaborating on the content of the draft plan, agency anti-corruption policy department director Salauat Muksimov noted preparing the draft document incorporated both national and international experience accumulated during three years of implementing new anti-corruption mechanisms.

He added the main efforts would be focused on automating and digitalising processes and procedures for rendering public services and completing monitoring activities, as well as increasing the transparency, openness and accountability of state bodies.

Muksimov spoke about the measures developed to reduce the corruption level in the quasi-public sector.

“The amount of money allocated for purchases in the quasi-public sector is over 3.5 trillion tenge (US\$10.5 billion), which is five times higher than the volume of actual state purchases. The draft plan provides for legislative regulation of purchases by state-owned and national enterprises. It is also important to strengthen ethical standards of employer behaviour at national companies,” he said.

The draft plan introduces the amendments and additions to the anti-corruption legislation associated with improving the system of anti-corruption measures and strengthening the punishment for corrupt practices, which follow from the recommendations from the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) and the national report on combating corruption.

# NATION

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 8, 2017

## Kazakhstan's way to space: realities and prospects

By Aigerim Bulambayeva

ASTANA – The international forum “Kazakhstan’s Way to Space: Realities and Prospects-2017,” held Oct. 19 in the capital, commemorated 60 years since the launch of the first artificial Earth satellite.

Organised by the Ministry of Defence and Aerospace Industry, the forum’s goals included exchanging best practices to use space activity results in solving economic problems, reviewing those results for the past decade and discussing the industry’s development prospects.

In his keynote address, Defence and Aerospace Industry Deputy Minister Marat Nurguzhin spoke about domestic space industry development. He noted one branch of the industry’s activities involves developing and expanding Kazakhstan’s use of the spacecraft orbital constellation. “Regular replacement of satel-



lites is being undertaken. We plan to create and launch the KazSat-2P satellite by 2023 to guarantee the scheduled replacement of the KazSat-2 satellite,” he said.

Nurguzhin later shared some details of the work of the Baiterek Rocket and Space Complex, which will be completed at Baikonur Spaceport and which is currently a joint venture between Kazakhstan and Russia. The pre-

liminary project will be designed by November and the project itself will be completed by September 2018, he said.

“The cost of the project has yet to be determined. As for today, we estimate the cost to be around US\$280 million-US\$310 million. This is the cost of the ground infrastructure only,” he added.

The figures represent Kazakhstan’s investments, as the nation

will be responsible for the ground infrastructure. Russia will provide the funding to develop a carrier rocket as well as enhance the piloting process of a transport ship.

Baiterek is not a project restricted to Kazakhstan and Russia, said Ministry of Defense and Aerospace Industry aerospace committee chair Yerkin Shaimagambetov.

“We are considering both Russian and European proposals on cooperation. Airbus and Thales Alenia Space are among our partner companies,” he added.

The existing Zenit rocket complex, located within Baikonur Spaceport, will be used to implement the Baiterek project. Russia will withdraw the facilities from the lease and transfer them to the Kazakh side. Kazakhstan, in turn, will transfer Zenit to the Baiterek enterprise, which will manage the operation and future modernisation of the complex, said Shaimagambetov.

## Gov’t addresses Industrial and Innovative Dev’t Programme, Astana development



By Dana Omirgazy

ASTANA – Eighteen additional industrial projects worth 399 billion tenge (US\$1.19 billion) are expected to be launched in a Dec. 6 teleconference involving President Nursultan Nazarbayev. They are the result of the State Industrial and Innovative Development Programme for 2015-2019, said Minister for Investments and Development Zhenis Kassymbek during an Oct. 31 government meeting.

“The volume of industrial production for the first nine months of this year reached 6.5 trillion tenge (US\$19.48 billion), increasing 5.7 percent in comparison with the same period of the previous year. At the same time, growth is observed in the pharmaceutical, light industry, metallurgy, machine building, oil refining, food production and chemical industries,” he said.

In the eight months, the manu-

facturing industry, which sends products to 115 countries, increased its export volume to \$9.9 billion, he added. Significant growth has also been observed in agrochemistry, oil refining and ferrous metallurgy.

The project implies removing large industrial facilities from the capital to the agglomeration area by creating three industrial zones, which would also include newly-created industrial enterprises.

Agricultural production is expected to increase 170 percent due to the industry’s diversification and intensification. As a result, the agglomeration area should meet Astana’s food demand in products such as flour, buckwheat, legumes, milk, eggs and poultry.

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Minister of Culture and Sports Arystanbek Mukhamediyev reported on the Shchuchinsk-Burabay resort zone (Akmola region) development plan for 2017-2020 and the Astana Tourism Development Road Map until 2020. The latter consists of 24 events, including attracting domestic and foreign tourists; improving infrastructure and the quality of tourist services; increasing the efficient use and self-repayment of the capital’s culture, sports and public health services and higher education facilities and developing medical tourism, as well as educational tourism activities.

“I believe the adoption of these resolutions will give a positive impetus to the further development of tourism,” said Mukhamediyev.

“Over the past seven years and nine months, 1,080 projects worth 5.5 trillion tenge (US\$16.4 billion) have been commissioned as part of the Industrialisation Map. Approximately 101,000 jobs have been created,” he said.

Prime Minister Bakytzhan Sagintayev noted good progress achieved through the state programme during the first nine months of the year.

## Ministry of Internal Affairs tests electronic investigation, needs funds

By Zhazira Dyussebekova

ASTANA – Kazakh Ministry of Internal Affairs needs 11 billion tenge (US\$32.9 million) for the introduction of criminal case investigation in electronic form, which it tests in several regions, said Oct. 16 Deputy Minister Rashid Zhakupov during the presentation of amend-

ments to the legislation concerning the modernisation of the procedural basis of law enforcement activity. Innovation might be introduced, but the technical base for it is still undeveloped, said official.

“This process is very expensive in terms of allocating funds from the budget. To implement the full technical support of all units that would be involved in

criminal prosecution today, we will need about 11 billion tenge (US\$32.9 million), with every five-year renewal of all the technical equipment of law enforcement agencies. Of course, no one expects to receive this amount at once,” he stressed.

He said that the ministry understands that the digitalisation is future, but criminal prosecution is a specific sphere.

“The main problem is that the use of this pilot in fact, and our calculations, show weak technical equipment of law enforcement agencies in order to go full-scale to such a form of investigation as an electronic investigation,” explained Zhakupov, adding that the same issue is faced in developed countries.

Right now the pilot is tested in Taraz and Astana with the conjunction of Ministry of Finance.

More than 400 cases go in the electronic format. As explained by Zhakupov, the pilot’s task is to reveal all issues that need to be ironed out.

“Today we are practicing this in terms of criminal misdemeanours and crimes of small gravity. Tomorrow, if this is extended to grave and especially serious crimes, then the issue of information security and the inability to penetrate into the investigation itself from the outside will appear.”

Technical, procedural problems are revealed, he added. The ministry promises to work them all up to readiness.

According to him, as soon as the programme is ready, the Ministry of Internal Affairs will start implementing it only where it will be technically possible to equip law enforcement agencies.

## Mother’s House gives hope to single mothers

By Dana Omirgazy

ASTANA – ANA UYI (Mother’s House), a social project sponsored by Kazakh businesspersons, helps single mothers overcome difficulties to prevent leaving children in orphanages. Pregnant women or those with newborns abandoned by their boyfriends or lacking families receive support and find understanding and compassion in these warm places.

“It all started with the question of what to do to ensure that all children in Kazakhstan live in families and grow up in love, rather than in a children’s home. The idea of the social project caused a wide public response and many Kazakh businesspersons joined the project. Already in December 2013, well-known entrepreneurs in Kazakhstan began the



Bibigul Makhmetova

every year,” ANA UYI Public Fund Executive Director Bibigul Makhmetova said in a recent interview with The Astana Times.

The first to join the project was

House in 2013. There are currently 25 houses in 19 Kazakh cities funded by 21 businesspersons.

“The project assists young women in late pregnancy or mothers with a child under 18 months of age who are in a difficult life situation. Mother’s House offers women housing, food and medical care for up to one-one and a-half years. Here they are helped to get a child allowance and medical, legal and psychological advice,” she added.

Mother’s House employees help women mend relations with relatives, learn new skills such as caring for a child, housekeeping and mastering a new profession and finding a job.

“Over the nine months of this year, our houses accepted 578 women with children. Of them, 174 women restored documents with the help of our employees and 88 women applied for housing. In addition, 105 children received specialised medical care and 56 children went to kindergarten. Nine women – graduates of orphanages – received housing from the state. But the most important thing is that more than 2,600 children did not go into orphanages and stayed with their mothers,” noted Makhmetova.

Statistics indicate 7,236 children reside in 140 Kazakh children’s houses. Eighty percent are social orphans – children with one or both parents still alive. As a result, the Adoption Support Centre was launched in 2016 as part of the social project with the mission of training and supporting foster families and promoting a culture of adoption in society.

“For today, consulting offices and schools for foster parents were opened in 17 cities in Kazakhstan. Specialists of the fund provide comprehensive assistance to citizens (families) wishing to take their child (children) from orphanages and children’s homes. In addition, potential adoptive parents are trained in the schools as foster parents. All services are provided to citizens free of charge,” said Makhmetova.

joint work to open crisis centres for young mothers throughout the country. This was the first stage of work to prevent social orphanhood and reduce the number of children who fall into orphanages

Tsesna Corporation board chair Dauren Zhaksybek, who took over the houses in Kostanai and Petropavlovsk. BI-Holding head Aidyn Rakhimbayev and his spouse opened the first Mother’s

# EURASIA&WORLD

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 8, 2017

## Rukhani Janghyru programme unveiled at UNESCO

By Danat Islambek

PARIS – Rukhani Janghyru (Modernisation of Kazakhstan's Identity), the programme unveiled by President Nursultan Nazarbayev in April, was officially presented Oct. 17 at United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) headquarters in the city.

In her welcoming remarks, Nada Al-Nashif, Assistant UNESCO Director-General for Social and Human Sciences, said the organisation was excited to host the introduction, which, among other ventures, envisions promoting Kazakh culture in the international arena. She noted the programme's importance within the context of the International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures (2013-2022), which was launched to help address pressing global challenges through intercultural and inter-religious dialogue.

Al-Nashif reminded the audience of the pivotal role Kazakhstan played both as a co-sponsor and financial supporter of the 10-year campaign and praised Astana's efforts to build understanding among cultures, including by convening the triennial Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions.

Al-Nashif also highlighted the country's multifaceted contribution, referring to the establishment of the Central Asian Regional Glaciological Centre in Almaty as a Category 2 centre.

Aida Balayeva, head of the Ka-



zakh Presidential administration domestic policy department, explained the reasoning behind the programme's presentation at the Paris-based UN agency.

"The ideas put forward in the Rukhani Janghyru programme by the Kazakh President are based on modern trends and relevant not only for Kazakhstan, but the entire international community. The goal of this presentation is to introduce the Kazakh model for open discussion: on the one hand, we expect constructive feedback and new ideas, and on the other, we hope the world community will learn some useful approaches laid down in the programme," she said.

Balayeva noted there is a simple, historic logic behind the initiative.

After 25 years of successful independent development as a nation, Kazakhstan today aspires to join the world's top 30 most developed countries. She said the Kazakhstan 2050 Strategy launched in 2012 is the foundation for the new programme, which seeks to modernise the country's identity.

She also spoke about the world's fast-moving changes, partly due to the emergence of digital technologies. These changes have led Kazakhstan to take specific measures to achieve a breakthrough to a new level of development, including initiating large scale modifications in both the political and economic domains. Among them are a move to redistribute and decentralise powers and concrete steps to spur innovative economic

and technological development. Rukhani Janghyru should be viewed as an integral part of this overarching strategy and its successful execution will require active involvement of the entire society, she added.

Balayeva further briefed the audience on the six national projects launched as part of the programme – transitioning the Kazakh language to the Latin alphabet, new humanitarian knowledge with 100 new textbooks translated into Kazakh, the Tugan Zher (Homeland) project, the country's sacred geography, the modern Kazakh culture in the global world and 100 new faces of Kazakhstan.

As the co-chair of the Modern Kazakh Culture in the Global World project, Balayeva spoke at length about its objectives and approaches. The nation is seeking to promote its people's cultural achievements since 1991 in four major areas – literature, arts, music and theatre/cinema/performance dance – to be presented to the world in the UN's six languages.

The project will begin with nationwide online voting to select pieces of culture in each category, which will then be presented to the international audience. To promote Kazakh literature, project organisers plan to employ a multitude of tools and approaches, including creating an online library of books by Kazakh authors translated into various world languages and collaborating with the largest publishing conglomerates and authoritative literary agents, said Balayeva.

The project also envisions introducing an online platform where the public could access to high-resolution images of artworks housed in the country's largest and most renowned museums. Such a platform would enable users to tour museum galleries virtually and explore physical and contextual information.

In addition to the digital approach to promote Kazakh artists and their works, Balayeva suggested hosting regular biennales in Astana could become important international artistic events.

The roster of speakers also included Minister of Culture and Sports Arystanbek Mukhameduly, Centre for Rapprochement of Cultures Director Karl Baipakov, Institute for European Perspective and Security President Emmanuel Dupuy and Sorbonne University professor Dominique Archambault. The conference was followed by an exhibition featuring historical artefacts and works of contemporary Kazakh artists, writers and poets.

Speaking at the opening of the exhibition, UNESCO Director-General Irina Bokova said the event was yet another tribute to the country's expanding cooperation with UNESCO which opened a window to Kazakh culture in the French capital.

The event concluded with a gala concert featuring the Kurmangazy Kazakh National Conservatory Symphony Orchestra, Astana Ballet artists, Astana Opera singers and famous pop singer Dimash Kudaibergen.

### EXTERNAL NEWS IN BRIEF

Kazakh ambassador to China Shakhmat Nuryshev discussed cooperation between Kazakh and Chinese research institutions with Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) President Wang Weiguang Oct. 31 in Beijing. They considered the prospects of enhancing interaction between CASS and its member institutions and Kazakh think tanks such as the Library of the First President, Institute of World Economy and Politics and Kazakhstan Institute for Strategic Studies. In implementing the Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev's "Course towards the future: modernisation of Kazakhstan's identity" project, the men agreed to mutually translate literature volumes and textbooks into the Chinese and Kazakh languages, as well as organise visits and internships of Kazakh scientists to CASS institutes.

The Kazakh artists' exhibition held in Ankara Nov. 1 celebrated 25 years of Kazakh-Turkish diplomatic relations. Gulmaral Tatibayeva and Natalya Bazhenova, who demonstrated their pieces under the symbolic name "Friendship," presented more than 50 exhibits in different genres. The artists also conducted a master class on Kazakh applied art. "The exhibition is called the Friendship Mobile Project. The name reflects both our friendship with Natalya and the friendship of all nomads. The basis of the whole exhibition is the symbol of the ship. We have many pieces that incorporate this symbol. The ship represents the determination and the power of a female nomad's spirit," said Tatibayeva.

A seminar devoted to presenting the Kazakh mining and metallurgical complex was held in Tokyo. Representatives of 40 Kazakh and Japanese metallurgical companies participated in the event organised by the Kazakh Embassy in Japan in cooperation with the Japan Oil, Gas and Metals National Corporation (JOGMEC). Berikbol Khamzin, chief geologist at Kazgeology, spoke about the innovations adopted by the Kazakh legislature on subsoil use designed to simplify procedures and accelerate the issuance process for obtaining exploration and production rights permits.

Trade Mission 2017, the second Kazakh-Mongolian business forum, was held Oct. 31-Nov. 1 in Ulan-Bator. The event was organised by Kazakh Invest and the Mongolian National Chamber of Commerce and Industry with the support of the Kazakh Embassy in Mongolia. More than 100 small and medium-sized Mongolian enterprises and 14 Kazakh companies participated in the event. Kazakh entrepreneurs met with Mongolian ministry and department officials, as well as with potential business partners, to discuss prospects for expanding trade, economic and investment cooperation between the countries.

Kazakh Ambassador to Azerbaijan Beibit Issabayev spoke during a recent media briefing about the current state of bilateral political, trade and economic cooperation, specifically mentioning the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars (BTK) highway. "BTK can be named as the key link of the Trans-Caspian International Transport Route intercontinental highway, which starts in China and passes through Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey and extends further to Europe. The BTK opening is a historical event. It is a large-scale project that will give impetus to the transit-transport interaction of Asian and European countries located along the Silk Road," he said.

## CIS council of government heads sign array of agreements in Tashkent

By Aigerim Seisembayeva

ASTANA – The Council of Heads of Government of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) reached agreements during its Nov. 3 meeting in Tashkent defining and sharing the customs value of goods, efforts to combat terrorism and land reclamation, among other issues.

The group also reached agreements concerning oil and gas engineering and preparations for the 2020 population census round in the CIS. They also set rules to determine the origin of goods within the CIS and train international road carriers.

No details on the agreements were released.

They also discussed trade and economic relations within the CIS,

including eliminating trade barriers. The council also discussed implementation of the CIS Free Trade Agreement and agreed to hold the next meeting of the Council of Heads of Government of the CIS in spring 2018 in Tajikistan.

On Nov. 2, before attending the council meeting, Kazakh Prime Minister Bakytzhan Sagintayev discussed trade and economic cooperation as well as joint projects in

transit-transport, agriculture and energy with Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev. They also discussed existing agreements and cooperation between the regions of the two states and their business circles.

The Kazakh PM and Uzbek Prime Minister Abdulla Aripov also reviewed the implementation of agreements signed by each country's president. The two heads of government also discussed strengthening bilateral

and interregional cooperation, primarily between the border regions, and increasing trade volumes.

In particular, they considered measures to boost investment cooperation in engineering, the automotive industry, civil aviation, pharmaceuticals, transit and transport infrastructure development, as well as prospects for joint work in the military-technical and aerospace spheres.

## Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan meeting addresses concerns over border trade regulations

By Aigerim Seisembayeva

ASTANA – Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan agreed during an Oct. 18 meeting in Astana of each country's prime ministers to ensure priority crossing at the Kazakh-Kyrgyz border, especially in Kordai, for individuals with personal luggage, regular passenger buses, cars and empty cargo vehicles beginning at midnight October 19.

The meeting to discuss customs, tax, transport, phytosanitary and veterinary issues on the Kazakh-Kyrgyz border was requested Oct.

17 by Kyrgyzstan following Kyrgyz complaints over recent moves by Kazakhstan to ensure the safety and quality of imports coming across the Kyrgyz border.

Kazakhstan announced Oct. 11 that its border service will hold operations along the entire perimeter of the country's frontier to prevent illegal migration, smuggling, penetration of terrorist and criminal groups and individuals. The Kazakh government believes loopholes in Kyrgyz regulations allow commodities from third countries to be re-exported to Kazakhstan in breach of regulations along

the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) external customs border.

"We considered issues of customs and tax administration with regard to relevant rules and regulations of the EAEU and the WTO. For instance, our customs authorities reveal the facts of unreliable declaration by Kyrgyz importers of goods from China during transit through the territory of Kazakhstan. Because of this, we bear direct losses," said Kazakh Prime Minister Bakytzhan Sagintayev after the meeting.

The Kazakh agriculture ministry also announced Oct. 16 it would

reduce cross-border trade of food products with Kyrgyzstan because of the failure of some Kyrgyz exporters to comply with veterinary and phytosanitary norms.

Kyrgyzstan responded by complaining that Kazakhstan's measures were not compliant with existing regional and global trade agreements and caused cargo truck delays at the border.

The meeting to iron out these differences was attended by Sagintayev and Kyrgyz Prime Minister Sapar Isakov as well as numerous department and ministry heads. In addition to agreeing

to give priority to certain crossings at the Kyrgyz-Kazakh border, the delegations agreed to spend the next five days ironing out a road-map for economic relations between the two countries.

Both prime ministers also reaffirmed during the meeting their commitment to continued positive bilateral relations.

"As the President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev repeatedly noted, the relations of the two brotherly states should be exemplary in all respects and become an example of effective cooperation in the region," Sagintayev said.

## Eurasian Intergovernmental Council agrees on member state digitisation programme, transportation policy

Staff Report

ASTANA – The Eurasian Intergovernmental Council (EIC), bringing together the heads of government of EAEU member states, signed agreements Oct. 25 in Yerevan advancing Eurasian Economic Union efforts to digitise member nations and formalise EAEU transportation policy for 2018-2020.

The council meeting was attended by the heads of government of Armenia, Belarus, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Kazakh Prime Minister Bakytzhan Sagintayev.



The attendees signed documents eliminating exemptions

and restrictions within the EAEU internal market for 2018-2019,

establishing an accident investigation body, forming an information exchange system within the common electric power market and a draft agreement on labelling goods by means of identification. The sides also chose the host countries for Eurasian Week exhibition fora in 2018-2020 and signed instructions on a draft agreement on navigation.

They also discussed implementing the EAEU integration framework, advancing previous agreements and strengthening economic ties.

Sagintayev told the gathering he was concerned about the current transformation of inter-

national trade relations, a growing trend towards protectionism and increasing competition between the largest countries for building regional trade zones. He, therefore, urged the EAEU to adapt medium-term national policies to the new conditions.

He also said key policy documents to develop participating countries' economies had been adopted but not implemented because those policies lacked supporting economic analysis.

On the sidelines of the meeting, Sagintayev met with Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan and other EAEU member country officials.

# EURASIA&WORLD

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 8, 2017

## OECD Eurasia Week in Almaty, first in region, focuses on openness and diversification

By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – OECD Eurasia Week under the theme Openness for Shared Prosperity took place in Almaty Oct. 23-25 for the first time outside the organisation's headquarters in Paris. The forum gathered high-level officials from OECD, its member states and partner countries in the Eurasian region, including OECD Secretary-General Angel Gurría and Kazakh Prime Minister Bakytzhan Sagintayev, to discuss ways to promote economic openness and foster policy dialogue in a multilateral framework.

Eurasia Week is a key OECD event within its Eurasia Competitiveness Programme launched in 2008 involving 13 countries of Central Asia, the South Caucasus and Eastern Europe – Afghanistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Moldova, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan. The event joins representatives of 35 OECD member states and Eurasian partner countries to determine ways to strengthen ties.

Bringing Eurasia Week to the region signifies the area's deepening engagement with OECD, while equally demonstrating Eurasia's significance for OECD member states, Gurría noted in his opening remarks.

"We see the growing interest from the region in the OECD instruments and multilateral cooperation," he said.

The decision to organise Eurasia Week in Almaty, made last year in Paris, reveals Kazakhstan's increasingly dynamic involvement in the organisation



and its "thorough and fruitful cooperation," he added.

The partnership between Kazakhstan and the organisation embarked on a new phase in 2015 when the nation became one of the first three countries to implement the OECD Country Programme, which offers partners full involvement with the organisation's best expertise and policy network in carrying out structural reforms to promote prosperity and inclusive and sustainable economic growth. OECD prolonged the programme this year until the end of 2018.

Kazakhstan's involvement in the programme demonstrates the organisation's support of the nation's crucial objective of entering the world's 30 most developed countries by 2050, noted Sagintayev, adding the standards and development level of OECD member states serve as a practical guideline for Kazakhstan in its economic development.

"The OECD recommendations help us conduct a structural reform agenda in a wide range of issues, including public administration, small and medium-sized entrepreneurship policies and green growth. Kazakhstan is

ready to contribute to promoting best practices and share its experience of cooperation with the OECD and the Eurasian countries," he said.

This year's theme is of particular importance for the region, noted Gurría, as it contributes to diversification, a key goal for the Eurasian countries that heavily rely on oil and gas resources.

### Growing oil, gas and metals production a challenge for diversification

Kazakhstan's continuing dependence on oil and gas and metals is one of the main challenges for its economy as well as an impediment for its diversification, said Kazakh Minister of National Economy Timur Suleimenov at a ministerial panel on where participants from Central Asia and Eastern Europe discussed key challenges for their economies.

In 2009, they accounted for 19.7 percent of Kazakhstan's GDP, according to the minister, and after many years of concerted efforts under various state programmes,

their share now stands at 12.7 percent of GDP.

This was achieved despite concurrent major expansion in the raw material sector, he said, adding that while in 2009 Kazakhstan produced around 60 million tonnes of oil, in 2017 it is expected to produce up to 86 million tonnes of oil.

Other factors affecting Kazakhstan's economic development, according to Suleimenov, include rather basic, but inescapable factors – climate, geography and expenses.

Comparing Kazakhstan to the Netherlands, which has a similar size of the population, yet 65 times smaller than Kazakhstan, Suleimenov explained the need to invest much more in the development of infrastructure.

"Infrastructure and transportation costs are a lot more in our economic structure. We have to dig deep, heat up more, and transport further. And that impacts our interaction with our neighbours," he said.

Suleimenov noted, however, that Kazakhstan has a consistent vision of how to overcome those challenges reflected in the nation's economic programmes such as Strategy 2025.

"We have an even longer term

plan in Strategy 2050. All of these strategies talk about diversification," he said.

### Openness not a goal in itself

Openness is not a goal in itself, added Gurría, and the Kazakh government's efforts affirm that.

"It needs to be accompanied with the right structural and social flanking policies to promote better opportunities and enhanced well-being for all," he said.

"Openness is worth preserving: it can bring greater prosperity, innovation and diversity. The OECD is committed to working with Eurasia and our partners around the globe to develop the analysis, policies and the will to build a more open, transparent and fair global economy. The region is ready and so are we," noted Gurría.

In his turn, Uzbekistan Deputy Prime Minister Nodir Otajonov stressed the importance of the forum's theme for all countries.

"Openness for shared prosperity, the theme of the first Eurasia Week held in the region, is relevant to all of us," he said. "Uzbekistan is taking radical measures to ensure steady economic growth, reform public administration and increase institutional attractiveness."

Economic openness is equally critical for Tajikistan, said the country's Deputy Prime Minister Azim Ibrohim, adding there are still many challenges, including the economy's huge dependence on remittances.

"We have developed a comprehensive set of measures to support businesses," he noted. "We are welcoming upcoming cooperation with the OECD and neighbouring countries."

### EU support to remain steady

Deputy Managing Director of the European External Action Service Luc Devigne emphasised the importance of the region to the European Union in his remarks.

"Countries to the East of EU are very important for us," said Devigne, highlighting the EU's commitment to investing in long-term stabilising partnership with the region.

He also pointed out a significant potential in the development of cooperation between the Union and Kazakhstan. "The EU is the first trading partner and the first investor in Kazakhstan and we are very happy that two years ago we signed the Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (EPCA) and I am sure it will strengthen our ties further," noted Devigne.

The EU is equally the largest foreign donor and the largest contributor to development assistance in the region, especially in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, he said, and maintains its commitment to supporting political and economic reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan.

"I believe it would be impossible to ensure stable development of Central Asia without Afghanistan," added Devigne.

He assured the countries in the region of the European Union's continued support.

"I know the geopolitical environment is challenging, but it is still possible to see stars from the bottom of a well when the sun is shining," said Devigne, referring to the quote from Robert Byron's 'The Road to Oxiana' about the poet's account of his travels in Persia and Afghanistan.

## Latest Syrian peace talks in Astana focus on humanitarian issues

Continued from Page A1

In the joint statement, Iran, Russia and Turkey asserted there was no military solution to the Syrian conflict, rather the commitment to the political process guided by the UN Security Council resolution 2254 (2015) should prevail.

Concluding the two-day talks, the three guarantor states praised the contribution of the four de-escalation zones agreed-upon during the sixth round of Astana process in September.

"We emphasise the significant reduction of violence on the ground in Syria as a result of measures taken to strengthen and maintain the ceasefire regime, including launching the de-escalation areas and creating the security zones," said Kazakh Minister for Foreign Affairs Kairat Abdrakhmanov as he read out the document.

"We hope that all the agreements reached today are fully implemented. All the items on the agenda, including the issues related to hostages, detainees, missing persons, humanitarian demining and other issues discussed during the sev-

enth round in Astana, are of great importance for all parties," Abdrakhmanov added on his behalf.

### Focus on humanitarian issues

During the negotiations, the guarantor states stressed the need to take confidence-building measures referring to such humanitarian issues as the release of detainees, handover of bodies and finding missing persons. The parties involved in the negotiations, however, have yet to come to an agreement.

The Syrian opposition drew special attention to the issue of detainees during the talks.

"Another thing we are here for are detainees, forcibly detained people, and we have around quarter of a million people. We do not know how many of them are still alive. So this is a very important issue for every Syrian," noted advisor to the Syrian opposition Yahya al-Aridi. Certain people impede the progress in achieving the objective, he added.

During a press conference wrap-

ping up the talks, the Syrian opposition criticised Iran and the Syrian government for hampering the process of adopting the document on detainees.

"We signed documents [on the release of detainees] and there was agreement approved by Russia and Turkey. We had discussions in the presence of the UN, which supported it [the document]. Who is against – Iran and regime," said al-Aridi, stressing the opposition's firm commitment to push the issue forward and raise it during the upcoming Geneva talks.

"All the present parties supported it. The regime does not want to resolve the issue and we do not want to put that issue aside," he added.

Not surprisingly, the joint statement from the guarantor states emphasised "the need for the conflicting parties to take confidence-building measures, including the release of detainees/abductees and the handover of the bodies as well as identification of missing persons, to create better conditions for political process and lasting ceasefire."

### Congress of national Syrian reconciliation in Sochi put forward by Russia

In the talks, Russian President Vladimir Putin's Special Representative for Syrian settlement Alexander Lavrentiev reaffirmed his country's initiative to organise a congress for Syrian national dialogue and reconciliation. The forum is expected to be held in Sochi due to security reasons, he added.

"We have been discussing the place for a while. We reviewed different options. We would certainly like to organise such important intra-Syrian forum in Syria itself, but with the current situation that does not allow for ensuring security, so we decided to hold it in Russia," said Lavrentiev at a press conference.

It is not yet clear whether the congress will be held, however, as the Syrian opposition already questioned the motives behind it.

The Syrian government delega-

tion, however, supported the initiative and expressed its firm commitment to that.

"As for national dialogue forum, it is the result of coordinated activities which continue between Russia and Iran. Given the situation at the front and decreasing activity of terrorists, it is time to hold such kind of conference and we are ready to participate. The forum will be held in Russia and we think we can trust Russia as a friendly state," said al-Jaafari.

In their joint statement, Russia, Turkey and Iran agreed "to discuss in consistency with the UN-led Geneva process the Russian Federation's proposal to convene a Congress of the national dialogue about which the Russian side shared information with the guarantors."

### Astana Process supplements the Geneva talks, says Nazarbayev

Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev met Oct. 31 with the heads of Russian, Turkish,

Iranian delegations as well as a delegation of observers from the U.S., Jordan and the UN.

The Astana Process enhances the efficiency of the Geneva talks, said Nazarbayev, emphasising the positive results of the previous rounds.

"You have solved the problem of de-escalation of military actions in several regions. You have determined further mechanisms. The humanitarian situation is improved. It is important to preserve the ceasefire regime," noted the Kazakh President, as he addressed the delegations.

"Any kind of negotiations and dialogue is a path to the future. We all want a peaceful solution to this issue. It is impossible to fight terrorism if the efforts of all countries are not united and if there is no single coalition. We are making every effort to create the necessary conditions to continue negotiations," Nazarbayev said.

The next Astana Process talks are expected to take place in late December.

## Kazakh President thanks UAE Crown Prince for support

By Frol Leandro

ASTANA – Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev thanked the United Arab Emirates for its support during an Oct. 24 meeting in Abu Dhabi with the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan.

"You always support us in the international arena and in the economic sphere, and we have

established warm relations with you over these years, I want to express my gratitude for the fact that you pay special attention to Kazakhstan," President Nazarbayev said according to an account of the meeting provided by the Akorda press service.

Nazarbayev also noted planned joint petrochemistry, agriculture and nuclear industry projects and praised the UAE's development of modern technologies.

"There is one wise saying:

if you want to correspond to the future, then start to change today. You are following this path," President Nazarbayev said.

The Crown Prince also praised relations between the two countries.

"We are learning a lot from you, you are implementing reforms in accordance with the demands of the times. Kazakhstan is developing steadily thanks to your far-sighted policy," said Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan.



Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan (L) and President Nursultan Nazarbayev.

Photo credit: Akorda.kz

# ECONOMY

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 8, 2017

## Privatisation programme sells 291 entities worth \$337.5 million

By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – The national privatisation programme for 2016-2020 has seen the sale of 291 of 887 entities earlier slated for sale for 112.7 billion tenge (US\$337.5 million) through Oct. 1, reported Kazakh Minister for Finance Bakhyt Sultanov during the Oct. 17 government session.

He noted the sales include 23 state-owned entities for 8.3 billion tenge (US\$24.85 million), 162 in communal ownership for 33.1 billion tenge (US\$99.1 million) and 106 in the quasi-public sector for 71.3 billion tenge (US\$213.5 million).

At present, 211 entities on the list will either be reorganised or liquidated. The government plans to sell 473 entities with 251 already offered, including 112 entities sold for 55.6 billion tenge (US\$166.5 million).

“The results of the analysis meant to examine the efficiency of the sales demonstrate that the total value of the sold entities is 17.4 percent more than their balance value,” said Sultanov.

In line with President Nursultan Nazarbayev’s instruction, the government has been carrying out an ambitious privatisation programme since 2014 to reduce the state share in the economy up to 15 percent of the nation’s GDP, a figure corresponding to the level of Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) member states. The government expects the measures will bolster the private sector and attract investments, funds needed for emerging economies such as Kazakhstan.



Bakhyt Sultanov

The 2014-2016 privatisation programme resulted in the sale of more than 30 percent of 831 entities owned by the state and quasi-public sector. The privatisation plan for 2016-2020 incorporating a new list of entities began in January 2016.

“Currently, the programme is 74.3 percent complete,” noted Sultanov.

Privatisation of 24 entities are of particular importance this year, he added, including 20 currently under the control of national holdings and the state-owned Astana Airport, Astana Konak Yui, KazMed-Tech and the National Scientific Medical Centre.

Kazakh Minister for Economy Timur Suleimenov reported on changes made in the budget code as per Nazarbayev’s instruction.

“The changes are about the transfer of funds generated from privatisation to the National Fund. The draft decree is currently in state bodies awaiting their approval,” he said.

The ministry also conducted an inventory of subordinate organisations that will remain under state ownership, he added, including 6,523 organisations with social entities such as kindergartens, schools and hospitals accounting for 85 percent of the list.

## Industrialisation initiative results in economic growth

Staff Report

ASTANA – Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev said that around 1,060 projects were implemented and 100,000 jobs created as part of the industrialisation programme at an Oct. 16 meeting with the Minister for Investments and Development Zhenis Kassymbek.

The head of state emphasised the importance of implementing state and sectoral programmes and noted the interim results of its implementation.

“Around 1,060 projects were introduced worth 5.2 trillion tenge (US\$15.5 billion) and 100,000 jobs were created as part of the industrialisation programme. Items worth 8 trillion tenge (US\$24 billion) have been produced. This is the most important achievement for the country. We are producing 500 types of products that haven’t been produced before,” said Nazarbayev.

The Nurly Zhol infrastructure development programme’s results were also on the agenda.

“Five thousand kilometres of roads were constructed and reconstructed since 2010. Over 4,500 kilometres will be put into operation until 2020. Now 85 percent



of the national highway networks are in good condition. The Western Europe-Western China roads and Astana-Temirtau, Almaty-Kapchagai, Beineu-Shetpe, Kokshetau-Petropavlovsk roads were commissioned. Also, the largest bridge in Central Asia across the Irtysh River was constructed. Around 75,000 people were involved in these projects. Ninety percent of all building materials were produced in Kazakhstan,” he said.

The President also noted the economic importance of the Kuryk seaport on the Caspian Sea and the Khorgos, the International Centre of Trans-Boundary Cooperation, on the border with China.

More than 10 million square me-

tres of housing were built as part of the Nurly Zher initiative.

“We are building housing in nine regions. All programmes are aimed at improving the lives of our citizens,” he said.

Nazarbayev said some issues require increased attention of the ministry.

“The state industrialisation programme has not yet ensured diversification of the country’s economy. The share of processing industry in GDP has not changed significantly. All the necessary instruments are available to carry out the tasks set. The ministry is responsible for the implementation of economic and social priorities,” he said.

## Economy expected to grow at least 3.4 percent by year’s end, says minister

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – Kazakhstan’s economy retained a 4.3-percent growth rate from January-September and is expected to grow 3.4 percent by the end of the year, said Minister of National Economy Timur Suleimenov at an Oct. 17 government meeting. Macroeconomic stability, investment activity and favourable conditions in foreign markets influenced the trend, in addition to initiatives taken as part of the state and sectoral programmes.

“The industry, construction, trade, transport and communication sectors became the main drivers of growth. The industry sector shows a steady growth of 8.3 percent since the beginning of the year,” said Suleimenov.

Mining volume increased 11.3 percent and manufacturing by 5.7 percent. Pharmaceuticals, light industry, food, and beverage and petroleum production also demonstrated significant growth. Ferrous metallurgy production rose 7.8 percent; non-ferrous, 6.6 percent.

Agricultural growth remains at 1.9 percent, while the construction industry rose from 0.1 percent to 3.5 percent in the nine-month period.

“Positive growth dynamics in industry, agriculture and construction is observed in the regions,” he said.

Transportation services increased 4.7 percent, trade and communications by 3 percent and real estate transactions by 2.1 percent.

The volume of investments in fixed assets increased by 4.4 percent. The greatest increase in investments was reported in trade, construction and industry due to ongoing modernisation in the heat and water supply network.

The growth of investments in fixed assets was due to internal sources, while external financing sources decreased, said Suleimenov.

The gross inflow of foreign direct investment increased by 8.6 percent (US\$10.5 billion) in the first half of the year. The country’s international reserves were \$89.4 billion due to the 10.2-percent growth of gold and foreign currency reserves.

Suleimenov further informed that Kazakhstan’s external trade turnover reached \$48.7 billion, showing a growth of 26.4 percent, with export volumes growing by 32.2 percent to \$30.3 billion and imports increasing



Timur Suleimenov

17.9 percent to \$18.4 billion. He credited the growth to favourable conditions on global markets, including higher prices this year for Kazakhstan’s main export commodities.

The socio-economic development forecast was revised according to the GDP growth rate for 2016 and indicators for the current year.

Nominal GDP in 2017 is projected to be 51,855.3 billion tenge (US\$155.4 billion), which would be 2,114.7 billion tenge (US\$6.3 billion) higher than the indicator approved in February. The per capita GDP is expected to increase to \$8,700.

### ECONOMIC NEWS IN BRIEF

Social health insurance fund contributions by employers and individual entrepreneurs reached approximately 6 billion tenge (US\$17.9 million) in October, reported newtimes.kz. Receipts for July-October were 18.6 billion tenge (US\$55.5 million). “Of these, the amount of payments of employers for compulsory social health insurance was 15.02 billion tenge (US\$44.8 million) or nearly 81 percent of the total amount of income. The amount of contributions of individual entrepreneurs and persons working under contracts of civil law was 3.54 billion tenge (US\$10.56 million) or approximately 19 percent,” said the report.

Food products are rising in price, reported energyprom.kz. With the end of the warm season, vegetables have become more expensive per kilogramme: cucumbers rose in price to 292.6 tenge (US\$0.87), potatoes to 119.5 tenge (US\$0.35) and tomatoes to 306.2 tenge (US\$0.90). Imported oranges increased for a month to 568.1 tenge (US\$1.69) and bananas to 434.5 tenge (US\$1.29) per kilogramme. To stabilise prices and strengthen ties between agricultural producers and end customers, the Atameken National Chamber of Entrepreneurs is considering creating wholesale distribution centres.

Tourism in Almaty and Almaty region is being enhanced through the regional Tourism Cluster Association under the auspices of the World Bank, reported ortcom.kz. Nine million tenge (US\$26,856) allocated from the local budget this year was used to develop design estimates to construct an 11-kilometre regional road from the Almaty-Narynkol highway to Charyn Canyon. Approximately one billion tenge (US\$2.98 million) is expected to be assigned from the local budget to repair a 34-kilometre segment of the regional road from Kopa railway station to the Karabastau settlement, said regional akim (governor) Amandyk Batalov. The segment leads to the Tanbaly State Museum Reserve, included in the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) list of cultural heritage. Repair work is planned from 2018-2020.

Twenty Aktobe region enterprises are modernising this year, reported 24.kz. Innovations have already been introduced at 15 sites; the rest of the work on technological improvements will be completed in the next two months. Approximately 20 billion tenge (US\$59.68 million) was allocated for the work. Thirty large-scale productions will be modernised in the region in the next five years, which will expand factory production lines and increase the number of jobs, said regional akim (governor) Berdibek Saparbayev. He also noted significant indicators in other areas, as the region is the leader in manufacturing growth. During the first nine months of this year, products worth more than one billion tenge (US\$2.98 million) were manufactured. The region has also increased construction volume more than 10 percent, with more than 140 residential buildings constructed this year under the Nurly Zher programme.

The South Kazakhstan region has become the leader in the number of small and medium-sized entities (SMEs), as more than 15 percent of the country’s business entities are located there, reported abctv.kz. The number of operating SMEs increased to 177,709, a 106.2-percent increase compared to the same period last year, according to Bатырхан Курманseit, head of the region’s department for entrepreneurship, industrial-innovative development and tourism. As of Aug. 1, the country has 1,157,092 SMEs, approximately 15.4 percent of which are in South Kazakhstan. The region is followed by Almaty (172,880) and the Almaty region (111,933).

## Country drops one spot in Doing Business report...

Continued from Page A1

While the nation’s ranking fell one point, its Distance to Frontier (DTF) improved to 75.44 versus 74.38 in 2017.

Beginning in 2014, the World Bank rating has been calculated based on the DTF measure – the distance of each economy to the “frontier,” which represents the best performance observed on each indicator across all economies since the 2005 Doing Business sample. An economy’s DTF ranges on a scale from 0-100 with 0 representing the lowest performance and 100 representing the frontier.

New Zealand and Singapore once again presented the best results, with DTF measured at 86.55 and 84.57, respectively.

Compiled for the 15th year, the Doing Business report examines regulatory standards that either facilitate or hinder the development of business throughout the entire cycle of activities. It assesses aspects of doing business as such starting a business, dealing with construction permits, getting electricity, registering property, getting credit, protecting minority investors, trading across borders, paying taxes, enforcing contracts and resolving insolvency.

## Farmers harvest 21.9 million tonnes of grain in 2017

By Aigerim Bulambayeva

ASTANA – Kazakh farmers harvested 21.9 million tonnes of grain this year for a yield of 14.3 quintals per hectare.

The harvesting area increased by 1.1 billion hectares compared to 2016, said First Vice Minister of Agriculture Kairat Aituganov at an Oct. 23 government meeting.

He also noted that the proportion of third class wheat was 63 percent, compared to 44 percent last year. The proportion of gluten containing wheat reached 34 percent, compared to 8 percent in 2016.

By the end of this harvesting season 3.4 million tonnes of bar-

ley were collected, which exceeds the planned indicator by 600,000 tonnes. This is the result of the crops’ diversification project. Diversification and reorientation towards production of priority crops enabled farmers to double their gross output given the same area of 1.4 million hectares, and generated revenue of 119 billion tenge (US\$354.2 million) instead of last year’s 57 billion tenge (US\$169.6 million).

“Final statistical data on plant breeding will be known by the end of this year, but, according to the operational data, we can already tell that the targeted indicators have been achieved,” reported Aituganov.



# BUSINESS

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 8, 2017

## BUSINESS NEWS IN BRIEF

The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) is providing a five-year loan in tenge equivalent to \$11 million to Ramstore, Kazakhstan's food retailer, according to the bank's press release. The loan will help Ramstore modernise and redevelop its flagship shopping mall in the Samal district of Almaty, with the multi-functional trade complex to open its doors in November. "With our loan we are promoting foreign investment in Kazakhstan, creating new jobs and facilitating access to better-quality food retail services across the country. Providing our loan in local currency makes working with the EBRD even more attractive to Ramstore Kazakhstan as we help the company to avoid exchange rate fluctuations," said EBRD Director for Kazakhstan Agris Preimanis. According to the press release, the Kazakh retail sector was strongly impacted by the country's recent economic slowdown, which affected consumer purchasing power. The economy has recently showed signs of stabilisation and recovery, it noted.

Borte Milka dairy farm will soon launch a milk processing plant in Ordabasy district of the South Kazakhstan region, according to the region administration press service. The facility, with the capacity to process up to 50 tonnes of milk per day, intends to produce cream, sour cream, kefir (a fermented milk drink) and six types of yogurt. The complex, the only robotic dairy farm in the region, will soon start accepting milk from small farmers, according to company representatives. The plant has 2.4 billion tenge (US\$7.7 million) in production investments.

Marble meat from the East Kazakhstan region will be sold to large processing enterprises, shopping centres and restaurants in Almaty, according to the city's enterprise and industrial and innovative development department. "Today in the East Kazakhstan region there are 96 feeding grounds with more than 28,000 cattle of highly productive meat breeds – Angus, Hereford and Charolais from Canada, the United States and Australia. In this regard, we arrived in Almaty regarding the creation of a distribution centre for the supply of our elite meat," said regional deputy akim (governor) Shakkar Baibekov. During the talks, the sides noted interregional cooperation has resulted in an increased supply of dairy products from the East Kazakhstan region to Almaty. The 2016 volume of 416 tonnes has increased almost 2.5 times this year.

A plant producing canned camel meat, the winner of the Ministry of Education and Science contest, will be launched in Almaty in 2018, according to inform.kz. The state has allocated 151.3 million tenge (US\$452,000) via the Science Foundation to implement the project and a private partner has invested 7.5 million tenge (US\$22,400), as well provided a building for production. The initial assortment will include canned stew in its pure form, as well as stew with the addition of buckwheat and rice. The range of products will be expanded as demand grows, said project head Zhuldyz Suleimenova.

Moody's Investors Service has affirmed Kaspi Bank global scale ratings at B1 with a positive outlook and upgraded the national scale rating to Baa2.kz. Moody's rating action, with the change to a positive outlook, reflects improving asset quality indicators with decreased credit costs, improved coverage of problem loans by reserves and strengthening profitability metrics. Kaspi Bank also maintains a high capital buffer and ample liquidity cushion. At the same time, the bank's ratings remain constrained by high reliance on the risky consumer finance segment and FX mismatches, which require relatively costly hedging, according to the statement.

## Cryptocurrencies are natural evolution of payment systems, says expert

By Aigerim Bulambayeva

ASTANA – The popularity of cryptocurrencies, and the scepticism around them, are, paradoxically, on the rise. In an interview with The Astana Times, Nazarbayev University School of Business Dean Dr. Patrick Duparcq spoke about the scrutiny around cryptocurrency and its future in Kazakhstan and throughout the world.

Duparcq is a recognised technology strategist and visionary with 20 years of expertise in forecasting, marketing and implementing. His current activities include technology forecasting and providing application frameworks and strategies for businesses, specifically in digital and global marketing.

In essence, cryptocurrency is a unit means of exchange where the value of the exchange unit is determined by the global exchanges in that currency. Unlike regular national currencies, governments cannot manipulate cryptocurrency exchanges, for all transactions are in an encrypted shared ledger. Therefore, cryptocurrency is – at least theoretically – a more truthful representation of the real value.

Though this is an apparent advantage, it comes at a certain cost.

"Cryptocurrencies are a more realistic reflection of the currency value than traditional currencies, which are easily manipulated by governments. On the other hand, governments sometimes need monetary policy to stimulate the economy or cool down the economy. A cryptocurrency in its purest form would eliminate this very important tool for the government," said Duparcq.

While the fact that cryptocurrencies undermine monetary policy lays the groundwork for scepticism among experts, commoners are more concerned with the anonymity issues.

"A cryptocurrency holder can send exactly the amount to the merchant or recipient with no further information like credit card information. On the other hand, governments sometimes need tracking to detect criminal activity," said Duparcq.

Whether cryptocurrency can gain ground in Kazakhstan is another concern, but Duparcq's predictions are rather positive.

"Doubting the future of cryptocurrencies is akin to doubting the future of the Internet,



Patrick Duparcq

which was quite common in the 1990s. Cryptocurrencies are just a natural evolution of payment systems. Systems have evolved from totally reliable on physical assets to unrelated to physical assets," he said.

He added there is a natural need to depart from cash towards a more efficient means of payment and cryptocurrency, along with e-pay, as one of the viable options of cashless transactions.

"David Chaum, one of the early pioneers in virtual currencies, recognised early on that the cost of producing and administering money bills and metal coins is an unnecessary drain on the economy. For instance, in Kazakhstan this 'cost of cash' is estimated to be around 1.5 percent of Kazakh-

stan's GDP, which is roughly \$2 billion," said Duparcq.

If the economy operated without cash, though not necessarily through cryptocurrencies, the money spent as the "cost of cash" could have been invested in infrastructure, education or other fields with a better yield. That said, for cryptocurrencies to thrive and actually have a future in Kazakhstan, or any other country, a list of certain preconditions must be met.

Some of the main features of a successful cryptocurrency are simplicity and universality, said Duparcq. Cryptocurrency must be easy to use online, a smartphone or other device and be accepted everywhere. Other essential characteristics include currency conversion and trustworthiness, and the government must ensure that trustworthiness by backing it up.

Despite the popular opinion that cryptocurrency is deliberately designed in a way to avoid third parties and intermediaries, including government interference, true believers would strongly disagree and argue that "non-regulation" is at its very core.

"The ability for the government to have a monetary policy, to fight crime and to provide trust in a cryp-

tocurrency would require some level of regulation," said Duparcq.

He made the analogy between the Internet and Intranets. Cryptocurrencies, in the form currently known to us, are akin to the Internet. Enhanced cryptocurrencies, backed by the government and yet to be created, are like Intranets.

"For internal security, companies use Internet technology in a closed network (Intranet). This enables them to use all the benefits of Internet technology without some of the security risks that come with a totally open system," said Duparcq.

The aforementioned conditions must apply to any cryptocurrency that strives to achieve enduring success. A report in August noted two Kazakh-based cryptocurrencies – altyncoin and eurasiaincoin – are to be released in the second half of 2018.

"They can have a future other than short term speculative opportunities if the preconditions are in place," he said.

"In ancient times, people had pieces of gold with them for their transactions. We went past that and I strongly believe that in 20-30 years from now there will be very little cash, if any at all," added Duparcq.

## Venture fund for financing start-ups to be based on AIFC

Staff Report

ASTANA – A venture fund providing early financing for start-ups will be created based on the Astana International Financial Centre (AIFC), said Ministry of Education and Science committee chair Bolatbek Abdrasilov during a Central Communications Service press conference.

The pilot project, with the goal of stimulating productive innovations, is being implemented within the loan agreement ratified Feb. 2, 2016 between Kazakhstan and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development. The effort, to be executed in 2016-2020 with a \$110 million budget, is aimed at demonstrating the commercial viability of both high-quality research and technology and early funding institutions.

"There are plans to establish an early-stage venture fund in 2018 on the basis of the Astana International Financial Centre. The fund will be created to provide investments for technological start-ups and start-ups with high added value," said Abdrasilov.

The project consists of five main components – developing the innovation knowledge base, forming innovative consortia, consolidating the technology commercialisation cycle, improving the national innovation system coordination program and implementing the projects.

Creating the venture fund is included in the third stage.

"Currently, an international consultant from Israel has been involved in the implementation of this component, which is developing a programme to support exist-

ing technology commercialisation offices at universities in Kazakhstan and opening offices abroad and will prepare several models from which the most viable will be selected by AIFC," he added.

Two grant programs were conducted in 2016-2017 in conjunction with developing the innovation knowledge base. As a result, 43 subprojects were selected for financing.

A tender was launched in September offering grant financing for production sector consortiums. The goal of the programme is to ensure cooperation and create consortia between scientific organisations and manufacturing enterprises to introduce technologies aimed at solving the system's tasks in the industry.

"In total, 4 billion tenge (USD \$12 million) was provided for

grants of the consortium of the production sector and applications were completed on Oct. 20. A total of 45 applications were submitted, including 17 applications for the creation of scientific cooperation centres and 28 for technology consortia. Next year, there are plans to launch a grant programme for the development of social and inclusive innovations in Kazakhstan," said Abdrasilov.

## Kazakhstan opens office in Skolkovo

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – The Autonomous Cluster Fund "Park of Innovative Technologies" has opened a representative office in Russia's Skolkovo Technopark to support cooperation between Kazakh and Russian high tech companies and boost the Digital Kazakhstan programme.

Establishing the office, accomplished under the programme, will help synchronise the digital economies of Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) countries.

"Kazakhstan is happy that we will have our representative office in Skolkovo. Its opening will create the necessary conditions and will provide an opportunity for our start-ups to work in the market of the Eurasian Economic Union," said Kazakh Deputy Prime Minister Askar Zhumagaliyev at the opening ceremony, reported Kazinform.

Kazakhstan will be sending representatives of companies which aim to work in the Russian market using its infrastructure, said Autonomous Cluster Fund park director Sanzhar Kettebekov. He added Russian start-ups will be attracted to Kazakhstan's market as well.

Kazakhstan will provide mining and metallurgical complex laboratories to create a test site at an operating plant. The site will be used to evaluate the latest solutions for

Industry 4.0, essentially the Internet of things. The project will provide a unique platform, even at the world level, and Skolkovo residents will no doubt be interested in trying their forces and solutions in real conditions, said Kettebekov.

The representative office will work on cryptocurrencies, blockchain and smart city technologies, which are in great demand in Russia. Kettebekov noted Kazakhstan has companies working on similar projects, but noted a large consortium is needed to solve cumbersome tasks such as industrial digitisation.

Skolkovo Technopark general director Renat Batyrov confirmed the demand of Russian companies interested in cooperating with Kazakh companies, adding they are prepared to provide all the necessary conditions and opportunities at the office.

"We have been cooperating with Kazakhstan's Park of Innovative Technologies for several years and we see that there is a demand for cooperation with Kazakh companies, which is confirmed by Russian companies. There are successful examples of interaction and vice versa, there are Kazakh companies that are interested in entering the Russian market. In order to meet this demand and make it more successful, we made a joint decision to open the Kazakhstan representative office in Skolkovo," he said.

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# EDITORIAL & OPINION

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 8, 2017

## Digital Kazakhstan programme key to country's development

The Astana International Financial Centre (AIFC) signed a memorandum of cooperation in October with EXANTE, a Maltese technology investment company, signalling their intention to cooperate on new digital projects.

The memorandum of cooperation confirmed the AIFC's interest in blockchain technology, which is widely praised as one of the most significant economic developments of the past few years, and represented the first steps of progress between the AIFC and a company renowned for its expertise in bridging forward-thinking government institutions with new technologies.

One of the proposed projects is the AIFC's adoption of a cryptocurrency platform named Stasis, which will serve as a foundation for "a new digital asset secured by fiat." What this means is that a new digital cryptocurrency operating on a blockchain platform will be secured, supported and regulated by government decree, which in turn will be informed by experts in blockchain technology.

Through regulation, the AIFC will be able to mitigate the traditional risks associated with cryptocurrencies, whilst allowing investors to enjoy distinct benefits. For example, Stasis will enable virtually instant payments with no risk of devaluation or hyperinflation for the digital asset, and as the CEO of Stasis Gregory Klumov noted, there will also be several indisputable advantages of "transparency, immutability... and reduced cost."

Although this project has only just begun, getting to this stage is the culmination of much work by the Kazakh government, which has created a working group to develop rules and regulations for the digital assets market. Governor of the Astana International Financial Centre Kairat Kelimbetov himself praised "Astana's leading financial regulators [who] have already commenced their work and are laying the foundation for Kazakhstan's fin-tech ecosystem... [so that] the AIFC can become an international hub for blockchain operations."

The memorandum of cooperation between the AIFC and EXANTE also represents a big step forward for the Digital Kazakhstan government programme. This state-led initiative was launched earlier this year and has seen departments throughout the Kazakh government engage in discussions and debates to facilitate interdepartmental and sector-wide efforts to modernise Kazakhstan's economy.

The Digital Kazakhstan programme specifically aims to facilitate Kazakhstan's digital modernisa-

tion by focusing on four key priorities: creating a high-speed and secure digital infrastructure; digital transformation within all appropriate sectors of the economy; government proactivity in digital affairs; and the development of competencies and skills to permit a creative and digital society. Implementation has begun throughout government, with institutions, departments and administrative bodies all encouraged to evaluate areas where digital transformation could have a positive impact on public services.

This has already yielded results. For example, the National Bank of Kazakhstan recently announced that it is exploring the creation of a mobile application for the population to conduct transactions to buy and sell securities using blockchain technology. In this instance, the underlying blockchain platform would be used for the accounting of executed deals and for ensuring the safety and inalterability of information on transactions, showing how new technologies can add security and reliability through untypical means.

There are also a number of larger projects expected to be launched over the next few years. Digital infrastructure initiatives, such as the creation of a technology hub where start-ups and entrepreneurs are given the resources to innovate and prosper, will bring tangible benefits to both the Kazakh population and the region more widely. All this will also directly contribute to Kazakhstan's development at a time when it powers on in its trajectory into the world's 30 most developed states.

Although news about cryptocurrencies and blockchain technology is often deemed inaccessible owing to its specialist terminology, the news of this prospective collaboration between EXANTE and the AIFC is significant in much broader sense. With appropriate consultation around its implementation and specialist counsel about proper legal regulation, the AIFC stands to be one of the first prominent institutions worldwide to incorporate blockchain technology in a regulated and intelligent manner.

At the same time, this is just a single example in a growing trend. Through these announcements and digital initiatives, we are seeing the Digital Kazakhstan programme solidify Astana's role as regional hub for innovation, and Kazakhstan's international standing as an adopter of the world's newest technologies. Only time will tell what the future holds, but we can all be sure that the Digital Kazakhstan programme is going to play an important role in shaping it.

## A well deserved prize and a token of stronger cooperation to come

When King Abdullah II of Jordan paid an official visit to Kazakhstan on November 1 and met with President Nursultan Nazarbayev, both sides discussed bilateral relations, mainly focusing on trade and economic cooperation. But in addition to this, there was another significant moment. The President of Kazakhstan presented to the King of Jordan the Nazarbayev Prize for a Nuclear-Weapons-Free World and Global Security for the king's contribution to regional stability, global security and steadfast stance against war and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

The prize itself, and its first recipient, was first announced in August 2016. It is easy to see why the leader of Jordan deserved it. Jordan's commitment to global peace and security in recent years has been noteworthy. The country took in more than 1.5 million Syrian refugees during the peak of the Syrian crisis last year. Jordan has also played an important role in promoting peace in the Middle East, including through the establishment of a nuclear-weapons-free zone in the region.

The hope is that the Nazarbayev Prize, which will be awarded every two years by a special committee, will urge other international actors to more vigorously pursue a world free of nuclear weapons.

The visit by the Jordanian King coincided with the seventh high-level international meeting on Syria within the framework of the Astana Process, which took place Oct. 30-31. As President Nazarbayev rightly pointed out, Jordan plays a big role in the Astana Process by participating as an observer. Jordan's involvement will be very important to the success of the Astana Process and the overall resolution of the Syrian crisis.

Resolving the Syrian conflict is just one issue that brings Kazakhstan and Jordan together. In fact, both countries share a much wider commitment to global peace and stability, as well as nuclear non-

proliferation. As is well known, Kazakhstan has been a consistent supporter of all global anti-nuclear initiatives since its independence and has led several international efforts to rid the world of weapons of mass destruction. Kazakhstan has been actively promoting the idea of establishing a nuclear weapons-free zone in the Middle East. The support of Jordan will be absolutely essential to prevent nuclear proliferation in the region.

Fortunately, Kazakhstan can count on Jordan, as the country has become one of Kazakhstan's closest partners in the Middle East, not least because Astana and Amman share similar views on a variety of regional and global issues. Jordan has continuously showed its support for Kazakhstan's initiatives on the international arena such as the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA), the Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions, the Astana Economic Forum and EXPO 2017. In 2013, Kazakhstan allocated \$200,000 to help Jordan in dealing with Syrian refugees located on their territory.

The President of Kazakhstan rightly noted that over the years, Kazakhstan and Jordan have built a very trustful and friendly relationship. During the visit, the two sides were able to deepen these relations further, especially in the field of trade and economic cooperation.

Enhancing the ties between Kazakhstan and Jordan is in the interest of both countries. There is ample opportunity for increased collaboration, especially in the field of renewable energy. Both countries can further explore joint investments and projects in the field of green energy. And if both countries continue to work together to facilitate the achievement of their ambitious mutual goals – world peace and a world free from nuclear weapons – then this relationship will be in the interest of the entire planet.

## Long-term stabilisation of Afghanistan needs concerted efforts

By Adilkhan Gadelshiyev

At the present time, issues of stabilisation of the situation in Afghanistan draw the attention of the entire international community. Long-term stability of the Central Asian region in whole is related to this issue. Consequently, building a secure and prosperous region is impossible without resolving the Afghan crisis. In this regard, Kazakhstan, within the framework of the United Nations Security Council, is making significant efforts to stabilise the situation in this country.

The presidency of the UN Security Council's sanctions committees on Afghanistan/Taliban (the Committee 1988) and in particular, ISIS/IS/Al-Qaida (the Committee 1267/1989/2253), empowers Kazakhstan with opportunities to improve the Afghan situation.

It should be noted that the work of this committee is conducted within the sanctions policy, implemented by the UN in respect to persons or organisations supporting the Taliban. Besides, a close cooperation between Kazakh diplomats and Interpol has been established. It must be emphasised that Kazakhstan, within the framework of its presidency of the UN Security Council in January 2018, will work on the convening of open debate at the ministerial level on Central Asia and Afghanistan.

In addition, Astana is planning



Adilkhan Gadelshiyev

to establish a Central Asian hub on countering transnational crimes, terrorism and global threats by 2020, where security forces of both Central Asia and, in prospect, Afghanistan and Pakistan will receive training. Such a project has already enlisted the support of the UN and the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), in particular as it is aimed at post-conflict rehabilitation of Afghanistan.

At the same time, Kazakhstan is also conducting independent work on improving the standard of living and infrastructure of Afghanistan. Humanitarian aid in the form of supplies of food and essential goods is provided on an annual basis. The education programme for Afghan students in Kazakh universities is also carried out. In addition, construction of schools, hospitals and roads is funded by Kazakhstan.

It is remarkable that in 2009 Kazakhstan donated \$1 million to the Islamic Solidarity Fund of the Or-

ganisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) for rehabilitation of Afghanistan. In addition, Kazakhstan made a special-purpose contribution of \$300,000 to the UN Trust Fund for fighting terrorism to implement the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in Central Asia.

In the work of regional organisations there are positive efforts of countries in the region on implementing infrastructure, transit transport and energy projects. Such steps promote gradual integration of Afghanistan to trade and economic cooperation with Central Asian countries.

Moreover, regional formations such as the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA) and Central Asian Regional Information and Coordination Centre for combating the illicit trafficking of narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and their precursors (CARICC) make active efforts in resolving the ongoing conflict. The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) member states and Afghanistan establish cooperation in meetings of the SCO-Afghanistan Contact Group. Iran and Turkmenistan also express interest in resolving the Afghan issue within this platform.

The author is a research fellow at the Kazakhstan Institute for Strategic Studies.

The full version of this opinion is available online.

## Kazakhstan and Germany: 25 years of cooperation

By Guido Herz

Before I came to Kazakhstan in 2011 as the Ambassador of Germany, I had been an ambassador to a big African country, which gained its independence in 1961. Despite good preconditions, this country, because of its experiments with "African socialism," was economically destructed by 1980s. The good preconditions were mineral deposits, long coast line, world-known tourist sites, English as an official language, no war of independence, good physical, administrative and legal infrastructure first taken from German and then from English colonisers.

In 1991, it was one of the poorest countries in the world, and today it remains as such. At the same time, a transition to market economy in 1990s brought many advantages. The commodities boom since 2000 and huge payments for development assistance during all these years have brought great revenues to the country. Nevertheless, in 2011 per capita income was approximately \$700, which is not more than it was back in 1991.

When it gained its independence, Kazakhstan was just as poor but by 2011 it increased per capita income twentyfold to €12,000 (\$14,060).

In addition, the preconditions in this case were much worse. The state unity was not secure at all, the country's borders were not marked accurately and with a significant potential for conflict with strong neighbours, transport infrastructure was not developed and it was laid only from North to South, the legacy of the bureaucratic centralism was a burden, and additionally, Kazakhstan is a huge country with no access to the sea. Despite this, the country has moved along the path of democratic development and is doing well compared to its Central Asian neighbours and other states of the former Soviet Union. The country is stable both internally and in external policy, the economy is efficient and is aimed at the future, and the physical and social infrastructure develops dynamically.

This all became possible thanks to



Guido Herz

a wise and forward-looking government. Certainly, the country's raw material wealth also helped, but there are enough examples when the country's raw material wealth becomes more a curse than a blessing. Therefore, Kazakhstan's achievements within 25 years cannot be overestimated.

Germany has cooperated closely with Kazakhstan since its independence. We have had an important link since the very beginning – there was about a million ethnic Germans living in the country who had been deported to Kazakhstan in Stalin's times. Many of them wanted to move to Germany after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Despite the fact that Kazakhstan needed labour force to create independent state, the country did not prevent the Germans' desire but actively supported them. Therefore, many ethnic Germans managed to come back to their ancestral homeland. About 800,000 of them currently live in Germany and create a so called "living bridge" between our countries.

The current year Kazakhstan and Germany mark the 25th anniversary of diplomatic relations; Germany at the beginning of February 1992 became one of the first countries which established diplomatic relations with independent Kazakhstan.

Relations between our countries have always been positive. When I came to Kazakhstan in 2011, the country had just concluded successful chairmanship of the OSCE in 2010 which was marked by personal participation of the Federal Chancellor Angela Merkel in the Astana summit in December 2010.

For five years of my work as the Ambassador, Kazakhstan continued developing on the international plat-

form playing a far more important role within the "international concert" than most of the countries with population around 18 million usually do. Since the first years the independent, the state has confirmed itself as a trustworthy counsel for the world free of nuclear weapons by complete refusal from the nuclear arsenal left from the Soviet Union. Kazakhstan is an important actor of the Eurasian Economic Union; it plays a significant role in Iranian negotiations, the Syrian peace process, as well as in overcoming the Ukrainian crisis. Kazakhstan in light of its foreign policy was justly invited as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council.

The fact that Chinese President Xi Jinping chose Astana and Nazarbayev University for the official presentation of the project of the century – "New Silk Road" in September 2013 should not be forgotten.

The Kazakh-German relations have been constantly developing since my appointment as ambassador in 2011. The commodity agreement signed in 2012 is a good platform for further long-term development of our economic relations. Germany as one of the first countries that confirmed its participation in EXPO 2017, and I hope that it thereby contributed to the success of this big event. The visit of the newly elected Federal President Frank-Walter Steinmeier, a long-standing friend of Kazakhstan and its President in July of this year, emphasised this.

In my opinion, Kazakhstan is an example of successful development. However, there is no room for complacency, and, in accordance with changing premises, conditions should be created for the country to continue developing. The country's leadership knows that, and therefore it has announced extensive political and economic reforms. If the country implements these reforms gradually, the country will develop consistently the following 25 years. Kazakhstan can count on Germany as a reliable partner.

The author served as German Ambassador to Kazakhstan in 2011-2016.

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# OPINIONS

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## A New Era of Cooperation for Central Asia

By Takehiko Nakao

Central Asia is a dynamic and fast-changing region. Over the past couple of decades, it has shown that increased regional cooperation is indispensable to achieving development goals.

The Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC) programme started operations in 2001 and has made significant contributions to the region's growth. The programme has grown steadily to 11 member countries (Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, the People's Republic of China, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Mongolia, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan) and has financed more than \$30 billion in investments to enhance transport and energy linkages and boost cross-border trade. Over a third of this amount, or \$10.5 billion, has come from the Asian Development Bank (ADB), which has supported CAREC since its inception.

Despite their rapid development, countries in the region face significant



challenges. The spillover impacts of global economic and financial crises and of lower oil and gas prices have been acute. Climate change is a major global and regional challenge. These issues do not respect borders and underscore the value of working together to navigate the shifting development landscape.

The CAREC programme needs a scaled-up mandate to become more effective and relevant in the years ahead.

Its CAREC 2030 strategy, unanimously adopted on Oct. 27 by member countries in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, shows the region is ready to fully achieve its enormous potential by

connecting its people, policies and projects. I see four key ways in which it can create the conditions for future growth, stability and prosperity.

First, it will deepen support for traditional areas of cooperation, such as transport, energy and trade facilitation. Regional cooperation cannot be achieved without the basic building blocks of good roads and railways, reliable power supplies and the ability of businesses to seek new markets.

Infrastructure investments that integrate new technologies, coupled with appropriate regulatory reforms, will help accelerate the region's integration with global value chains and support the adoption of clean and renewable energy.

Second, there is a pressing need for macroeconomic policy dialogue among member countries to promote economic and financial stability. The CAREC programme has provided a practical and flexible platform for infrastructure investment and policy planning.

Through initiatives such as a planned forum for countries to share experiences on banking and market

regulation, CAREC 2030 can also help improve the region's investment climate, sustain economic growth and manage the impact of cyclical economic downturns.

Third, for Central Asia to truly prosper it must commit to cooperating in new areas. CAREC 2030's support for regional initiatives in tourism, agriculture, water resources, health and education will help countries achieve their sustainable development goals. Deeper cooperation will also help countries reach their targets under the COP21 climate agreement.

Cross-border tourism, value-added agricultural exports and educational exchanges have tremendous untapped potential in Central Asia. But these can only be unlocked through a regional agenda where countries work together and share expertise.

Finally, development in Central Asia will depend crucially on building the capacities of its own people. Enhancing people-to-people contacts will help deepen intra-regional understanding and increase personal mobility. Enhanced business-to-business contacts are

vital to increase private sector development and create jobs.

Greater labor mobility will allow people to improve their skills and obtain new jobs. It is encouraging that CAREC 2030 has embraced in principle a regional labor market information system focusing on skills needs and regional job search and placement, as well as cross-border higher education and technical training.

CAREC's new strategy will enhance its convening power for high-level policy dialogue among ministers and senior officials on key development issues. This dialogue needs to be backed with high-quality research by the CAREC Institute, which recently became an intergovernmental organization, and from member countries and development partners to build capacity in areas including education, health and financial and economic stability.

The broader scope of CAREC 2030 provides new space for development partners like ADB to further support the region's prosperity. It also opens the prospect of exciting new partnerships with other regional programmes such as the Belt and Road Initiative.

ADB will commit \$5 billion to support CAREC 2030 in the next five

years. We have just approved a new \$800 million Multi-Tranche Financing Facility for CAREC road corridor development in Pakistan. Next year, we will finance the first phase of the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan transmission line project for \$150 million. ADB has also already begun discussions for regional projects in agribusiness, tourism and railways—areas covered in CAREC 2030.

We seek the strong support of all member countries and development partners for the financing and successful implementation of the new CAREC strategy.

By harnessing the collective energies of CAREC member countries, the new strategy will help the region to capitalize on its unique geographic position and proximity to global markets. There is vast potential to improve connectivity and trade between the region's countries, to Europe and beyond.

CAREC 2030 is an opportunity to promote growth, stability and prosperity in Central Asia. By working together, countries and development partners can secure the future that the region and its people deserve.

**The author is the President of the Asian Development Bank.**

## The OECD and Eurasia: partners for an inclusive globalisation

By Angel Gurría

I have long been passionate about free trade and international integration and the benefits that they can bring to people everywhere. In my own country, Mexico, I have seen firsthand what a powerful impact they can have in lifting millions out of poverty. Yet I am ever more convinced that we can and must do more to ensure that the benefits of openness and international integration are shared more equally. In advanced and emerging countries we are witnessing challenges not only to open trade and investment policies but also to the transparent, rules-based international economy that we had grown to trust, and perhaps take for granted. Multilateral co-operation is viewed with more scepticism, and protectionist pressures are rising.

Many people feel let down by globalisation and no longer believe the world economy works for them. Rising inequality and sluggish global growth add to their scepticism: real global GDP growth has fallen below 3% for the last five years, making them the most lacklustre five years in over half a century. No wonder populist and nationalist political movements have resurfaced in so many countries, rich and poor.

There is much at stake for Eurasia countries ("Eurasia" here refers to the countries participating in the OECD Eurasia Competitiveness Programme: Afghanistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Mongolia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan). They have spent a quarter-century integrating more deeply into international markets and institutions, gaining needed access not only to new markets but also to foreign technology and knowledge, as well as capital. Moreover, internationalisation reinforced other reforms. Joining institutions like the World Trade Organisation has helped entrench many beneficial reforms, while foreign direct investment and foreign trade strengthened support for greater security of property rights and more transparent and efficient institutions.

In many respects, deeper international integration over the last quarter-century has paid off for Eurasia. Inflows of foreign direct investment (FDI) to the region rose from less than US\$5bn per year in the early 1990s to an average of US\$73bn over the decade to 2014. In constant dollars, the region's total foreign trade turnover tripled, while the people of Eurasia have seen a 2.3-fold increase in per capita GDP over the last two decades, as well as falling poverty rates



and sharp improvements in human welfare.

Yet openness has come at a price. Many Eurasia economies have experienced rising inequality and periodic crises, usually arising from external shocks. Most have highly concentrated export profiles, and the region's exports overall are dominated by hydrocarbons and minerals, leaving them particularly exposed to volatile commodity prices. These vulnerabilities constitute one of the principal reasons that policy-makers across Eurasia are so concerned with diversifying economic activity and shifting towards a growth model that relies less on primary resources and more on human capital, innovation and the creation of high-productivity jobs. Increasingly, the OECD is working with countries in the region in an effort to create the conditions for such a shift, not least by helping them align their policies and practices with international standards.

Continued commitment to open markets – open to cross-border trade and investment, but also open to new domestic entrants – will be critical to realising these ambitions. Trade and investment flows do more than shift goods and capital from place to place. They spread technologies and – even more important – ideas. Productivity rises. That means more and better jobs, particularly where countries invest in skills and education, too.

This is particularly true in today's world where almost two-thirds of trade is in goods used in production,

often as part of global value chains involving several countries. Closed borders can boost the cost of essential inputs and cut countries off from those value chains, stifling entrepreneurship and investment, and condemning them to low-skill, low value-added jobs. Reducing barriers between countries will help societies become wealthier, greener and more equal.

That said, we must still address the concerns that underlie the backlash against globalisation and open markets that we observe in many countries. The OECD is working to do just that. We have focused attention on rising inequality and its costs since before the crisis, and, indeed, have made inclusion form an important part of our agenda in working with the countries of Eurasia on social, educational and labour-market policies.

The challenge is three-pronged. First, we must enhance our open, transparent and rules-based international economic order for the widest possible benefit. We must make trade easier, especially for small and medium-sized firms (SME), by addressing not just tariffs but also behind-the-border barriers that drive up prices for consumers and producers alike. This is the purpose of our work on export promotion and SME-FDI linkages in Eurasia.

Second, we need to make economic openness work for all, with policies to boost skills and encourage lifelong learning, and improve infrastructure and connectivity so that regions like Eurasia can make

the most of foreign trade and capital. And we must do far more to empower all groups, and protect the vulnerable. The OECD is working with our partners in Eurasia to address these issues, from education to infrastructure to active social policies.

Third, we need to make international business genuinely rules-based, using the full range of available multilateral tools. The OECD's Guidelines for Responsible Business Conduct (RBC), for example, oblige investors to maintain high labour, tax, anti-corruption and environmental standards as they invest abroad. These Guidelines, which have been the focus of reviews in two Eurasia countries, make international investors lead by example and encourage domestic investors to follow suit. Through the OECD/G20 initiative on Base Erosion and Profit Shifting (BEPS), we are addressing tax avoidance, so that international trade and investment do not undermine public budgets. Three Eurasia countries (Georgia, Kazakhstan and Ukraine) have joined the BEPS Inclusive Framework, while six participate in our Global Forum on Transparency and Exchange of Information for Tax Purposes (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Moldova, Ukraine).

Of course, business integrity must be matched by public sector integrity. For almost 20 years, our Anti-Corruption Network for Eastern Europe and Central Asia has provided a regional forum to prevent and combat corruption through peer reviews

and peer learning. Its activities include trainings, exchange of information, elaboration of best practices and donor co-ordination. In parallel, we have engaged in sustained and wide-ranging work to improve the efficiency and quality of public governance and public service delivery in many Eurasia countries.

Given the deepening co-operation between the OECD and Eurasia, it is fitting that the annual OECD Eurasia Week will take place in the region for the first time, in Almaty in October. This is a reflection of the maturity of our relationship with the Eurasia countries and, in particular, with Kazakhstan, which since January 2015 has been engaged in an OECD Country Programme, an ambitious, whole-of-government process involving analytical work, enhanced participation in OECD bodies and adherence to OECD instruments. I look forward to address the opening of Eurasia Week but also to see firsthand the impact of our work with Kazakhstan and its regional peers.

We all know from experience that international openness brings greater prosperity, peace, innovation, diversity, and cultural exchange and security. But we will only succeed in preserving it if we ensure that its benefits are more widely shared. The OECD is committed to working with Eurasia countries as partners to design, develop and deliver better policies for better lives.

**The author is OECD Secretary-General.**

## Kazakhstan and Croatia mark 25th anniversary of diplomatic relations

By Toleshan Barlybayev

The history of relations between the people of Kazakhstan and Croatia dates back to the times of the Silk Road through which trade caravans from China and Central Asia transported silk, wool, fabrics, jewellery and other goods to Europe.

In the 13th century, the brothers Niccolò and Maffeo Polo travelled as merchants through the lands of southwestern Kazakhstan, visiting the Ustyurt plateau, the Syrdarya and Amudarya river valleys and the ancient Kazakh cities of Otrar and Almaty. Niccolò's son, the great explorer Marco Polo, native of the Croatian island of Korcula, studied the customs of the Great Steppe and the language and traditions of nomadic tribes, describing them in his famous book "Livres des Merveilles du Monde" ("Book of the Marvels of the World").

During the First World War, the future leader of Yugoslavia, young Croat Josip Broz Tito, was a prisoner-of-war in the southern Siberian city of Omsk, near the border with Kazakhstan. In the difficult conditions of Tito's captivity, the family of Kazakh farmer Issa Zhaksenbayev gave



him shelter and work and helped him survive.

The people of our two countries fought together against fascism during the Second World War. In the battles for the liberation of Yugoslavia, the 73rd Guards Division, formed in Kazakhstan, was noted for its special courage. As part of the 18th partisan brigade of the 30th Yugoslav Division, Kazakh soldiers, along with Russians, Ukrainians, Serbs and Croats, fought valiantly. The Kazakh soldier Khalil Salimzhanov, for his service in the battles for liberation of the people of Yugoslavia, was awarded the Silver Star and the Order of Bravery as well as the Partisan of Yugoslavia Honorary Badge by the Presidium of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

In the post-war years, Croatia, as part of the former Yugoslavia, actively

participated in the development of economic ties with the Kazakh SSR. In the period of industrial construction and the development of Virgin Lands, Yugoslav specialists took part in building industrial facilities, schools, hospitals and commercial centres. Consumer goods, footwear and clothing produced in Yugoslavia were popular in Kazakhstan. Imports from Yugoslavia were dominated by raw materials, machinery and equipment.

The quarter-century spanning the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries was a time of large-scale historical changes. The new independent states of Kazakhstan and Croatia appeared on the political map of the world. At the dawn of their independence, the Croatian people faced difficult times due to the military conflict in the Balkans.

Having overcome the crises of the 1990s and challenges in establishing and developing statehood, Kazakhstan and Croatia became recognised as independent sovereign states. Our countries have experienced profound and progressive changes, the general features of which included large-scale state reforms, modernisation of society and economy, improvement of the

living standards of the population, and strengthening of the role of the two countries in international affairs.

Oct. 20, 2017, marked the 25th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Kazakhstan and Croatia. Today, the people of our countries are bound by traditions of friendship, mutual respect and trust. Successful dialogue is being developed at the highest level.

President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev paid official visits to Zagreb twice, in 2001 and 2006. Presidents of Croatia Stjepan Mesić and Ivo Josipović visited Astana several times. In 2015, Prime Minister Zoran Milanović paid an official visit to Kazakhstan.

Several fundamental documents were signed during those visits, including the Declaration on the fundamentals of the relationship between the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Republic of Croatia, Agreement on cooperation between the Chambers of Commerce, and others.

By now, interstate relations have been brought to a high level by common efforts. Joint work is under way to expand the contractual and legal frameworks linking the countries. Dialogue is maintained through the

Ministries of Foreign Affairs and specialised government agencies. Inter-parliamentary and interregional relations, business and cultural-humanitarian contacts are developing as well.

It is encouraging that the foreign trade turnover between Kazakhstan and Croatia has a stable growth trend. According to Kazakh statistics, from January to September of this year, the volume of mutual trade has exceeded \$300 million and continues to grow. About 30 Croatian companies are registered in Kazakhstan in the fields of construction, pharmaceuticals and medicine, the food industry and trade.

Astana and Zagreb share similar positions on key issues on the international agenda. Our states closely cooperate within the framework of the UN, the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and other international organisations on issues of international security, the fight against international terrorism, organised crime, illicit trafficking of narcotic drugs, illegal migration and other transnational challenges and threats.

On Oct. 11-12, on the eve of the 25th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Kazakhstan and Croatia, political consultations at the level of deputy foreign ministers took place in Zagreb.

Agreements were reached on expanding the legal framework and signing bilateral agreements in various fields. The parties agreed to promote the development of inter-parliamentary

relations, as well as business and cultural-humanitarian contacts. In this context, an important step will be the opening of the Embassy of Croatia in Astana next year.

Following the consultations, the deputy ministers signed the Plan on Cooperation between the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan and Croatia for 2018-2020, exchanged signed texts of the Convention on the Avoidance of Double Taxation and agreed to harmonise draft documents on cooperation in air transport, agriculture, energy, tourism, education and culture.

The constituent meeting of the Croatian-Kazakh Friendship Society held recently in Zagreb and attended by public figures and representatives of science, education and culture was an important event. During the meeting, Chairman of the Croatian-Kazakh Friendship Society Andrija Karafilipović noted that the people of our countries are tied by traditions of friendship and cooperation. The special role of society was also noted as an effective instrument of people's diplomacy and an important channel of cultural ties.

Looking into the future with optimism, Kazakhstan and Croatia intend to continue pursuing the policy of comprehensive strengthening and development of bilateral relations to benefit the people of the two states.

**The author is ambassador of Kazakhstan to Croatia.**

# OPINIONS

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 8, 2017

## EU-Central Asia: A new generation of partnership and cooperation

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – On a recent visit to Astana, Peter Burian, European Union Special Representative for Central Asia, spoke with The Astana Times Oct. 30 about the key priorities of the EU's Central Asia strategy, its "balancing power" and security transformation processes.

*This year there were positive changes in relations between Central Asian countries. What is your opinion about the prospects of regional cooperation in Central Asia?*

We welcome the new atmosphere in the region conducive to regional cooperation and we see it in concrete areas where even the most sensitive issues are tackled, discussed and addressed through a very constructive dialogue. Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan managed to sign an agreement on delineation and demarcation of 85 percent of the border. Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan are discussing with downstream countries certain joint projects even in those areas where previously they had certain disagreements. Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan managed to increase bilateral trade by almost 30 percent within a couple of months. We welcome these developments and we know how important regional and neighbourly cooperation are for stability.

Central Asia has the potential to be a major gateway between Europe and Asia with a young, growing market and significant potential for investment and trade. That potential can be fully used only when the countries of the region work together, improving connectivity between them, thus removing barriers and obstacles for regional trade and addressing challenges together. Establishing this base with common rules



Peter Burian

increasing regulatory compatibility, standards and rules-based space for trade and investment is important.

*This year marks the 10th anniversary of the adoption of the EU Strategy for Central Asia. How would you evaluate the results of EU activities in the region over the past decade?*

The EU adopted the most comprehensive and structured strategy for regional and interregional cooperation in 2007. We have already registered major progress in strengthening the relationship between the EU and Central Asia.

The EU has played an important role in the region as the biggest donor and allocated more than 1.5 billion euros (US\$1.7 billion) for implementing various regional and bilateral programmes.

The EU has also played an important role as a balancing power in the region, also establishing and giving the opportunity to our partners to diversify the relationship.

We managed to move EU-Kazakhstan relations to even a higher level by concluding an Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement. This is a new generation of our partnership and cooperation agreements. Now Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan have expressed their interest in starting the process.

We see greater understanding of

our partners that promoting topics and values like rule of law, good governance or human rights is not a Western agenda. These principles are recognised by our partners and universally recognised as key for gaining their rightful place in the world economy, global trade and transport as well.

*The EU-Central Asia meeting of foreign ministers is to be held in Samarkand Nov. 10. What are your expectations for this event? Are there any new initiatives that the EU intends to offer the Central Asian countries there?*

After an update of the strategy, new dynamism appeared in our dialogue and cooperation. Kazakhstan played an important role bringing new elements to the updated strategy. Our partners feel that they are shapers of this process and owners of this process. It's very important.

During the previous two meetings our partners highlighted the importance of increasing economic cooperation and investment in the region coming from the EU. And we prepare several initiatives in this regard based again on the interests of our partners. We are preparing to strengthen our regional investment instruments. There is the Investment Facility for Central Asia (IFCA) aimed at supporting private sector development, especially small and medium-sized enterprises, and focusing on new promising areas including renewable energy and the agriculture sector.

There's also the growing activity of the European Investment Bank (EIB). Now they are developing certain projects of connectivity including CASA-1000, followed by digital CASA, which is a project supported by the World Bank that will be also looking to increase digital connectivity.

We also want to use our existing platforms for supporting sustainable development, but focusing on strengthening investment instruments is something quite new. We'll be focusing within these initiatives and beyond on job creation in the region, setting up industrial promotion services to help new enterprises, especially small and medium ones, to start their activities and to support business incubation.

Digital connectivity and economy will play an enormously important role. Then we'll be focusing on traditional areas of cooperation. We have three platforms for regional cooperation – the rule of law, educational initiatives and water initiatives.

Cooperation between scientific and educational institutions will create good ground for universities in Central Asia to move to high standards of quality and we see that this process is bringing a concrete approach. We'll have some discussion on how to use the rule of law platform.

We already have established an environmental remediation account and plan for addressing problems of uranium tailings. We have put 16 million euros (US\$18.6 billion) into this account and will be putting additional 15 million euros (US\$17.4 billion) but we are also inviting other donors to look to this particular problem. We will discuss disaster reduction and disaster mitigation preparedness.

*What are the main priorities of cooperation between the EU and Central Asia in the short and medium term? Is Afghanistan and the current situation in that country included in these plans?*

The prevention of violent extremism is an important priority. We will use our BOMCA programme

and high-level political and security dialogue, where also, based on the desire of our partners, we have included Afghanistan when discussing security threats. Of course, it's important to have a country like Afghanistan on board. I'm pleased to note that countries of the region now more and more are looking to Afghanistan not only as a security threat but also as an opportunity for future connectivity. They see their responsibility for contributing to the stabilisation of Afghanistan, which is very much welcomed.

The second very important priority is education. We have allocated 117 million euros (US\$136 billion) for the Erasmus Mundus Plus programme. Kazakhstan is the most active participant in this programme. I see a growing interest among our students and teachers in coming to the region.

Climate change is also important priority. We believe it's necessary to develop regional cooperation and responsible management of natural resources.

*The share of young people is quite high in Central Asian countries' populations. Are there any specific programmes through which the EU could assist with increasing their access to quality education?*

People-to-people contacts are important. The young generation being able to travel and meet their counterparts in Europe is an important element of this. We would like to provide opportunities for young people to study in Europe.

We, of course, are working on certain improvement and facilitation of the visa regime. It is a process which takes some time. We also want to really make sure that all these young people are interested in staying in their countries and contributing to

the development of those countries. There are different migration processes happening in Europe and it's important to manage those migration processes for the benefit of the development of the region. This young population can be an important driver of economic development. But if not given the right opportunities it can become a source of problems in terms of radicalisation, illegal migration and so on.

It's worth investing in a young generation. We welcome this important priority of the Kazakh government through Bolashak and other programmes. Certainly we see a greater space for making sure that young generation meet with each other exchange experiences and this is something we also want to focus on in the future.

*How would you describe relations between the EU and Central Asia 10 years from now?*

We have good prospects for a strong relationship. I'm pleased that we have created a very solid foundation based on common interest and shared values. I hope this foundation is further strengthened. I see the potential of the region in its strategic location being a link between Europe and Asia. I see already a growing potential for Kazakh investors to be active in the European market.

Kazakhstan is moving very comprehensively in all key areas of the reform process, provided all these reforms are fully implemented.

The EU doesn't have to have and doesn't want to have any exclusive kind of space, but rather share the cooperation with others, avoiding geopolitical games in the region. And I hope that the regional and interregional cooperation helps the region assume the rightful position it deserves.

## Rule of Law in Kazakhstan

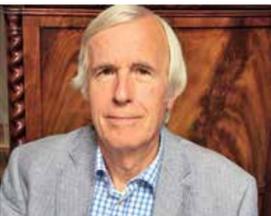
By Jan Reijntjes

There is much to see and much to learn for legal tourists nowadays – when travelling in what Europeans use to designate as the East, but also in their own world, the so-called West, where interesting discussions are closely connected with the manner in which the legal legacy of the former Soviet Union is being dealt with. Especially interesting would be what is happening in Kazakhstan, positioned as it is on the crossroads of East and West!

First thing to be noticed is that there the ongoing debate is more on the modernisation, not of the law itself, but of the manner in which it will be applied. It is clear that Kazakhstan resolutely decided to opt for the Rule of Law. But what exactly does this mean? Many lawyers are severely disturbed by the current clash of opinions between the leading political circles in, for instance, Hungary and Poland on the one side, and important parts of the European Union on the other. Obviously, Rule of Law looks quite different in Warsaw than in Brussels. What kind of changes will the new policy bring for Kazakhstan – in any case: what kind of changes could be expected? Here follow some remarks from a criminal lawyer. (These remarks are inspired by the draft law of the Republic of Kazakhstan "On making amendments and additions to some legislative acts of the Republic of Kazakhstan on further modernisation of the criminal process.")

### What is Rule of Law?

Amongst lawyers there is a general understanding on what the Rule of Law implies – but decidedly not more than that. Clearly there is a lack of definition, and the implementation of the Rule of Law is different wherever one goes. General agreement, however, exists that under the Rule of Law not only everyone within a jurisdiction is bound by the rules of the national law, but also, and even in the first place, all government organs themselves. Whoever commits a crime within the jurisdiction should be sure that, when he is caught, he will be punished according to the law,



after a fair and speedy trial in which an independent court decides on his guilt, according to fixed rules of evidence, based on the presumption of innocence. Independence of the courts, presumption of innocence, fixed rules of evidence are guaranteed by the current Kazakh Code of Criminal Procedure (KCCP, see e.g. Articles 22 and 19). But what about, for instance, Article 35 of KCCP – should a court have the power simply to avoid any decision on the guilt of a defendant, when it finds that there is not enough evidence against him? Or has every defendant the right to a decision on his guilt? Does the Rule of Law not imply that the courts in such cases have to decide for an acquittal, instead of simply sending them back to the prosecutor? And what about the defence? Would not everybody who is brought before a court and can't pay for his defence have a right to free legal aid? At least when he is facing imprisonment?

The Prosecution Service used to supervise the close observation of the law by citizens and by all government officials, in the most general sense; this led to an accumulation of many functions and responsibilities. By now it is clear that in modern Kazakhstan this will come to an end. Moreover, under the Rule of Law it would not suffice that one government authority supervises the other. It decidedly requires that the process of investigation and prosecution of offences is integrated within a permanent review system by independent organisms or institutions. Those could be what the Scandinavians call an ombudsman, but most countries are preferring (a kind of) judicial review – or combinations of both. In their opinion an effective system of review would find its centre of gravity at the independent courts.

There is more. Under the Rule of Law everyone within the jurisdiction who becomes a victim of crime

(or thinks that he is in this position) should be sure that this (alleged) crime will be investigated speedily, and independently from the status he himself and the supposed perpetrator of the crime might have within the community. The law should provide for effective means to file complaints about non-investigation and non-prosecution. There should be no prerogatives for supposed perpetrators of corruption or white collar crime (so-called business crimes included). Instead the combat against corruption should have absolute priority. And there should be no pretrial detention without strict necessity, to be assessed by a judge. When a judge has ordered pretrial detention the detainee should leave the premises of the police forces and be brought to a prison, in order to minimize the risk of undue pressure.

But for many people Rule of Law means even more. The European Union, for instance, found that the Rule of Law implies 'a constitutional system by which the different organs of the state are aligned and limited in such a way that the state cannot illegally infringe a citizen's right.' This is especially meant to express that an efficient implementation of the Rule of Law requires a division of powers between legislative, judicial and executive organs, in such a way that a certain equilibrium is created between the three of them. In this way Rule of Law also presupposes a trustworthy political system. The creation of checks and balances would be the guiding principle. The law on criminal procedure, for instance, should be based on such a system of checks and balances that the risk of fraudulent or corrupt acts or influences is kept at a minimal level. But again this would not suffice; Rule of Law not only requires a trustworthy judicial, but also a trustworthy financial system.

In any case Rule of Law is non-existent as long as the courts do not enjoy absolute independency and the judges may fear to be punished or otherwise corrected for the content of their decisions. All necessary oversight of the factual behaviour of the members of the judiciary should be in the hands of the judiciary itself.

A separate question is whether a

jury system is still acceptable in all cases. It is clear that juries generally are unable to understand complex cases like frauds and moreover are liable to undue influence in cases of organised criminality and terrorism.

### More in detail: criminal prosecutions

It seems obvious that investigation of offences should be entrusted to a specialized organism, forming part of the regular police. Exceptions could be acceptable only when others would be better equipped to do so. In many countries an example is offered by the Internal Revenue Service.

Here we find a special problem: what about prosecutions? The European Union designated 'status and role of the public prosecutor' as one of the four major components of the Rule of Law – next to an independent judiciary. Should the public prosecutor be as independent from 'the executive' as the courts are? Here we meet very different opinions. Yes, a public prosecutor is a magistrate, like a judge, with a very special responsibility – but arguments for independency of the judiciary are much stronger than for independency of prosecutors. Should the decision to prosecute strictly be governed by law, or also by expediency? Should there be a duty to prosecute all offences that have been cleared up – like in Italy and Germany? Which should be the influence of parliamentary control? Anyway it is clear that Rule of Law is no obstacle for a system in which the prosecution service is directed by, especially, the Justice Department of the national government. In most (but not all) European countries it is accepted that the government, especially the Minister of Justice, has the power to decide on the general policy of the Prosecution Service, but also that this Minister should abstain as much as possible from intervention in individual cases.

Meanwhile, the relation between the prosecution service and the police should be clear and established by law. But what should this relation be? The principle of checks and balances makes it preferable that decisions whether to prosecute are not taken by the same

organs as those responsible for the investigation of the offence. This needs some further elucidation. Of course, in the first place, there should be no possibility to cover up misbehaviour during the investigations by not prosecuting. The police should not be placed in the difficult position to disprove insinuations of such cover-ups. But there is much more to it. Investigating and prosecuting offences are very different activities, asking for very different qualifications. Prosecution requires a certain distance from putative offences and from (potential) defendants. For the investigator this distance is difficult to maintain. The prosecutor should be able to correct errors made in the investigation; but for all human beings it is difficult to correct their own mistakes. This became especially clear in the United Kingdom, where prosecutions for a long time have been in the hands of the police and other government organs, like Customs and Excises. The last mentioned government agency had to abandon this competence after some high profile blunders, leading to disastrous time- and money-consuming prosecutions that ended in sensational acquittals. Not only the public, but also the police itself should be protected against such situations. Nowadays it seems nearly generally accepted that the police should not itself have the power to prosecute, except in cases of minor offences or contraventions.

### Giving guidance to the police

The police itself should be held responsible for the technical quality of all investigations – speed included. But like all government organs it needs supervision. As the prosecution service will be held responsible in court for the legal quality of investigations of all offences that it prosecutes, it would only be practical to charge it also with general accountability for the quality of the police investigations. Public prosecutors should not only be independent from the investigative authorities, but have the power to oversee and review investigations. Moreover the prosecution service should be competent to

order investigations if the police omits to do so. Under certain conditions it could also be empowered to stop further investigations. Who else would be competent to do so?

In all cases of serious offences supervision should be proactive: the prosecutor should be involved as soon as investigations are started by the police, he should give guidance to the investigation, and guarantee its speediness.

However, in cases of minor crimes like shoplifting it could be sufficient when supervision of investigations by the Prosecution Service would be retroactive, and the prosecutor simply waits until cases are sent to him by the police, or complaints by citizens are received by him.

### Infringements upon civil rights and liberties

We have to face the fact that effective investigation of offences generally requires infringements upon civil rights and liberties. However, this should be kept to a minimum and never be allowed without a formal permission by a member of the prosecution service (so, for example, search and seizure in office buildings). More serious infringements (like pretrial detention, and seizure in habitations and eavesdropping) should only be allowed, upon an express request from a prosecutor, by a judge (examining magistrate).

Prosecutors and defence lawyers should also have the right to file requests with the examining magistrate to perform certain investigative acts, like interrogations of witnesses, reconstructions, ordering an expertise etc.

**The author is an international expert with the EUCJ, a project funded by the European Union (EU) and aimed at strengthening the rule of law in Kazakhstan, and is professor of criminal law and criminal procedure at the Open University of the Netherlands (retired); a member of the government committee for the Modernisation of the Dutch Code of Criminal Procedure.**

*The full version of this opinion is available online.*

# OPINIONS

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 8, 2017

## Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA): what's in the name?

By Gong Jianwei

If the territory of all 26 member states was painted on the world map in one colour, it would cover the space from the Pacific Ocean to the Mediterranean Sea and from the Indian Ocean to the northern seas. This is the CICA region: one-fourth of the planet's landmass, whose peoples are united by a desire to ensure their common security and stability and protect the world for the joint development of national cultures, economies and a common bright future. This desire is based on the enormous potential inherent in the diligence, enterprise and openness of the peoples of Asia and the richness of their natural resources. This potential has been realised for 25 years for the prosperity of all corners of the Asian continent through the equitable cooperation of countries that differ in size, population, religion, culture, economic development and political order.

On Oct. 5 this year we celebrated the 25th anniversary of the CICA process. It all began with the initiative President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev put forward at the 47th Session of the UN General Assembly in 1992, which gave way to a new understanding of security based on principles of mutual trust and cooperation. Thus, interstate relations were transferred to a new level of equal partnership. A model of regional cooperation was proposed, the innovation of which was the priority of the indivisibility of security, joint initiative and mutually beneficial interaction of small and large states. The interests of sustainable development of all peoples were put at the forefront.

During this period CICA gained a foothold as a platform for trustful dialogue, mutual understanding and equal partnership between member states and became an important mechanism of the modern system of interstate relations, contributing to the maintenance of security and stability in the region. Here we will try to briefly outline the main points of what has been done so far.

The leader of Kazakhstan proposed starting with simple and practical steps to establish a regional structure of security. A delicate approach and the correct identification of the key parameters of the interaction of the countries concerned contributed to the evolution of a new and effective institution in the field of Asian security.



Painstaking efforts that began with meetings at the level of representatives of foreign affairs offices of Kazakhstan and the 15 countries that supported the new idea have borne fruit. The tireless work of diplomats led to the first meeting of the ministers of foreign affairs of CICA member states in Almaty in September 1999 to adopt the Declaration of Principles Guiding Relations between CICA member states. This laid the foundation for the subsequent institutional development of the CICA process. It is important that it emphasises that "the diversity of national characteristics, traditions, cultures and values of Asian states is not a divisive, but valuable mutually enriching factor of their relations."

Here I would like to note the following. We often hear figurative expressions like "speak the same language" and "family of peoples." Within the CICA, from the very beginning, the diplomats sought, found and developed this new language of equality and mutually beneficial cooperation with partners from other countries of the conference. Now, meetings and events at all levels use this language of mutual understanding and respect. This atmosphere of confidence must not be overlooked as a factor contributing to an increase in the number of member states. The new members do not shyly listen to what is happening, but immediately actively join the work of the "family," making their suggestions and ideas, which we will talk about below.

In June 2002, Almaty, warm and smothered in verdure, hospitably received the participants of the first Summit of Heads of State and Government of 16 CICA countries, which marked the formal birth of the conference as a multilateral forum for deepening cooperation for peace, security and stability in the region. The Almaty Act, adopted as its outcome, clearly showed the intention of the member states to find an acceptable platform for creating a viable

security structure in Asia, in spite of the existing disagreements. It also declared the determination of the states to form a common and indivisible security space in Asia, where "military-political aspects, confidence-building measures, economic and environmental problems, humanitarian and cultural cooperation" should be involved. A sign of the political perspicacity of President Nazarbayev and the pride of Kazakhstan's diplomacy was that some countries embroiled in very tense relations became signatories of this document. The summit also adopted a Declaration on Eliminating Terrorism and Promoting Dialogue among Civilisations.

In 2004, the CICA Catalogue of Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) was elaborated as a basic document for practical activity defined in five dimensions: military and political issues, the fight against new challenges and threats, economy, the environment, and human issues. This document was one of a kind. Countries agreed to choose confidence-building measures acceptable to them and implement them on a gradual and voluntary basis. A cooperative approach for the implementation of CICA CBMs was adopted in 2007. I would like to note that now 14 countries are coordinators/co-coordinators of confidence-building measures in different areas.

Regarding CICA's organisation, an important milestone was the establishment in 2006 of its Secretariat, the executive body of the forum intended for administrative assistance to the chairing country and member states in the implementation of confidence-building measures. The staff of the Secretariat consists of diplomats sent by countries on secondment, as well as administrative and technical personnel. The Secretariat contributed to the launch of work on all five dimensions of CICA and the development of mechanisms for creating and implementing plans. The Secretariat's website contains information on daily activities and recent developments in CICA.

In the economic sphere, attention is focused on the promotion of small and medium-sized businesses, trade, infrastructure development and transport corridors, telecommunications, the expansion of opportunities in agriculture and other directions. The rapid pace of introduction of innovative technologies, especially those created in the countries of the region, helps in implementing CICA tasks in

these areas. The five business forums held in support of small and medium-sized businesses facilitated the establishment of direct links and dialogue between representatives of commercial organisations and executive bodies of the CICA countries. Based on their results, it was decided to establish the CICA Business Council, tasked with establishing contacts, signing contracts between the business circles of the countries, further implementing joint projects and expanding trade, financial and investment flows. This successful experience prompted the idea of organising a Specialised Business Forum. Such a forum, dedicated to problems and solutions in the export of consumer goods in the CICA region, was held in Moscow on Oct. 12 this year.

It is no secret that the most pressing problem in the Asian region continues to be the cultivation of narcotic plants. Everyone knows that proceeds from the drug business are used to sponsor terrorism, corruption, human trafficking, weapons purchases and other illegal and destructive trades. World experience has shown that simply burning fields of illegal crops is not effective. It is necessary to replace narcotic plants with agricultural crops to provide the rural population of those countries with work, food and income. So the branches of the fight against the drug threat and provision of economic security are intertwined. Now, China has proposed an action plan for the coming years intended to transform and modernise agricultural work. The plan guarantees employment and profitability, and should increase the competitiveness of the agricultural sector in the region and the rational allocation of resources. Thailand has become a coordinator for sustainable development and is holding courses on this issue in October.

Over the years, dozens of events have been held in all five dimensions, including business forums, military exercises, seminars and festivals. Hundreds of specialists of various profiles were given the opportunity to exchange experience, methods and technologies, whether it be in the fight against drug trafficking, developing the agro-industrial sector, supporting small and medium-sized businesses, understanding and managing migration, cooperating between law enforcement agencies, and understanding and facing new challenges. Events have also grown more targeted, directed at specific requests of mem-

ber states. For example, teachers and lecturers at seminars on the fight against the drug threat are representing CICA countries; thus, participants study material based on real situations in the region.

In the Secretariat databases of contact persons, national coordinators, including departments, are being created. This is an important detail. After all, individuals can leave departments, but departments retain responsibility for implementing action plans.

It should be noted that for a more complete study of issues of the greatest interest for all countries, CICA periodically conducts scientific and practical conferences and seminars with the participation of member states' analysts and experts. From the outset, the conference has used every opportunity to ensure continued effective action. A nongovernmental forum was established to facilitate civil communication between CICA member states, to popularise CICA's goals and objectives and to increase the influence of the forum in the field of security.

Since then, several meetings have taken place, during which prominent scientists, politicians – including former leaders of nations – experts, representatives of the media elite and public organisations were given the opportunity to discuss a wide range of issues of peace, security and stability in Asia. A deep exchange of views on these and other issues led to very constructive proposals that are used in the current activities of the CICA.

It should be noted that political cooperation and cooperation in the field of security continues successfully. Negotiations among member states on the development of the CICA Action Plan for the implementation of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy are continuing. In recent years, Kazakhstan, as a coordinator in the military-political dimension, held seminars and lectures for military experts, diplomats and military attaches of CICA countries and organised visits to a number of military facilities and exhibitions. A very interesting seminar was held in Kazakhstan – participants visited the Baikonur space port for a rocket launch. This was a unique and informative addition to the rest of the seminar, held in Astana.

Climate change, including disruptions caused by human economic activity, requires new solutions. The need for cooperation in this area is also evident in all Asian countries. A regional approach

based on the fair consideration of the interests of all parties involved is required to address issues of using trans-boundary water resources and combating desertification. Mongolia coordinates this activity.

Last month, member states adopted the concept paper for implementation of CBMs in the area of sustainable development, presented by Thailand as a coordinator. Its essence is to study alternative approaches to sustainable development already underway and exchange its experience and best practices for the successful implementation of the UN Agenda for the period until 2030. Goals will also be supported through the development of a network of cooperation between CICA member states.

CICA member states support China's Belt and Road initiative, which fits perfectly into the ideology of the conference, as it represents a vision for integration projects in Eurasia. This initiative is a step forward in this direction in creating infrastructure and developing trade, finance and relationships between people.

Of great interest is CICA's activity in the human field. Measures have been taken to promote intercultural dialogue, cultural cooperation, the development of democratic processes in the region and more, all with the aim of promoting mutual understanding and interaction between the peoples of CICA countries. Festivals, a cultural exhibition of the countries of the Silk Road and the New Delhi seminar "CICA: Building Bridges across Asia through Tourism" were held, a collection of fairy tales and legends of CICA countries was published and a youth camp was organised.

The CICA Youth Council, set up in 2014, explores and improves national youth policies based on real-world situations and addresses many challenges facing young people in the region. We see how vulnerable young souls are and how easily they can fall under negative alien influences, especially considering the potential of modern communications. Our task today is to build in young generations the desire for peace, goodness, dignity and freedom.

**The author is executive director of the Secretariat of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia.**

*The full version of this opinion is available online.*

## Central Asia a crucial partner in promoting nuclear safety, says leading expert

By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – Eddie Maier, deputy head of unit at the European Commission Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development's Instrument for Stability and Nuclear Safety, discussed nuclear safety and the regional projects and activities of the International Science and Technology Centre (ISTC) in Central Asia in a recent interview with The Astana Times.

Representing the union at the ISTC Governing Board, Maier visits Astana twice a year for board meetings to discuss the centre's activities, address problems and seek new solutions with researchers and colleagues from ISTC partner countries Armenia, Georgia, Japan, Kazakhstan, South Korea, Kyrgyzstan, Norway, Tajikistan, the EU and the U.S.

Maier was visiting Astana to take part in the Oct. 12 international seminar organised by the ISTC and bringing expertise from ISTC partner countries and beyond to share ideas and suggest solutions in the increasingly important field of dual use goods strategic trade control. The seminar also marked



Eddie Maier

the launch of the second project on dual use goods export control funded by the EU and implemented by the ISTC.

Established in 1994, the ISTC works to set up and strengthen cooperation and partnership between researchers and scientists from the ISTC member states working to promote peaceful science and technology activities, particularly in the areas of nuclear non-proliferation and weapons of mass destruction.

The centre and its partner countries, including the EU, has funded 2,838 projects so far worth more than \$888.9 million between 1994 and 2016, with 207 projects worth more than \$76 million specifically in Kazakhstan.

The centre moved to the Ka-

zakh capital in 2015 at the invitation of the Kazakh government and is now based at Nazarbayev University.

"When we arrived from Moscow [to Astana], we decided to modernise and adapt the ISTC to the 21st century, because it was created in 1994 after the collapse of the Soviet Union," Maier explained.

The board revised the centre's basic documents, he added, noting the changes in the centre's objectives as well.

"We have changed the objectives. It remains security oriented, but now in a broader sense. It deals not only with reoccupation and re-direction of scientists who work in weapons of mass destruction field, but more generally scientists and institutions working in the security field," he said.

The relevant changes result in a wider scope among ISTC projects, according to Maier, implying "more people, more expenses, but greater impact."

"The second big change is that we decided not to relate activities to a region – for instance, the former Soviet Union – but leave it open worldwide. ISTC can act in Syria, Iran, North Korea if needed,

and ISTC is currently acting in Africa," said Maier.

Kazakhstan, in this context, is a "strategic place to have a good view on a large neighbourhood," he added.

To that objective, instruments are essential, as they serve as a "kind of agreement between major countries in the security domain," according to Maier, helping increase the effectiveness of the activities and improving the ability to react quickly, an important factor amidst the rising activities of non-state actors.

He also noted the EU's contribution to the ISTC and its activities in the Central Asian region, activities that saw nearly 1.5-3 million euros transferred every year to the centre.

"In addition, we allocated around 15 million euros over the last three years for specific large scale projects," said Maier.

Among these key projects in the region is Project 53, a biosafety and biosecurity project in Central Asia worth 6.5 million euros. The project is developed under the EU CBRN risk mitigation Centres of Excellence initiative and involves 59 countries in eight regions with the centre's Central Asian office

located in Uzbekistan. It seeks to assist the Central Asian countries in improving their biosafety and biosecurity legal framework in compliance with international standards and regulations.

The second project on dual use goods strategic trade control that was unveiled as part of the Oct. 12 seminar in Astana follows the previous EU P2P project, which, unlike the second one, involved only Kazakhstan and Jordan.

"Kazakhstan and Jordan are one of the examples of novelty in our actions," said Maier, adding that the project plan did not envision changes in law enforcement and licensing, the areas of a great importance for export control mechanisms to become truly efficient.

"We had impression that this was not sufficient. You have to do more," he said, explaining the motives behind the launch of the second project.

Other projects are being implemented in water protection and uranium mining that, among other objectives, envision bringing the expertise to conduct training and capacity building activities.

Speaking about the EU contribution to nuclear safety field worldwide, Maier noted the EU was also

among the major donors to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and its low-enriched uranium bank that was recently unveiled in Ust-Kamenogorsk in eastern Kazakhstan.

The EU contribution extends farther, with its strict nuclear safety standards reaching out worldwide. "We try to export the EU culture in terms of nuclear safety. EU standards are more strict and demanding than the IAEA, for several reasons," said Maier. "We try to promote our standards to improve the IAEA standards and improve nuclear safety around the world."

"Kazakhstan is very much involved and we do not have to invest much, because it is well equipped," he added, emphasising the contrasting poor capacity and equipment in other countries, including African ones.

But there is always a room for improvement, noted Maier. "Even in a nuclear domain where your country is a fantastic promoter – as is your president – in nuclear non-proliferation and a nuclear-weapons-free world." He added that the message of Kazakhstan will also be important when it chairs the United Nations Security Council next year.

# EURASIA&WORLD

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 8, 2017

## Nigmatulin urges support for President's initiatives at IPU forum

Staff Report

ASTANA – Chairman of the Mazhilis (lower chamber of Kazakhstan's Parliament) Nurlan Nigmatulin appealed to the world parliamentary community to support the counterterrorism initiatives of President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev, the Mazhilis press service reported.

Nigmatulin reviewed Kazakhstan's proposals and Nazarbayev's efforts in strengthening regional and global security for the 137th Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, which drew parliamentarians from more than 160 countries to Tauride Palace in St. Petersburg to unite their efforts to promote peaceful dialogue.

"Back in 2015, President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev, speaking at the 70th session of the UN General Assembly in New York, put forward a number of initiatives to counter international terrorism aimed at creating a Global Anti-Terrorist Coalition under the auspices of the United Nations. Today, from this high rostrum, we appeal to fellow parliamentarians from the member states of the Inter-Parliamentary Union to support the initiative of the President of Kazakhstan to develop and adopt 'The Code of Conduct on the Achievement of a World Free of Terrorism' within the framework of the United Nations. I'm sure it will make a significant contribution to the global parliamentary community in the fight against one of the most serious threats of the 21st century," Nigmatulin said.

The speaker also explained the unique model of interethnic and inter-confessional dialogue that Kazakhstan has formed and is success-



Nurlan Nigmatulin

fully developing. Among its basic principles, he noted, are the constitutional and legal provision of equal opportunities for all citizens of the country in the realisation of their religious and cultural interests.

A purposeful state policy on the development of the culture and languages of the ethnic groups of Kazakhstan, the formation of effective institutions for interethnic accord and a consistent practice of interfaith dialogue were also noted.

Discussing the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan as a unique institution for supporting harmonious interethnic relations, Nigmatulin noted the commendation of the assembly by the UN, UNESCO and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

"The experience of the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan could be of interest to the world community as an effective model for institutionalising interethnic dialogue for multicultural societies," Nigmatulin said.

Nigmatulin met with Speaker of the Great National Assembly of Turkey Ismail Kahraman to talk about issues of strengthening inter-parliamentary cooperation. They paid special attention to interaction within the framework of the Parliamentary Assembly of Turkic-speaking States and the relevance of parliamentary diplomacy in the face of modern challenges.

## 826-km Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway launches operations

By Aigerim Seisembayeva

ASTANA – The 826-km Baku-Tbilisi-Kars (BTK) railway route launched operations Oct. 30 with an opening ceremony at the Baku International Sea Trade Port in Baku, Azerbaijan, according to a Kazakh Prime Minister's office press release.

The route has a current annual capacity of 1 million passengers and 5 million tonnes of freight with plans to increase capacity to 3 million passengers and 17 million tonnes of freight.

The BTK railway route is part of the Trans-Caspian International Transport Corridor, which connects the railway networks of Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey. It starts at the shore of the Caspian Sea in Azerbaijan, runs through Georgia's capital of Tbilisi and through the eastern part of Turkey before merging with the Turkish and European railway systems.

The new line will open new routes to the Black and Mediterranean Seas for Kazakhstan, according to the press release.

The new railway route is expected to help Kazakhstan transport through its territory up to two million containers per year by 2020.



Photo credit: sudanews.org

Kazakhstan's locomotives produced by Lokomotiv Kurastyru Zauyty and Electric Locomotive Zauyty will be used in the sections of the new BTK railway corridor. Ten locomotives are ready for operation, and by 2020 Kazakhstan will supply 40 cargo electric locomotives to Azerbaijan.

The route is expected to reduce transit times between China and Europe to around 15 days, which is more than twice as fast as the sea

route at less than half the price of air transportation.

Cargo and passenger trains will be able to depart from China, enter Kazakhstan at the Khorgos gateway, be taken across the Caspian Sea by ferry to the Port of Baku and then be loaded directly onto the BTK and head to Europe.

In addition to the host, President Ilham Aliyev of Azerbaijan, the opening ceremony was attended by Kazakh Prime Minister Bakytzhan

Sagintayev, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Prime Minister of Uzbekistan Abdulla Aripov, Georgian Prime Minister Giorgi Kvirikashvili, Minister of Transport of Tajikistan Khudoyor Khudoyorzoda and Turkmenistan's Minister of Railway Transport Deryaguly Bashimov.

"Baku-Tbilisi-Kars is part of a big Silk Road and it's important that we have implemented this project using our own funds," said Erdogan, according to Reuters.com.

## CIS to create common photobank

By Frol Leandroer

ASTANA – The Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) will be creating a common photobank available to member states. The idea was approved at the 23rd CIS Heads of State Information Agencies (Information Council) meeting held in Sochi, Russia, which coincided with the opening of the 19th World Festival of Youth and Students.

Event participants discussed is-

issues of news agencies' cultural interaction, in particular as it relates to information support next year during the CIS "Year of Culture." The representatives talked about current trends in developing agency journalism, the practice of using an interagency informer operating in test mode, organising press tours and creative seminars for journalists and photo correspondents and exchanging experience in digitising photo archives.

Based on the results, the information council agreed to create

the photobank. State news agencies also advocated for more active coverage of issues relating to developing and promoting domestic tourism as it relates to council members. As 2018 will mark 100 years since the Belarusian Telegraph Agency (BelTA) and Armenpress News Agency were founded, the state news agencies agreed to hold information council meetings in both countries next year.

The council, established in November 1995, includes state news

services heads from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia and Tajikistan. Its activities are aimed at ensuring information interaction and cooperation among CIS countries, creating favourable conditions for unhindered dissemination of information and effective exchange of professional experience, as well as strengthening media partnership. The meeting involved agency heads from all countries involved except Kyrgyzstan and Moldova.

## Kazakhstan hosts CSTO Unbreakable Brotherhood 2017 exercises

Staff Report

ASTANA – The Unbreakable Brotherhood 2017 exercises on post-conflict resolution with the peacekeeping forces of the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) were launched on the Iliisky training ground in the Almaty region, reported the Kazakh Ministry of Defence press service. The manoeuvres, held Oct. 16-20, were another stage of the operational-strategic exercise Combat Brotherhood 2017.

The exercise involves peacekeeping contingents from Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan and CSTO Collective Peacekeeping

Forces (CPF) police units. Representatives of the International Committee of the Red Cross, the Joint Staff and the CSTO Secretariat have also been invited.

The main goals of the Unbreakable Brotherhood-2017 exercises were to strengthen mutual understanding and cooperation between the peacekeeping contingents of the CSTO member states, increase the practical skills and skills of commanders and staff of all levels in preparing the peacekeeping operation and CSTO CPF units and solving problems of ending and localising conflicts, as well as improve the peacekeeping contingents personnel field training during activities in the difficult conditions of Central Asia.

Tasks were coordinated for negotiating, escorting humanitarian supplies, patrolling and carrying out service at checkpoints and observation posts and blocking and eliminating militant training camps.

The CSTO CPF involves psychological struggle and information confrontation units. According to the scenario, the CPF will increase actions step-by-step in conditions involving the mass arrival of people displaced from armed conflict zones.

The final stage of the Combat Brotherhood 2017 exercise will be tasked for completion by CSTO Collective Rapid Reaction Forces (CRRF) contingents, to be held Nov. 10-20 in Tajikistan.



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# Nation&Capital

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 8, 2017

**PEOPLE**

**Kazakh scientist invents drug testing device in UK**

**B2**

**CULTURE**

**Gorky Russian Drama Theatre takes spotlight at international festival**

**B3**

**SPORTS**

**FC Astana secures first away win in European club competition group stage**

**B7**

## Brave Dogs Almaty organises charity photoshoots, seeks to expand

By Zhazira Dyussebekova

ASTANA – Brave Dogs Almaty sponsored its third charity photoshoot in an Almaty mall Oct. 8 to advocate for animal shelters. The event attracted more than 2,000 guests and the community of Northern breed dogs and their owners says the event is only the beginning.

“This photoshoot was very different from the first two, not only by the scale and quantity of visitors, but also by its originality. In addition to the standard seasonal photo areas in fall and Halloween styles, we wanted to introduce something interesting and relevant. The third photo session’s main feature was the photo area inspired by the popular American TV series ‘Game of Thrones,’” said group member, leader and event co-organiser Toma Sumarokova in an interview with The Astana Times.

The photoshoot involved approximately 25 dogs, 50 participants, 15 technical staff, two of the largest elite animal nurseries, 20 sponsors and 10 professional photographers.

“No words can express the great gratitude to our dear sponsors and all the participants of the event, like the sincere eyes of animals rescued from hunger, and we are very happy that there are still such wonderful, kind people among us. They are not alien to the problems of a defenceless, abandoned animal and that they find the time and means to help. Each collar, every kilogramme of feed, every penny collected for the shelter is already a big acquisition; this is a new chance to live,” she added.

Brave Dogs Almaty was launched by Yevgeniya Medvedeva as the WhatsApp Happy Dog



for owners of breeds such as Siberian Husky, Alaskan Malamute, Laika and Samoyed. As the club expanded, it changed its name to Brave Dogs Almaty. The group has more than 100 participants, approximately 60-70 of whom are active, note the founders.

“We are all influenced in our lives by social networks. Every day, watching the news you see animals that are in trouble... So together by our chat we were collecting small contributions for shelters, but unfortunately it was not enough. Therefore, the idea to arrange a small photo shoot made a real furore and has grown into a big event, which has now become a constant and in demand,” said Sumarokova.

The community has already

helped three animal shelters – Novy Shans (New Chance), Kotopes and Fond Dobrykh Del (Foundation for Good Deeds). In September, members visited Solnyshko (The Sun), a foster home.

“Of course, the list [of charity photoshoots] is not large, but nevertheless we understand that the organisation of charity photoshoots requires months of preparation and a great investment of forces, means and ideas. The most important fact is that we do not intend to stop there and by the end of next year we hope that the list will increase at least three times,” she added.

In addition to public charity photo sessions, Brave Dogs Almaty organises individual photosets. Their dogs are shot for commer-

cial and even participate in thematic parties.

“We really want to share the kindness of our dogs with the world, to introduce people to beautiful Northern breeds such as Siberian Husky and Alaskan Malamute. We want to say that the dogs are not aggressive, are intelligent and that each of them has its own character, its soul. We want to teach humankind to be a little more responsible and have compassion for those who are in trouble and cannot take care of themselves. Many animals remain on the streets and end up in shelters because of human negligence and cruelty. Making the world a little kinder to animals – that’s the main goal of Brave Dogs Almaty,” she said.

Continued on Page B5

## Kazakh restaurant opens in Manhattan

Staff Report

ASTANA – While studying in the United States, Karaganda siblings Farida Gabbasova and Zhanibek Gabbasov missed the tastes of home. To treat themselves and others to their favourite foods, they have opened a small restaurant in Manhattan featuring Kazakh cuisine, reported 24.kz.

“Everyone is trying to open their own cuisine in America: Chinese, Turks, many other nations and nationalities. Why doesn’t Kazakhstan make its cuisine a discovery for many countries? There are Uzbek restaurants in Brooklyn, but there are no Kazakh ones anywhere in America or in any state. To be honest, we did not know that we would be the first Kazakh people in this sphere here. We did not have such a goal,” said Farida Gabbasova.

The cosy atmosphere features Kazakh melodies and Berik Kulumirov paintings to attract tourists from different countries. The new restaurant, however, must make a few concessions to adapt to local preferences and trends, noted the founders.

“Our chef, who made a menu with us and made recipes, is known in New York. He has worked with Robert De Niro. He developed a menu to taste good not only for us, but also

for the American population. Here, we have more organic food. Our special dish is called waffle dog, with sausages made according to our recipe. Our direction is more like a healthy kitchen. The people think that these are sandwiches; in fact, they are organic burgers and meat,” said Zhanibek Gabbasov.

“We decided to call the restaurant simply Siblings. This word translates as brother and sister. For Americans, it’s such a warm name; it is a reminder of home comfort and cuisine and they like it very much. We would like more people in America to find out about Kazakhstan. They say that the Kazakh people are very well-mannered. Here, they respect us,” said Gabbasova.

To promote their cuisine, the entrepreneurs have launched catering services for large companies. The menu includes beshbarmak (boiled meat and noodles), kuyrdak (stewed meat) and pilaf. They also wanted to add kumys (fermented horse milk) to the exotic list of dishes, but were unable to find it in New York state.

“Representatives of an American company called us and asked what the pilaf was. We explained everything and sent the photos and they were interested in it. It was something unusual for them and they liked it. They wrote us very big feedback with five stars. They continue to order,” said Gabbasov.

## Nikita Panassenko wins Track Cycling World Cup event in Poland

By Anuar Abdrakhmanov

ASTANA – TrackTeamAstana’s Nikita Panassenko, a 25-year-old rider on the Kazakh national team, beat some of the world’s best cyclists to win the men’s points race in the first stage of the International Cycling Union (UIC) Track Cycling World Cup. The event was held Nov. 3-5 in Pruszkow, Poland.

The dynamic race required the athletes to cover 30 kilometres in 130 laps. Points were available in 12 laps based on 5-3-2-1 system, in addition to 20 extra points for the round.

The main rivalry developed between Panassenko and Greek cyclist Christos Volikakis. The latter gained some advantage at the beginning of the race, while the Kazakh got his opponent out of balance with a good series of at-

tacks, leaving him eventually with no chance to win. Panassenko triumphed with 42 points, followed by Volikakis with 27 and Italian Liam Bertazzo with 21.

“This is a very important step both for Panassenko himself and Kazakhstan’s cycling. In particular, this is an important achievement for our young riders who want to achieve something, so they have a real-life example that everything is possible. Kazakhstan’s Artyom Zakharov and Sultanmurat Miraliyev previously won medals at the World Cup stages, but not gold ones. Nikita added a gold medal to our team’s collection at the highest-level competitions. This is yet another proof that we are moving in the right direction,” said TrackTeamAstana Manager Vladimir Bushansky.

Continued on Page B7

## World Bank organises storytelling event to raise awareness and address poverty

By Aigerim Bulambayeva

ASTANA – The World Bank marked International Day for the Eradication of Poverty Oct. 17 with the storytelling event “Talking for Change.” A number of compassionate speakers shared their personal experiences and life stories and described how those actions changed their way of thinking and improved the lives of others. They focused the audience’s attention on societal issues and possible solutions.

The date was not a random choice. The UN-designated In-

ternational Day for the Eradication of Poverty is Oct. 17 and 2017 is the declaration’s 25th anniversary. The World Bank and Kazakhstan are also celebrating 25 years of partnership, when the international financial institution has helped the country implement numerous projects aimed at development reforms.

Eradicating poverty and sharing prosperity are the World Bank Group’s mission and main goals. Commemorating the day is part of its wider campaign that seeks to raise awareness, build support and catalyse action to end extreme poverty by

2030 and create opportunity for all.

The speakers and moderators indicated there is more than one definition of “poverty” and thus there must be more than one way of solving the problem. Ato Brown, World Bank Country Manager for Kazakhstan, said his definition is the “inability to achieve one’s full potential.” As someone raised in a middle-class family, he said he did not realise the scale of the problem, even during the 1982 revolution in Ghana, and stressed the importance of raising awareness of poverty-related issues among the population.

“It took me years to see the glass as half full rather than as half empty,” he noted.

Brown discussed some of the recent trends identified by the World Bank report. According to the data, fewer people throughout the world now live in poverty and, in Kazakhstan particularly, poverty has been consistently falling. The nation’s positive economic growth peaks between 2002-2007 and 2013-2014, both fuelled by oil, resulted in more job openings and a consequent reduction in the poverty level. The growth rate in the second period was significantly lower than the first, implying smaller returns on oil extraction and signalling the need for a new growth model.

“We saw the oil economy was not sufficient in sustaining growth over the future,” said Brown.

He added poverty, defined by geography and occupation, is distributed unevenly across the country. Poverty is more prevalent in the southern regions and Brown argued “self-employed” – a term widely used in statistical reports – is strongly associated with the poorest cluster of the population.

Despite overall positive trends during the past years, the issue of poverty remains compelling in Kazakhstan due to dependence on the oil economy, poverty in the countryside and the underdevelopment of a strong middle class.

“We have a solid 15-20 percent of the population in the upper income bracket and similar percent in the ‘poor’ category, but a very big band of the lower middle class – a very vulnerable group that can easily fall down into the poor category,” said Brown.



**THINGS TO WATCH & PLACES TO GO**

**ASTANA OPERA**

**November 12 at 12 a.m.** The Carnival of the Animals, concert for kids

**November 14, 18 at 7 p.m.** Classical music concert

**November 17, 18 at 7 p.m.** Carmen, opera

**HAS SANAT GALLERY**

**November 2 - November 23** Kulbatyrov’s artwork

**BARYS ARENA**

**November 15 at 7.30 p.m.** HC Barys - HC Avangard

**CAPITAL CIRCUS**

**November 11, 12 at 4 p.m.** New show by Mstislav Zapashnyi

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 8, 2017

## Astana Opera star to perform Carmen



By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – Kazakh mezzo-soprano Dina Khamzina will perform the title role in “Carmen” at the Astana Opera. The premier of the George Bizet classic will be staged Nov. 17 and 18 at the opera house’s main hall.

Khamzina has performed the role many times, yet considers each to be a different interpretation.

“Our life is constantly changing: today you meet a fascinating person, tomorrow – read an interesting book. All of this makes an impression on us – the mood and even the worldview changes. Even if we perform the same aria often, it still cannot

be the same, because when we go onstage, we, the artists, cannot be switched on and listened to like a recording. Once my Carmen was a naive girl, a hooligan; now I see her completely differently, more wise, free,” she said in an exclusive interview with The Astana Times.

The opera singer discussed her own freedom.

“Eating whatever you want and sleeping as much as you want is not freedom, of course. What is a gypsy camp? It is a constant struggle for survival, but this survival is not associated with any dependence. These people do not depend on circumstances, are not attached to one place; they all have inner freedom, which cannot be compared to anything. In the case

of Carmen, even death cannot withstand freedom,” she said.

Khamzina described herself as “a reserved person,” so she believes she cannot “overdo” Carmen.

“I can see the fine line which must not be crossed. Many people say that this is not my part, but my personality has nothing to do with Carmen’s personality. However, I should not be like my heroines. I am not in the theatre to play myself on stage; on the contrary, I am constantly searching, seeking unfamiliar portrayals for me, discovering something new in myself in order to convey to the audience what the composer wanted to say,” she noted.

“What makes us different from dramatic artists is the fact

that music helps the opera singers. Which word should be emphasised, how to sing this or that phrase – all this is spelled out in the score. The stage directors’ interpretations are also very important; each of them is different,” she added.

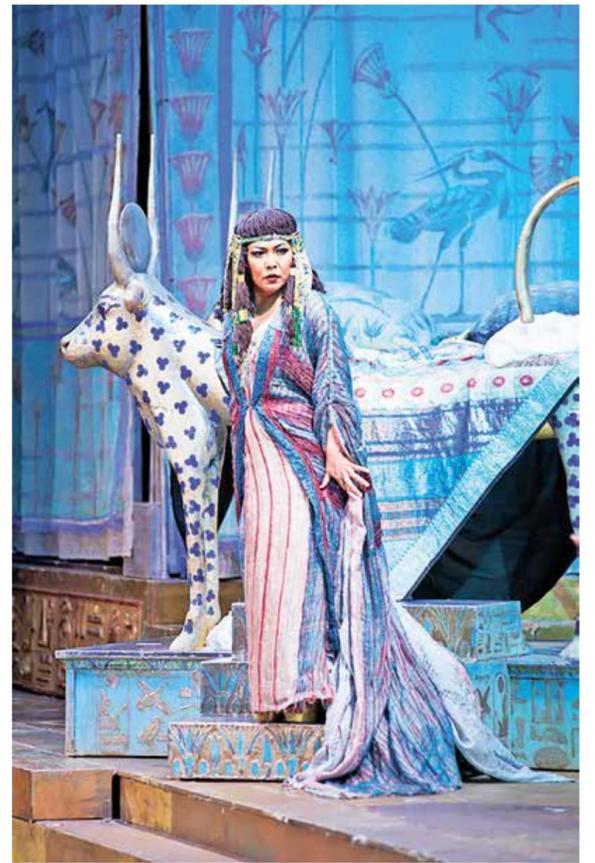
Khamzina strongly disagrees with directors who portray Carmen as vulgar. She is certain the character’s extraordinarily beauty and inner freedom attracted José.

“This ‘promiscuity’ does not correspond with the music. A free woman, uninhibited, open, spirited, passionate – this is not a vulgar woman. These concepts should not be confused,” she noted.

The libretto was written and is performed in French. An opera is typically presented in its original language and the singers must know at least the basics of grammar and phonetics.

“The artist must first of all understand what he or she is singing, which is why we do a word-for-word translation. I studied French grammar, which is much nuanced. Linguists worked with us, made suggestions, explained the meaning of words. Some words, which were actively used in France in the middle of the 19th century, could be moved into a passive vocabulary today; that is, they are no longer used, so the help of philologists was really needed. I do not speak the language perfectly, but I would very much like to study it, to speak it. Among other things, we took part in a master class with a tutor from Italy, the wonderful professional concertmaster Mzia Bachturidze. We hope that everything will turn out to be at the highest level,” she said.

Khamzina recently returned from Bishkek and the International Festival of Opera Art named after Bulat Minzhilkiev.



“I received a personal engagement and, together with the artists from the Mariinsky Theatre, performed in the opera ‘Aida’ by Giuseppe Verdi, where I sang the part of Amneris. On social networks, an opera fan wrote that the interpretation I created overshadowed all previous ones that she had seen until this day. Of course, such assessments are a source of inspiration and joy. I understand that I am growing, that I manage to convey the conceived ideas onstage,” she said.

She is planning a tour through Kazakh cities to make her own small contribution to the Rukha-

ni Zhangyru (Modernisation of Kazakhstan’s Identity) programme. The effort is seeking to develop and represent modern Kazakh culture throughout the world.

“Therefore, after the premiere of ‘Carmen’ I want to give a number of concerts in my hometown of Uralsk, as well as in other regions. Cultivating patriotic feelings and instilling love for the motherland are some of the tasks of artists. Spirituality is priceless; it is the foundation of a healthy and educated society. Therefore, we must make every effort for the prosperity of Kazakhstan,” said Khamzina.

## Kazakh scientist invents drug testing device in UK

By Zhazira Dyussebekova

ASTANA – Kazakh chemist Gabit Nurumbetov, the principal scientist for Medherant, the U.K.-based company that produces next-generation drug delivery patches, has invented a new device for testing transdermal drugs. The diffusion cell helps to test substances more quickly and efficiently.

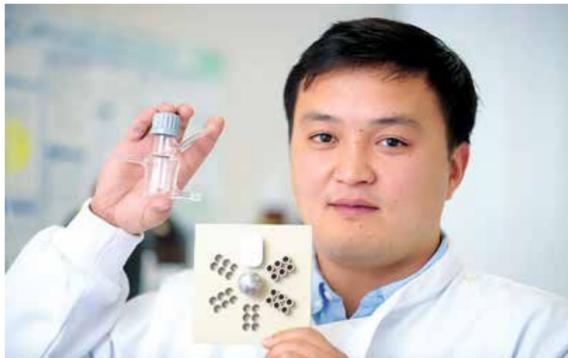
“The device allows us to speed up the development process of our patches by 5-10 times and this is our competitive advantage. For example, big pharmaceutical companies spend a year on patch development, while we need two-three months,” said Nurumbetov in an interview with The Astana Times.

The new device is an improved, miniaturised and multiplexed version of a Franz cell – an appliance commonly used to test transdermal drugs. It allows Medherant to test 108 formulations of a drug per day, compared to about 12 in the same period with traditional Franz cells, according to company’s press release.

The diffusion cell is made of chemically-resistant engineering plastic similar to that used on Formula 1 cars. The team needed nearly three months to create the device, making two prototypes before the third became fully operational.

Medherant is a creator of the TEPI Patch, a thin, flexible adhesive patch that can consistently deliver a steady, targeted, high dose of many different types of drugs through the skin. Depending on the requirements for a particular therapy, the patch may be designed to deliver a drug for 12, 24 or 72 hours, or even longer. The company also uses its innovative patches to develop a variety of products to treat pain, including ibuprofen and lidocaine. It plans to license the products for launch onto the global marketplace, following successful clinical trials and regulatory approval, in the next two-three years.

“Nurumbetov’s high-throughput device is at the core of Medherant’s



Gabit Nurumbetov

sector-leading R&D capabilities and has enabled the company to test over 50 drugs for compatibility in their TEPI Patch adhesive polymers over a 24-month period – a feat which would have been unachievable with a small team without his innovation,” reads the press release.

Shymkent-born Nurumbetov graduated from Kazakh-British Technical University, then continuing for eight years at the University of Warwick in Coventry, England, to complete a Ph.D. in Polymer Chemistry. He worked closely with Professors Stefan Bon and David Haddleton. After completing his degree, he was employed as a researcher in Haddleton’s group, working on improving polymerisation performance for industrial partners.

“Having graduated from Kazakh-British Technical University in 2009, I was keen to continue studies in one of the leading global universities. My application seemed interesting to Professor Bon at the University of Warwick. Following a successful interview, he offered me the opportunity of becoming a Ph.D. student within his group,” said Nurumbetov.

“Being a member of the Bon Lab for three years and the Haddleton Group as a postdoctoral researcher for two and a-half years, I had a chance to broaden my knowledge

and learn how to apply it to real-life applications,” he added.

Nurumbetov and Haddleton were both interested in using novel polymers for developing adhesive technologies for application to medical patches. In 2015, Haddleton founded Medherant with Nurumbetov being the founding scientist and this year becoming the company’s principal scientist.

“The transition from the academic environment to Medherant was challenging, but it has been a very exciting experience. As a member of a spin-out company, you always need to consider some aspects of everyday routine which you have never thought of as a researcher in academic laboratories. Parameters such as costs of chemicals, energy consumption, waste disposal and laboratory supply have become an everyday part of the equation,” said Nurumbetov.

“The interesting part is that you are encouraged to increase the company’s productivity by improving conventional processes and instruments. That is how Medherant’s high-throughput diffusion test system was designed. After a couple of experiments with the traditional Franz cell, we spotted an opportunity to invent a device that allowed us to increase the speed of our product testing by up to ten times – simultaneously reducing the cost of our operations,” he added.

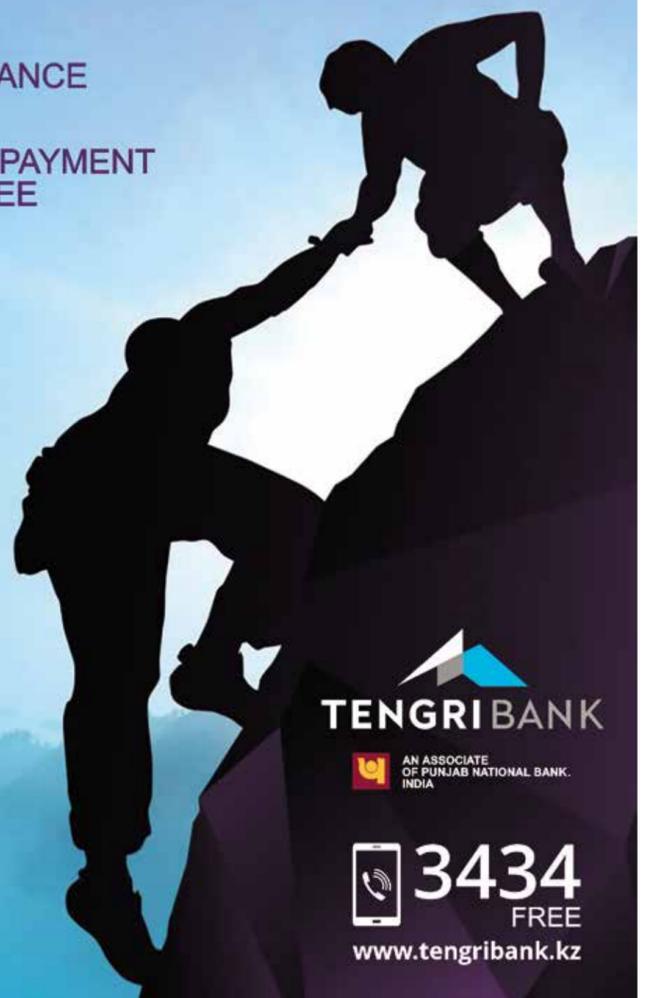
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# CULTURE

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 8, 2017

## Gorky Russian Drama Theatre takes spotlight at international festival



By Dana Omirgazy

ASTANA – The Gorky State Academic Russian Drama Theatre presented “Mankurt. Eternal slave,” one of the best plays in its repertoire, at the Synergy World Theatre Festival 2017 in Serbia.

The play by famous Kyrgyz writer Chinghiz Aitmatov, directed by honoured artist of Tajikistan Barzu Abdurazakov and performed by the Astana theatre

troupe under the leadership of its director Yerkin Kassenov, became a true embodiment of synergy demonstrating the high level of Central Asian theatre. The festival hosts assisted by participating in the event and providing scenery for the performance.

The performance was accompanied by Serbian and English subtitles, allowing every audience member to ponder its philosophy. The production was preceded by an exhibition about Kazakhstan,

Astana and the theatre itself. National music, kuis (stories told by music) and songs about the young capital sounded in the hall, providing a special atmosphere and acquainting those in attendance with the culture of the nation’s people. Visitors learned about the theatre’s history and looked at the rare historical photographs of the first buildings of Akmolinsk, as Astana used to be called in the 19th and first half of the 20th centuries, which turned into images of

the modern city. The performance received good reviews from both festival organisers and the audience.

“We have long waited for the theatre team in Serbia. The organisers were especially interested in the performance announced in the programme. The modern theatre brings cultural heritage of not only its people, but also the world of drama. The development and cooperation of theatres is the result of cooperation of states,” said

Synergy Festival Director Valentin Venecel.

Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev spoke about strengthening bilateral cultural and humanitarian ties and opening a monument in Belgrade to Kazakh poet Zhambyl Zhabayev during his visit to Serbia last year.

The week-long festival included theatrical collectives from Hungary, Kazakhstan, Macedonia, Romania and Serbia. Theatre representatives held symposiums and

shared experiences and plans for the upcoming season. The event ended with participants exchanging gifts and expressing their desire to visit one of Kazakhstan’s oldest theatres.

Synergy World Theatre Festival was created to gather professional artists in one place and create works in their individual languages. It offers an opportunity to exchange the most concrete artistic and cultural experiences, according to the festival’s website.

## Young Kazakhs perform at UNESCO headquarters

By Frol Leandro

ASTANA – Eight young Kazakhs performed at United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation UNESCO headquarters in Paris as winners of the nation’s second Children in the Rhythm of the World Creative Youth Festival.

More than 2,000 children from all regions submitted videos of their performances this summer. Twenty-four contestants advanced to the final stage, a series of master classes with leading Kazakh artists. The jury chose the best in three categories – instrumental and vocal arts and choreography.

The finalists demonstrated the results of their lessons at a gala concert at the Abai State Academic Opera and Ballet Theatre accompanied by the Almaty mayor’s pop and symphony orchestra under the leadership of

Kazakh honoured figure Alexander Belyakov.

The jury selected the eight individuals who travelled to the French capital. Representing instrumental art was Mayirbek Azimbayev, 14 from Sarykemer

from Shymkent performed in vocal art. Choreography was represented by Auzhan Bakhytkyzy, 15, and Gumar Sultanbek, 17, of the capital.

“The Children in the Rhythm of the World project is aimed at

country, is always happy to provide comprehensive support to such significant social projects. Moreover, together with the Kazakhstan National Federation of UNESCO Clubs, we fulfilled the dream of the finalists and helped them to take the first step towards great art,” said deputy executive director and Nursultan Nazarbayev Foundation representative office in Almaty director Sergei Tokhtarov.

The finalists were joined on stage by well-known artists such as Aida Ayupova, KeshYou and Alash Uly.

The UNESCO performance was held Oct. 17 in conjunction with the Rukhani Janghyru programme, unveiled by President Nursultan Nazarbayev in April 2017. The Children in the Rhythm of the World festival was organised by the First President of Kazakhstan Foundation and Kazakhstan National Federation of UNESCO Clubs.

“The Children in the Rhythm of the World project is aimed at identifying and supporting gifted young performers of our country, bringing their creative potential to light and popularising the national culture through children’s creativity.”

village of Zhambyl region, a student of the Republican Specialised Music School named after Akhmet Zhubanov; Azhar Kadylbekova, 15, and Azhar Tursynaliyeva, 15. Ayim and Gulim Madil, 13, from Almaty and Aigerim Temirbekova, 15,

identifying and supporting gifted young performers of our country, bringing their creative potential to light and popularising the national culture through children’s creativity. The Nazarbayev Foundation, pursuing its mission to support talented youth of the

## Transforma space invites creative theatres to collaborate



By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – The Transforma cultural space opened in Almaty Oct. 21 with the premiere of “B.O.Q.” staged by Laboratory No.316, an independent theatrical company. The multidisciplinary site offers room for theatre productions, dance and music events, film screenings, exhibitions, lectures and other creative projects

The venue is located at SmArt Point, the largest Central Asian co-working centre in Kazakhstan. The Kazakh-language play directed by Kuba Adylov will also be presented Nov. 1, 3 and 4.

“The Reasons to Live,” a multimedia show by director Viktor Nemchenko will be included Oct. 25 as part of the Dramcom virtual platform. The project will be broadcast live on the Internet, offering the audience an opportunity to interact with the characters in real time. The play brings together four extraordinary women, revealing the details of their destiny.

“The Transforma cultural space’s philosophy is to be free in terms of space transformation. The space should and can be transformed into project requests. We can hold performances, concerts, lectures and many other things here. Usually the project adapts to the conditions of the site; now, the stage easily and harmoniously adapts to the requirements of a particular project,” Transforma Artistic Director Antoine Doukravets told The Astana Times prior to the opening.

“The preparatory work is underway to create projects dedicated to independent and experimental theatre groups with the support of the Soros Foundation. The British Council supported us at the stage of developing space design,” he added. The space does not have a perma-

ment acting troupe and the task of the artistic director is to set project direction based on certain principles.

“New faces and new names are our first principle,” noted Doukravets. “Talented people are in need of a theatre platform, espe-

“The Transforma cultural space’s philosophy is to be free in terms of space transformation. The space should and can be transformed into project requests.”

cially those who do not have their own premises. Our space is perfect for rehearsal and performances. The second is experimental principle. We aim for our projects to bring something new. We want people to unite creative groups and perform extraordinary and avant-garde performances. The third principle is relevance. We support projects that reflect our reality. For example, what is happening in our society, what people think and discuss, what problems they face.”

Transforma is open to cooperation and experiment.

“The first month is preparatory for us. We are looking for interesting projects and teams who want to perform on our stage. We are also open for musical and lecture projects. Our mission is to develop and open new projects, to support young creative teams and promote new approaches to the creation of art. We believe that experiment and innovation are the cornerstones of contemporary art and development and progress are impossible without them,” he said.



WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 8, 2017

# Yandex.Lyceum launches in Kazakhstan

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – Yandex, Russia's largest technology company, launched its Yandex.Lyceum computer programming educational programme in early October in physics and mathematics schools in the capital and Almaty. Eighth and ninth grade students will study programming basics and write an app with graphic user interface.

"We want to share the practical knowledge and skills we have accumulated at Yandex. We are confident that the dissemination of knowledge is a great way to make the world better. Education can become accessible and exciting with the help of our technologies," said Yandex.Lyceum head Marina Suslova prior to the opening.

The two-year curriculum, developed by the Yandex School of Data Analysis, is divided into two parts – the basics of Python programming and fundamentals of industrial programming. Each course lasts a full academic year and must be taken sequentially.

Programming skills are necessary not just for those who want to work in the IT sector, according to Suslova. Young qualified personnel with practical experience in advanced technologies are in demand in all fields.

"The Yandex.Lyceum project is the company's initiative, but we



Yandex CEO Arkady Volozh (R) meets with students and teachers in Almaty.

launch the projects if there's great interest and support from local educational partners," she said.

After testing the pilot project in several Russian cities last year, the company received a number of

proposals to open schools in other urban areas.

"Currently, the education process is in full swing. The students perform tasks in the classroom and at home. At the end of the course, they

should know the types of data and be able to work with them. The programme is not focused on preparing for Olympiads or competitions. It is aimed at creating a child's thought process so that he or she can use

the operators and solve problems. Python is good at making mobile applications and problem solving," said Astana Yandex.Lyceum coordinator Gulnur Aubakirova in an Oct. 26 interview.

The course involves rigorous selection procedures for local teachers, who are Olympiad prize winners with extensive knowledge and experience. They will participate in trainings throughout the school year, including educational seminars, webinars and a series of test works.

"Children are very enthusiastic and do all the tasks properly. They are so motivated. We did a mailing to all schools about the audition at the beginning of the school year. More than 200 applications were submitted and 30 students were enrolled. We already have those who want to take part in next year's audition," she added.

The courses are free of charge. Classes are held twice a week and can be combined with the school programme. Students must pass an online test designed to test the individual's ability to think logically and analytically and then be interviewed.

The pilot project was implemented in four cities last year. Currently, there are 60 lyceums in 27 Russian and Armenian cities and two schools in Kazakhstan.

Yandex.Lyceum was developed with the participation of School of Data Analysis, a Yandex educational project. The more than 600 specialists who have studied there since 2007 are now working in IT companies in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and other countries.

## Electronic bracelets for convicts pass tests

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – A pilot project using convict electronic bracelets developed and produced in Kazakhstan has been successfully completed. As a result, the government is planning wider use.

The bracelets, a means of tracking individuals under suspended sentence with liberty restraints, were created by aerospace committee scientists and engineers at the Institute of Space Techniques and Technology. The pilot project, based on developments by experts in satellite navigation, was implemented through the criminal-executive system department probation services in Almaty and Almaty region, reported the Kazkosmos press service.

Electronic bracelets serve as

homing devices required for convicts under house arrest or parole. The device sends a radio frequency signal containing location and other information to a monitoring centre. Police are informed if the person moves outside an allowed range.

The bracelets were tested on 15 volunteers convicted for various types of crimes and sentenced to restraint by court decision. The Almaty and Taldykorgan penitentiary system departments established special monitoring centres. Trained dispatchers remotely monitored the convicts' locations on an electronic map, recording all violations of court-imposed restrictions.

Based on the project results, the Kazakh-developed electronic bracelets allow for continuous monitoring of controlled

individuals, according to penitentiary committee staff. The bracelets provide remote identification and automated data collection to process the individuals' compliance with restricted movement.

The project heads noted the domestic bracelets ensure information security, as those manufactured abroad can have the possibility of information leakage and remote system shutdown. The budget funds spent for their purchase also remain in Kazakhstan, create new jobs and stimulate the development of local technology.

Electronic monitoring was invented by a small group of scholars at Harvard University in the 1960s. It was used for the first time in Albuquerque, New Mexico (U.S.) in 1983.

## Government, UNDP to support 15 city energy saving projects

Staff Report

ASTANA – Fifteen Kazakh cities, including the capital, Kostanai, Shymkent and Taraz, will install energy saving technologies by 2020 to reduce carbon intensity and enhance infrastructure energy efficiency, said United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Deputy Resident Representative Munkhtuya Altangerel during an Oct. 13 press briefing.

The project will be implemented as part of an Aug. 28 agreement between the Kazakh Ministry for Investments and Development and Damu Entrepreneurship Development Fund to support businesses working in renewable energy

and the energy saving field with a much broader goal of fostering the nation's transition to a green economy.

The project's overall cost is estimated at \$6 billion and UNDP is set to provide financial support through subsidies, the mechanism similar to that used by the Damu Fund to bolster local businesses.

"Commercial loans taken for the implementation of the projects involving low-carbon technologies will have 10 percent of the loan's bank rate covered by the state to improve the project's financial indicators and shorten the payback period [for the project to recoup its initial investments]," said Altangerel.

With an average interest rate of 15 percent, businesses granted subsidies will repay loans at a 5-percent interest rate, she added, noting the rate corresponds to the level of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) member states.

Altangerel said projects focused on reducing carbon dioxide emissions will eventually be included on the list of the economy's priority sectors that are entitled to state financial assistance.

The programme will continue through the end of October, she added, and every Kazakh citizen can take part in the project and suggest ideas that can help improve his or her region's environment.

## Scientists make strides in identifying genetic predisposition to disease

Staff Report

ASTANA – The National Centre for Biotechnology recently discussed advances in identifying diseases at the genetic level.

"We find out disorders through DNA and this allows us to take timely measures. At a genetic level, we can determine such socially important diseases as oncology, cardiovascular diseases metabolic syndrome and metabolic disorders," said head of the centre's laboratory Elena Zholdybayeva.

Zholdybayeva stressed that the ability to determine predisposition to diseases at an earlier age is a big advantage in dealing with them.

"If there are any disorders in the coded area of DNA, the doc-

tor has the opportunity to make correct and timely prescriptions and recommendations. It is necessary to conduct research to reduce the risk of specific diseases," she said.

She noted that creating a full genetic passport is expensive. However, it is possible to conduct an analysis of some of its positions, especially to identify hereditary diseases.

An individual genetic passport contains information on the predisposition to various diseases and recommendations on the types of physical activity based on genetic analyses. The presence of such a passport and the recommendations of specialists will allow a patient to lead a healthy lifestyle that corresponds to his individual genetic characteristics.



Google play

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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, NOVEMBER 8, 2017

# Twenty remedial schools receive modern equipment

By Dana Omirgazy

ASTANA – Twenty schools for children with hearing, vision and intellectual impairments in the Almaty, Mangistau and Pavlodar regions and Astana were equipped with special devices this year, reported *tengrinews.kz*.

The nation has 100 remedial schools which train more than 15,000 children. The equipment was last updated in 2005 and all schools will receive new equipment by the end of the year under the Menin Yelim programme, a campaign initiated by Samruk Kazyna Sovereign Wealth Fund and coordinated by the company's trust social development foundation.

Special printers that make any drawing convex to the touch and a magnifying glass that helps enlarge and decipher text are helpful for children with visual impairments and youngsters deprived of sight. Induction loops that transmit the teacher's voice to the child, additional devices for hearing aids and special audiometers for hearing tests are de-



signed for children with hearing impairments. The schools also received ball pools, materials to

develop motor skills and logopedic trainers. The equipment was delivered from Germany, Italy,

Russia, Switzerland and the United States. Senate member Dariga Naz-

arbayeva visited one of the schools to look at the new equipment during a recent visit to Ak-

tau. The regional boarding school welcomes 137 children with visual and hearing impairments.

"We launched this project two years ago. Today, it implements a number of charitable projects; the project has a plan for almost all regions. First, it applies the assistance to remedial schools, construction of sports grounds or equipping existing ones. They take school places and gyms as a basis – there is no need to rebuild anything and spend money, there is only a need to equip the existing gyms with modern equipment. We want to have a healthy nation. Children should be engaged in sports from an early age," she said.

Remedial schools in the Ak-tobe, Atyrau, East Kazakhstan and West Kazakhstan regions are next in line.

Menin Yelim aims to support regions and local communities, as the former are a strategic direction for Samruk Kazyna social activities. The programme's main purpose is managing social investments and strengthening communication among the company, local executive agencies and the civil sector.

# Minister reports on Programme for Education and Science Development

By Dana Omirgazy

ASTANA – Kazakh Minister of Education and Science Yerlan Sagadiyev reported on the status of the State Programme of Education and Science Development (SPESD) for 2016-2019 during an Oct. 17 government meeting chaired by Prime Minister Bakytzhan Sagintayev.

Sagadiyev reviewed the programme results for 2016, noting the positive assessment from President Nursultan Nazarbayev.

"The state programme will undergo significant changes in light of a number of new initiatives of this and last year. They are the Rukhani Zhandyru (Modernisation of Kazakhstan's Identity) programme and transition to the Latin alphabet, as well as the Digital Kazakhstan programme. Finally, it is the Strategy 2025 that envisages the development of Kazakhstan as an educational hub for the Central Asian region," he said.

Approximately 420 billion tenge (US\$1.25 billion) has been allocated this year to implement 168 events under the programme. Since SPESD was instituted, 1,309

pre-schools have been opened and 155 schools built throughout the country.

Sagadiyev spoke specifically about pre-school education and training.

"To simplify the procedure for opening kindergartens, new sanitary norms and rules have been adopted. Thus, 92.3 percent of newly opened pre-school institutions account for private organisations, particularly in the South Kazakhstan, Kyzylorda and Almaty regions and the city of Almaty. In addition, conditions are created for children with special educational needs," he said.



Minister of Education and Science Yerlan Sagadiyev.

A five-day academic week was introduced this year in secondary schools. To implement the three-language policy, 30 percent of basic and profiling disciplines are taught in English, while 273 two-degree educational programmes have been coordinated with 49 foreign universities.

"To eliminate three-shift education and schools in emergency conditions, 72 billion tenge (US\$215.6 million) was provided. However, despite the measures taken and the construction of new schools, the number of three-shift schools has not decreased due to urbanisation and demographic trends," said Sagadiyev.

Rather than rely on three-shift and emergency schools, 76 new facilities will be put into operation by the end of the year, 52 of which opened their doors in September.

Higher education institutions have begun electing rectors through supervisory boards and creating corporate secretaries and internal audit services. Eight Kazakh universities were listed among the world's best this year by Quacquarelli Symonds World University Rankings.

"In September this year, within

the framework of the first summit of the Organisation for Islamic Cooperation (OIC) on Science and Technology, the OIC Programme on Science, Technology and Innovation was developed and adopted until 2026," said Sagadiyev.

Kazakhstan became a member of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Committee for Scientific and Technological Policy this year. According to OECD standards, pre-school and school education content has been updated and colleges and universities have introduced 92 new programmes developed with international experts and employers.

Sagintayev noted the importance of continuing the work to enhance the competitiveness of domestic education.

"The recommendation to amend the current programme remains relevant; moreover, it was stated in the President's state-of-the-nation address this year, where special emphasis was placed on changing the education system. Therefore, within the framework of the new model of economic growth, the role of the education system is very important," he said.

# Brave Dogs Almaty organises charity photoshoots, seeks to expand

Continued from Page B1

Other breeds are welcome in the group, say members. Socialisation and communication with various dogs are the most important parts of education and training, but primarily they discuss the problems and achievements of the winter breeds.

"In general, those dogs are unique in almost everything. First of all, appearance – thick fur, unusually fascinating eyes and graceful wolf habits. Second, such dogs are insanely hardy. There was one time when a husky team ran for 18 hours without stopping and covered about 250 kilometres. Third, these dogs can withstand the cold weather up to minus 40-50 degrees due to their unique undercoat, which practically does not let the moisture in, keeps the heat well and in summer even saves from overheating. And, of course, their amazing character," said Sumarokova.

She added huskies are considered the kindest dogs in the world, with absolutely no aggression towards humans.

"A husky dog is not able to bite or attack a person and it is practically impossible to raise it even as a defender or guard. But this quality, unfortunately, has another side, as huskies get often kidnapped because of their appearance and kind nature. Only then do people realise that this is a fairly com-

plex breed with which you have to practice sports, develop and train. These dogs are very self-sufficient and freedom-loving and without proper treatment to them, you risk getting an untamed dog that can escape," she noted.

Brave Dogs members hang out together quite often during the winter season.

"We go hiking in the mountains, take part in mushing and we just spend time in nature. During summer, a couple of times we went to Kapchagay and, of course, what brings us together is a charity photoshoot. They especially have a team spirit," say members.

The club has big plans for the future, including hard work on the new photo shoot and developing ideas and the concept of the event, said member and leader Ainur Sanbayeva.

"We also want to launch a small joint project with our dear photographer Valentina Usen for the Husky Help group in Almaty. The project is about a series of professional photoshoots featuring our dogs. Family and individual photosets for those who want to get stunning processed pictures from the master! The proceeds from this project will go to the account of Husky Help. We also plan to visit foster homes. We are very inspired by this idea and at the moment we are working out an action plan for the upcoming New Year's trip to foster homes in Almaty," she said.

# Konstantin Khabensky: We need to make charity an integral part of everyone's life

By Dana Omirgazy

ASTANA – Konstantin Khabensky, a popular Russian actor who is known for his kind heart and his unsuccessful fight to save his wife's life from cancer, shared his message of giving Oct. 21 with charitable organisations and leading Kazakh figures. He joined with the Samruk Kazyna Trust Social Development Foundation at a meeting in Astana to share the experiences of the foundation bearing his name which helps children with oncological and other serious brain diseases.

Formed in 2008, the Konstantin Khabensky Foundation, which now includes 19 people, has provided targeted assistance to more than 1,500 children and psychological support to more than 5,000 people. At least 2,000 doctors have taken part in its educational projects. The organisation has purchased 28 pieces of equipment for eight federal institutions and volunteers have conducted in excess of 300 workshops in hospitals. The foundation assists in coordinating children's examinations and treatment, purchases

medicine, organises rehabilitation programmes, trains doctors and works with parents to ensure early diagnosis of serious brain diseases.

During its nine years, the foundation has raised 471 million rubbles (US\$8.18 million), including 180 million rubbles (US\$3.13 million) collected this year, said Khabensky.

"The charity is not a story that was invented by someone, as something unshakable and unchanging once and for all. To do a good deed is something that was inherent in us initially. The mechanism of charity develops every day. The main thing is to try, to consult and not to frighten people, but, on the contrary, to involve and show them the most interesting and fascinating aspects of the moment when they become people themselves. It is very important to let people employ their benevolence through the mechanisms and the path of charity," he noted.

The most difficult part of that path is daily charity, he said, adding that foundations must not be hesitant to voice what needs to be done and how they plan to accomplish their goals if they want to be successful.



Konstantin Khabensky

"We learned to speak and talk about what we are doing in Russia. We have already learned to listen and perceive what other foundations are doing, but we have not yet learned to take it for granted, as in Europe and the U.S. We still have to do this. This is probably the most difficult," he noted.

In working with the public, Khabensky said charitable foundations must employ three mechanisms – mass fundraising/dona-

tions from individuals, corporate fundraising/donations from legal entities and major private fundraising and individual donations beginning at the 100,000 rubble (US\$1,738) level.

The foundation is now implementing the Charity Instead of Souvenirs project, an initiative offering the opportunity to choose charitable gifts rather than corporate ones. Within the campaign, a company's gift budget is directed towards benevolent and socially significant programmes, with partners and friends receiving a greeting card indicating their involvement. All funds raised will be earmarked to treat children with severe brain tumours.

The event participants learned about fundraising techniques and asked questions to improve and extend the activity of Kazakh charitable organisations. More than 50 non-governmental organisations that provide sponsorship and charitable assistance throughout the nation were involved, including Dara Charity Foundation, Kasiyetti Zhol Fund and Mercy Volunteer Society Fund.



Residents enjoy the charity photoshoot event.

NATION&CAPITAL

# TOURISM

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 8, 2017

## East Kazakhstan promotes domestic tourism, educational tours



Markakol Lake



The Burning Adyrs natural monument in the south of the Zaisan area.

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – In an effort to attract travellers from China and Russia, the East Kazakhstan region is completing large-scale road repair and reconstruction this year to the most visited tourist sites.

The region ranks second after Astana in terms of domestic tourism, as approximately 400,000 vacationers visited the region in nine months of 2016, reported Kapital.kz. The number of visitors decreased by 3.6 percent to 169,274

in January-June 2017 compared to the same period of the previous year. The number of foreign tourists increased by 31.8 percent to 10,681.

In the first six months of the year, 34,360 local and 140 foreign tourists visited the resort areas. The region has 463 options that can accommodate 26,370 travellers.

“We expect more tourists after the reconstruction works. Currently, people can get to Alakol Lake only from the Almaty region,” said East Kazakhstan Region tourism

and external relations department head Zhasulan Sarsebayev.

Four billion tenge (US\$11 million) was allocated this year to rebuild 122 kilometres of roads to Alakol, Markakol and Sibinskie Lakes. In addition, 500 million tenge (US\$1.4 million) was earmarked to renovate Alakol Lake’s embankment and a new bus station was put into operation.

“We examined all roadside service facilities along the main tourist routes. Most of them do not correspond to any category of the national standard. We are closely

collaborating with the Atameken National Chamber of Entrepreneurs and the KazAvtoZhol on this issue,” he said.

The TourEast.kz web portal was developed in Chinese, English, Kazakh and Russian to increase tourist flow. Eighteen tour operators offer 35 routes and informational tours are organised for media representatives and foreign tour operators.

With the participation of local investors, 19 tourism projects at a cost of 623 million tenge (US\$1.8 million) have been com-

pleted in the past two years, said Sarsebayev. Plans are underway to implement 26 projects totalling 18 billion tenge (US\$53 million) through 2023.

Forty-four projects worth 10 billion tenge (US\$29 million) have been included in the Tourism Sector Development Road Map for 2015-2020. The main focus is cultural and medical tourism.

The region is also planning to organise regular excursion tours for schoolchildren, with a map of sacred places created as part of the Rukhani Zhangyru (Moderni-

sation of Kazakhstan’s Identity) programme. Work has begun to explore and develop the sites.

“Our tour operators should offer excursion tours to the sacred places at affordable prices for educational institutions. Now, it is limited to one-time visits. We want to exclude one-time events and offer tours on a regular basis,” he said.

The region has 24 parks and nature reserves measuring 1.7 million hectares and more than 600 historical monuments and 100 tourist attractions, according to the department.

## Kazakh Khanate second season filming kicks off

By Frol Leandro

ASTANA – Kazakhfilm has begun shooting the second season of its large-scale historical series about the Kazakh Khanate. The project, commissioned by the Ministry of Culture and Sports in conjunction with Rustem Abdrashev’s Centaurus Productions, has the working title “Kazakh Khanate. The Golden Throne.”

“The first season of the series aroused great interest in our history among many people in Kazakhstan. We received a huge amount of feedback through the Internet and social networks. There have been a lot of discussions and disputes. We see that people have become uplifted and interested. They are waiting for the continuation, which is very important for us,” said Abdrashev, who is directing.

“The idea of this project is in tune with the recent programme article on the modernisation of Kazakhstan’s identity which says ‘The first condition of modernisation of a new

type is the preservation of its culture, its own national code.’ Without this, modernisation will turn into an empty sound. And today, after a short break, when you look back and look at the work that’s been done, not as a creator, but as a spectator, you realise that all our efforts were not in vain. As a result, we are beginning to shoot the continuation of a complex historical project. I wish the whole team good luck,” he added.

The authors of part one are involved in creating the second season scenario, which will have 10 episodes. The cast will remain the same and new characters added. Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev oversaw the project concept and the script is based on the novel “Diamond Sword” by Ilias Esenberlin.

“Last season ended with the coronation of Khan Kerey; next season will show the history in the fight for the steppe and the formation of Kazakh statehood. The season will end with the coronation of Zhanibek, the next Kazakh Khan,” said Abdrashev.

The audience will see Kazakh khans fighting with neighbouring

states for the city of Syganak, the cultural and economic centre.

Preparation for the series began this summer when the director’s

script was developed, minor characters cast, main scenery restored and

two interiors (the Rabia Room and the Baibishe Room) created.

“All the mistakes and shortcomings during the creation of the first season were taken into account. We have already conducted surveys of the outgoing nature. By the end of the year, we want to shoot 40 percent of the film,” said the director.

The bulk of filming will be done in Almaty on the main scenery built at studio, as well as Kazakhfilm studio pavilions, where yurts and several new backdrops will be installed, said producer Arman Asenov. Shooting will also take place using the Turkistan scenery at Kapchagai.

“The team almost remained in the same composition. During the preparation, each department did a great job. New costumes were created, as well as old ones restored,” added Abdrashev.

The television premiere of the first season, dedicated to the 550th anniversary of the Kazakh Khanate, was held in March. “Diamond Sword,” a full-length film version of the series, was released nationwide earlier this year and became a leading rental.



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WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 8, 2017

## FC Astana thrashes Tel Aviv 4-0

By Anuar Abdrakhmanov

ASTANA – FC Astana delivered an impressive display in a 4-0 home victory over Maccabi Tel Aviv FC, its biggest margin of victory in European club competition.

After losing away to Villarreal CF and tying with SK Slavia Praha at home, the Kazakh champions needed three points to preserve a realistic chance of progressing to the playoffs. At first glance, this seemed a considerable challenge, as their Israeli opponents have a solid European record and experience and players who previously played in top-flight clubs in England and Holland.

The hosts looked confident from the early minutes, however, controlling the ball for lengthy periods and gradually pressuring Maccabi's defences from the flanks. Astana striker Junior Kabananga soon had a great chance to score, but the ball hit a bit above the target. Defender Dmitry Shomko's kick resulted in the ball striking one of the Maccabi defender's hands and the referee awarding Astana a penalty.

Midfielder Patrick Twumasi perfectly converted a shot and the hosts opened the scoring. Three minutes before the break, Shomko made a great pass from the wing to the penalty box allowing Twumasi to double his team's lead.

Astana did not slow down in the

second half and clearly dominated the pitch. Kabananga needed only 10 minutes to score two more into Maccabi's net and the score did not change until the final whistle.

"It is great that we secured our first win in the group of the Europa League. Maccabi is a strong team. After the first 20 minutes of the match, we found the right tactics and deserved our victory. Now we should focus on the decisive matches [in Kazakhstan's Premier League], as we are close to winning the gold medal for the third time. It is clear that following this success we will be under more pressure in the match in Israel, but will be ready for this [and seek to win again]," said FC Astana head coach Stanimir Stoilov.

"I congratulate all the fans of the Astana team and football fans of Kazakhstan on this beautiful and convincing victory. We had to win this game to improve our tournament position in the group [and] the team showed a brilliant game and beat a strong opponent, playing equally successfully in attacks and defence. This is our first win in this season's group stage and only the second one in the history of our participation in the group stages [of European club competitions.] I would like to thank our players and the coaching staff for the emotions the team gave to all of us today," said general manager Sayan Khamitshanov.

## FC Astana secures first away win in European club competition group stage



Photo credit: FC Astana press service

By Anuar Abdrakhmanov

NETANYA – In the fourth round of the UEFA Europa League's group stage, FC Astana secured its first away win in a group tournament of a European cup. In Netanya, the Kazakh club defeated Maccabi Tel Aviv 1-0 and moved up to second place in Group A.

Understanding that the Israeli club would be gunning for revenge after the major defeat they suffered Oct. 19, FC Astana head coach Stanimir Stoilov initially decided to keep a lower profile, choosing a strategy using three central defenders. This was a serious risk, as before the game the Kazakh capital's club's key defender Yuriy Logvinenko was injured, forcing

the team's defence to experiment with a new line-up. Another problem was the absence of Bosnian midfielder Srdjan Grahovats, who fell ill on the day of the match and was replaced by Askhat Tagybergen.

The first half of the match was nerve-racking. Astana couldn't seem to find their game, and Maccabi had several chances to score. However, Kazakhstan's defenders and goalkeeper Nenad Eric managed to avert all the threats.

In the second half, Maccabi continued to pressure, but not as hard as in the first half. Astana, waiting for a moment to seize the initiative, finally found one and opened the score: defender Dmitry Shomko made a backdoor pass and strik-

er Patrick Twumasi sent the ball into the hosts' net, but the referee called offside and the goal was disallowed. A few minutes later, however, Twumasi scored again, this time assisted by defender Abzal Beisebekov.

Maccabi rushed forward, weakening their defence, and narrowly escaped being scored on again. Kazakhstan arranged another dangerous counterattack with defender Sergei Maly meeting a cross from Twumasi, but Maccabi goalkeeper Predrag Rajkovic turned the ball away. The Israeli club kept attacking, but Astana was resilient and came away with the historic win. As a result of the match, FC Astana moved to the second spot in Group A. With seven points, the Kazakh team is one point behind

the pool's Spanish favourite, Villarreal CF, which defeated Slavia Prague 2-0 in the group's other match.

"I am happy with our first away win in group stage of a European cup. We worked hard this season and took a step forward. To be honest, Maccabi was better in this game. I think our opponent played good football. We were lucky in some moments. We waited for our chance and used it in a counterattack. We dedicate our victory to the football of Kazakhstan. Yes, we still need more points. I think if we secure 10 points, we will [progress to the playoffs stage]. We need another win, either over Villarreal or Slavia. If we make it out of the group, this will be obvious progress for us," Stoilov commented after the game.

"I think discipline helped us win. We did what the manager told us to do. He said it was important to play tight, without giving the opponent a chance. That is what we did. We used the chance. We surely could increase our advantage, but this result is good enough," Shomko added.

"The game was very difficult because we realised Maccabi would use a different tactic and focus on attacks at home. We prepared for playing defensively. After all, away matches are always very difficult. The main task was to play tight without leaving any zones between the lines. The team needed to act as a single mechanism. We had some lucky moments, because Maccabi had a lot of scoring chances, and we used one of counterattacks and won. Everyone is very happy tonight," Astana midfielder Ivan Majewski concluded.

## Chess player wins international speed tournament



Staff Report

ASTANA – Kazakh chess player Zhansaya Abdumalik was the victor Oct. 16 in the Almaty Chess Players Union President's Cup international tournament.

The contest involved 54 players from nine countries, including nine male grandmasters and nine international masters. Belarusian grandmaster Kirill Stupak, winner of the Almaty Open, was among the participants.

The athletes sought to identify the best speed chess player during the three-day competition. Abdumalik

won first place based on the outcomes of all nine rounds.

"Initially, I had not thought about the results at all. I just tried to perform a stable and high-quality game. Right before the last two rounds, the moment when I caught up to Sergei Yudin on points, is when I started to think about first place. I managed to finish the ending of the tournament well, which secured me the first line. I am extremely glad that my game is becoming stronger," she said after winning.

Abdumalik's final score was 2,679 points. As a result, her international rating rose by 80 points.

## Nikita Panassenko wins Track Cycling World Cup event in Poland

Continued from Page B1

He also noted the high level of competition at the tournament.

"Our athlete had the world's strongest racers as opponents. Now, every athlete at the World Cup stages is determined to win to secure a berth to the World Championship," he added.

The next UCI Track Cycling World Championship will take place Feb. 28-March 4 in Apeldoorn, the Netherlands.

The Rio Olympics 2016 was the first competition in the last 12 years where Kazakhstan was represented in track racing. Zakharov won an Olympic license and achieved a decent result. According to the national team coaches, Kazakhstan is capable of winning two Olympic licenses for the 2020 Games in Tokyo.



From L to R: Christos Volikakis, Nikita Panassenko, Liam Bertazzo.

"Of course, we expect good results. As you know, this year the Olympics' programme was expanded and now includes a new kind of track

cycling, madison. I think we have all chances to show what we can. Securing two berths at the Olympics is our key task," said Bushansky.

The next World Cup stages will be held Nov. 10-12 in the U.K., Dec. 2-3 in Canada, Dec. 9-10 in Chile and Jan. 19-21 in Belarus.

## FC Astana wins fourth straight Kazakhstan Premier League title

By Anuar Abdrakhmanov

ASTANA – FC Astana came out on top of Kazakhstan's Premier League for the fourth time in a row with a 2-0 victory over Akzhayik Uralsk on the last day of the season.

The reigning champions could have secured the defence of their title earlier, but they lost 0-2 at home to Kairat in the previous round, making their Nov. 5 match a must-win.

That did not, however, appear to be a mission impossible, as FC Akzhayik Uralsk ranks only 10th in the league's standings. However, three days before their Kazakhstan Premier League match, Astana faced serious challenger Maccabi Tel Aviv in their UEFA Europa League group competition, so there were doubts about whether the players would have



enough time to recover to face their domestic opponents. To FC Astana's good fortune, the

match turned out to be predictable. Throughout the 90 minutes Astana had a clear advantage

and won confidently, giving the home fans another reason to celebrate.

"Becoming the champions for the fourth time in a row is a great achievement. I would like to thank those who believed in us – and those who did not as well – but I think we proved that we are the best in the country," Astana defender Dmitry Shomko said after the result. FC Astana head coach Stanimir Stoilov has now become the first person in the history of Kazakh football to lead his team to victory in the national league four years in a row.

"Today's game clearly showed that we were the stronger side. The question was when we would score. I am happy we won the championship. We worked hard throughout the year, and I am glad it paid off. A rare football club can win the national championship for four years in a

row. This is a great achievement for the whole club, and I want to congratulate our fans with it," he said.

"The winner was decided in the last round, and that held everyone in suspense. But we believed in our team and our strengths, and deservedly won the gold medals! Making it through to the group stage of a European club competition and winning the domestic champions title were our main objectives for this season. I congratulate the players of the club, the coaching staff, the employees and specialists of our football centre and all our many fans in Astana, in Kazakhstan and all over the world!" said FC Astana General Manager Sayan Khamitshanov.

FC Kairat Almaty lost the Premier League title by just one point, despite their 3-2 win over FC Aktobe in a parallel match,

and once again had to content themselves with silver medals.

Third place went to FC Ordabasy Shymkent; fourth to FC Irtysh Pavlodar.

The two teams that finished at the bottom of the standings, FC Taraz and FC Okzhetpes Kokshetau, were relegated from the Premier League. FC Zhetysay Taldykorgan and SK Kyzyl-Zhar Petropavl will replace them, having won promotions from the first league. Akzhayik, which finished 10th, will have to defend its place in the top flight in a Nov. 9 playoff match against FC Makhtaaral, representing Kazakhstan's southernmost township.

The results mean that FC Astana will try its luck again in the UEFA Champions League qualification round next summer, while Kairat, Ordabasy and Irtysh will do the same in the UEFA Europa League.

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 8, 2017

# Kazakhstan, Korea open Friendship Garden in Astana



By Dana Omirgazy

ASTANA – The Kazakh and Korean Friendship Garden opened recently in the capital signifying the harmonious cooperation and long friendship between the countries. The project was initiated by President Nursultan Nazarbayev during then-Korean President Park Geun-hye's visit to Kazakhstan in 2014.

The Korean government invested \$1.7 million to build the park. City Akim (Mayor) Asset Issekeshiev expressed gratitude for Korea's gift on behalf of the

residents and akimat (city administration).

"This project is very important for us. The President's initiative to develop a green belt around the city is one of our priorities. Therefore, we welcome the construction of new parks, squares and gardens. All this allows us to improve the ecology and develop a green belt inside the city," he said during Sept. 27 opening ceremony.

The park's architecture reflects Korea's charm. The garden's doors, gates, arches and walls, as well as a mirror pond, show its

national style. The Bell Tower of Friendship, the main building, houses a bell which is traditionally sounded to herald the beginning and end of the year. It was rung by Issekeshiev, Kazakh Deputy Minister of Agriculture Yerlan Nyssanbayev and Korean Ambassador Kim Dae-sik.

The ambassador hopes capital residents and guests will enjoy spending their leisure time walking around the park.

"Though our relationship as states has not lasted long, that is only 25 years, we, Kazakh and Korean people, have long been

kindred spirits in many ways, including ethnically and culturally. I believe Astana residents will enjoy and relish the taste of Korea and the height of the friendship that we have built since the establishment of diplomatic ties when they visit the Korean garden with their families, friends and loved ones hand-in-hand on a sunny day. Because of the progress of the work, we were able to open the garden around the end of September, in rather cold weather. Next year when the sun brings us spring and summer, my embassy is going to hold some

cultural events at the garden to share our friendship with the people of Astana. Since we have a Korean Cultural Centre in Astana, we are able to organise a variety of events on the premises of the Friendship Garden," he told The Astana Times.

Kim reiterated the garden was built as a result of an agreement between Nazarbayev and Park. The city provided the plot of land, while the Korean government ensured the financial and technical resources.

"When the Kazakh side is willing to build such a park in Ko-

rea in due course, I am sure that Korean cities, including Seoul or Ansan where Kazakh communities exist, may be willing to provide a plot of land for the Kazakh side as well," he added.

The Friendship Garden is the first of its kind in the capital built by a foreign country.

"We Koreans feel honoured and closer to the Kazakh people. The happy feeling led me to write a poetic expression at the opening ceremony that I cited only in Korean, regrettably due to my poor Kazakh or Russian languages," said Kim.

## Astana launches design contest for 36-acre island in heart of city



By Frol Leandro

ASTANA – The Astana city government recently announced a custom architectural town planning contest for the development of a sketch idea for the Oriental City facility. The facility will be located on a 36-hectare island in the central part of the capital near the Sary Arka bridge, Yelorda Info reported.

The terms of the contest require proposed designs of Oriental City to include a multifunctional centre, offices, a shopping mall, an exhibition pavilion, the Koshpendiler (Nomads) museum, craft workshops, a theatre,

cinema, cafes, restaurants, hotels, a mosque, a square and the Mound of Wishes. The Oriental City should be decorated with fountains and sculptural compositions. The design should also include cycling bridges, bicycle paths, a pier, and car parks.

The central object will be the Mound of Wishes, which will revive the ancient tradition of nomads, but in a new context. In ancient times, warriors erected the Oba mounds, which served as beacons and warned of the approach of foreign troops. The modern Akniyet Oba mound will become a place of good wishes. Tourist will be able to take any stone and order an engraving

with a wish in the workshop, then take it to the mound.

According to the client, the mound is expected to be the most visited place of the Oriental City and will constantly grow.

The mound will be .64 hectares. The project consists of the mound itself and a pavilion in the form of a yurt, which will be open all year round. The diameter of the mound will be 48 metres and nine metres in height.

The winner of the contest for the best sketch of the Oriental City will receive 16.36 million tenge (USD \$49,047). Applications will be accepted until Oct. 29. The results of the competition will be announced in April.

## China Studies Centre opens in Astana

By Zhazira Dyussebekova

ASTANA – Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences (SASS) recently opened a China Studies Centre in the Library of the First President of Kazakhstan.

"This morning [Oct. 24] a memorandum of understanding was signed with the Library of the First President of Kazakhstan. Under this document, a centre for China studies was opened in the library. The centre has several tasks, such as joint promotion of the One Belt One Road initiative, joint research with the involvement of experts from the Chinese and Kazakh sides," said Deputy to the National People's Congress of China, Vice President of the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences (SASS) Zhang Zhao'an during the seminar,

Contemporary China: Questions and Answers.

In addition, the new centre will be responsible for visits by researchers and a series of lectures on the study of China.

According to centre's website, the China Studies Centre is a modern think tank engaged in a comprehensive study of Chinese culture and history, which also analyses the prospective development of Chinese economy and serves as an interactive platform for cooperation between governments, business circles, expert and academic communities and universities of Kazakhstan and China.

"Today, this is the first event within the established centre. The ultimate goal covers a very wide audience from the state and trade and economic sectors, including small and medium-sized business-

es, as well as the academic environment," added Zhao'an.

He also noted that it will become a platform to help the two countries "understand each other better."

During the lecture at the seminar, the expert shared his assessments of the current state and forecasts of the development of Chinese economy.

The first seminar and upcoming ones will give the Kazakh audience the opportunity to get acquainted with foreign assessments of Chinese economic development. Particularly, they will focus on what Chinese economists think about China's economy, as well as the problematic aspects in its development. They will also discuss the future of Chinese economy and what the Central Asian countries can expect from such an uneasy but promising neighbourhood, according to the announcement.



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