



Kazakh President addresses global issues in Astana Club speech



President Nursultan Nazarbayev (C) speaks to the politicians and experts in Astana on Nov. 13, flanked by Parliament Senate Chairman Kassym-Jomart Tokayev (L) and Institute of World Economy and Politics Director Yerzhan Salybayev.

By Zhazira Dyusseimbekova

ASTANA – Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev addressed the Astana Club, a neutral platform to debate public issues based on Chatham House rules, during its Nov. 13 third annual meeting. He talked about global challenges and threats such as growing terrorism, military issues, economic situation, migration, as well poverty and lack of water and food.

“We are trying to bring to the world something that it has been lacking so much recently – unification, cohesion and tolerance for solving global problems. Kazakh-

stan’s diplomacy is focused on a philosophy of dialogue, compromise and mutually beneficial partnership. This can be seen in the examples of mediation efforts on Syria, anti-nuclear initiatives, the contribution to the dialogue between cultures, the development of socio-economic agendas,” the President said.

One of the main issues Nazarbayev addressed was international terrorism.

“The building of a new architecture for global development takes place in the context of a deepening geopolitical, geo-economic and geo-ideological fault along the East-West line. Political repression, poverty, low level of education and health are

fuelling the international terrorism and extremism,” he said, adding that the existing systems of regional and international security do not meet dynamics of the pace of developments or offer enough sustainable solutions to old and new issues.

“There is a formation of a new trade world order by forming large blocks around competing economic centres. This may lead to a reduction in the role of the WTO, an increase in protectionism. The threat to international trade and fair competition comes from ‘sanctions wars,’ which under the pretext of political pressure pursue economic goals and vice versa,” he said.

The second set of major global issues includes the growth of militaristic sentiments, the development of the arms race and the threat of nuclear weapons as well as the increase in global tensions generally.

“For many years and decades, military operations in the Middle East and Africa remain in active phase. The situations in Afghanistan, Iraq, Ukraine, Nagorno-Karabakh are in a limbo. The growth in global tension increases the demand for armaments. Military spending once again rose last year and amounted to US\$1.7 trillion or 2.2 percent of world’s GDP.

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Nazarbayev, Putin discuss developing human capital at interregional forum

By Aigerim Seisembayeva

ASTANA – A number of interstate, intergovernmental, regional and commercial documents were signed Nov. 9 at the 14th Forum of Interregional Cooperation between Kazakhstan and Russia in Chelyabinsk. Visiting Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev and his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin also signed a joint statement devoted to the 25th anniversary of diplomatic relations between the two states (Oct. 22, 1992).

“Our interregional cooperation is the basis of economic interaction, which, despite all the difficulties, is growing. In the past nine months, our trade turnover grew 31 percent. Our every meeting is a new milestone and [provides] a solution to some of the biggest challenges. Today’s meeting will also be of great importance for developing cooperation,” Nazarbayev said during a bilateral meeting with Putin prior to the forum.

The forum, which was devoted to human capital development, gathered the heads of the two countries’ regions, ministries and departments, as well as business executives, scientists and education experts.

Nazarbayev told the gathering that changes in the labour environment resulting from technology will be an important bilateral issue in the near term.

“Experts forecast that by 2030, about 60 professions in various spheres will vanish, and more than 180 new ones will emerge. According to the Human Development Report, in the next five years, more than a third of knowledge and skills necessary for work will change. This is a serious challenge, and its solution should become one of our cooperation’s top priorities,” he said, adding that it is important to develop human capital in education, health and social protection.

“To date, more than 30 Kazakh universities conduct joint scientific research with Russian universities. I propose to create Kazakh-Russian scientific consortiums in promising areas, such as biological and information technologies, energy and space, to name a few,” said Nazarbayev.

He highlighted the possibility of using the potential of such innovative clusters as the Nazarbayev University, the Park of Innovative Technologies in Almaty, the Skolkovo Centre in Russia and other research institutions. He also mentioned the Astana International Financial Centre, the International IT-startup hub and the International Centre for Green Technologies and Investments – the institutions currently being developed on the grounds of recently completed EXPO 2017.

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EU-Central Asia ministerial meeting reiterates mutual commitment to cooperation

By Aigerim Seisembayeva

ASTANA – Participants in the Nov. 10-13th European Union – Central Asia Foreign Ministers’ meeting in Samarkand, Uzbekistan adopted a joint communiqué reconfirming mutual commitment to jointly tackling economic, security and governance issues.

Foreign ministers from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, the European Union’s (EU) High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission Federica Mogherini and the European Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development Neven Mimica adopted the communiqué, EU and Central Asia: Working for a Safer and More Prosperous Future Together.

On economic relations, participants agreed that strengthening the nexus between security, migration, climate change and sustainable development could help strengthen economies.

“We are, as the European Union, and we will remain the first development partner of the region. But we see Central Asia more and more not as a



Kazakh Foreign Minister Kairat Abdrakhmanov signs the programme of cooperation between the ministries of foreign affairs of Central Asian States. See the story on A3.

recipient of aid but as an economic partner, with a market of 70 million people, that, especially if reforms are undertaken successfully, will become an attractive area for investments, including from Europe. We believe that we are facing challenges but that there are a lot of opportunities that we can make the most out of if we cooperate together,” said Mogherini following the meeting.

Participants also discussed ways to optimise Central Asia’s economic, transit and transport potential and to better manage cross-border issues,

such as water and energy use as well as environmental protection.

Officials also discussed the security situation in and around Central Asia, including Afghanistan, and the security challenges facing the European Union. Participants said in the joint communiqué they welcome the support provided to Afghanistan by the EU and Central Asian countries and called for continued joint efforts to help that country.

They also stressed the importance of strengthening good governance, including democracy, human rights

protections, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law in combating extremism, terrorism and drug trafficking and responding to financial and political challenges. The communiqué also said the Dec. 7 meeting of EU and Central Asian Ministers of Justice in Brussels would intensify discussion on the Rule of Law Initiative.

The communiqué also noted the EU’s engagement with individual Central Asian countries and said involvement by Central Asian civil societies will help deepen EU-Central Asia relations.

“Never before have we had such an intense, positive and constructive EU-Central Asia cooperation. I would say that we are at the top of our historical experience of cooperation, but we want to use this not as a target point, but as a starting point,” Mogherini said.

In this regard, the five Central Asian foreign ministers welcomed the decision to adopt the new EU Central Asia Strategy by the end of 2019 that will lay the foundation for further cooperation.

The next EU-Central Asia Foreign Ministers’ meeting will be in Brussels in 2018.

AIFC, green tech centre and IT start-up hub to begin operating in 2018

By Aigerim Seisembayeva

ASTANA – The Astana International Financial Centre (AIFC), international centre for green technologies and international IT start-up hub are expected to begin operating on former EXPO 2017 premises in 2018. The news was announced during the EXPO 2017 legacy presentation to the diplomatic corps Nov. 15 at the Kazakh Foreign Ministry.

“The President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev, pays special attention to this issue. It is not by chance that the head of state’s speech at the closing ceremony of expo included him highlighting the plans for the launch of the Astana International Financial Centre, the international centre for green technologies and

the international IT start-up hub,” said Kazakh Foreign Minister Kairat Abdrakhmanov to open the event.

He noted considerable potential exists for developing cooperation with foreign governmental and corporate partners.

AIFC, the first big project, was created at the President’s initiative and will operate according to the principles of English common law with a preferential tax regime, independent financial court, arbitration and regulator. It is intended to become a financial hub for Central Asia, the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), the Caucasus, Western China, Mongolia and Eastern Europe. The centre will develop the key areas of capital market, welfare management, private banking, Islamic finance and financial technologies.

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Kazakh, British foreign ministers agree to greater transit, Silk Road cooperation

By George D. Gleboff and Aigerim Seisembayeva

LONDON – Kazakh Foreign Minister Kairat Abdrakhmanov and British Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs Boris Johnson during a Nov. 20 meeting in London agreed to expand cooperation on the trans-Eurasian transport

corridors and reviving the Silk Road corridor.

They also discussed global issues, the Kazakh foreign ministry announced, including the priorities of Kazakhstan’s chairmanship in the UN Security Council in January 2018, the Astana Process on Syria, the situation in Afghanistan, the implementation of the Minsk agreements on Ukraine, counter-

ing terrorism, non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and cooperation in Central Asia, among other issues.

“Kazakhstan will be the first Central Asian nation to chair the UNSC. Looking forward to further cooperation on global security,” Johnson tweeted following the meeting.

The discussions took place as part of the Kazakh-British Stra-

tegic Dialogue at the British Foreign Office. The bilateral agenda for the upcoming months also includes meetings of the Kazakh-British Intergovernmental Commission, the Business Council and other events involving the Samruk Kazyna National Wealth Fund, the Astana International Financial Centre (AIFC) and the Kazakh Invest national company.

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EBRD predicts Kazakh economy to grow 3.8 percent in 2017

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – A recently released European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) report forecasts Kazakhstan’s economy will grow 3.8 percent this year and 3.5 percent in 2018.

In a Nov. 7 report, the bank attributes the growth to increased oil production at the Kashagan field, current oil prices and a recovery in real incomes growth. “The broad-based recovery is a very welcome development. It also creates a window of opportunity to carry out reforms that will ensure the sustainability of the stronger growth

rates over the longer term,” said EBRD’s Chief Economist Sergei Guriev.

In 2016, growth was 1.1 percent, according to the multi-nation lender. The EBRD report notes that 2017 growth was also supported by stronger activity in construction, agriculture and transportation and says the country’s banking sector problems are manageable. The report predicts inflation at 6-8 percent in 2017-2018. Kazakhstan’s banking sector consolidation will also help clean up balance sheets of banks with the largest non-performing loans, it notes.

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NATION

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New Shymkent mayor appointed

Staff Report

ASTANA – Nurlan Sauranbayev has been appointed new Akim (Mayor) of Shymkent, the third largest city in Kazakhstan. He replaced Gabidulla Abdrakhimov, who was appointed Secretary of Kazakhstan's ruling Nur Otan party.

Throughout his career, Sauranbayev worked in national companies, including Kazakhstan Temir Zholy, KazMunayGas, served as vice minister for industry and new technologies and deputy defense minister, among other positions.

"As agreed by the Administration of Kazakh President and city maslikhat (city administration), Governor of the South Kazakhstan region appointed Nurlan Sauranbayev as mayor of Shymkent," the region's press service stated.

South Kazakhstan region Akim (Governor) Zhansait Tuimebayev introduced the new mayor Nov. 7.

"You are a highly qualified specialist, who served in different fields of public service. You have a vast experience on managing positions," Tuimebayev told Sauranbayev in front of the gathered city officials.



"I hope that as a mayor Nurlan Sauranbayev will make every effort, use his knowledge and experience to further develop the economy of the city and drew particular attention to several issues that negatively impact social and economic development," added the governor.

Tuimebayev also gave instructions to ensure implementation of state programmes, increase revenues to the city budget, attract investors to develop small and medium entrepreneurship and introduce measures meant to develop infrastructure in settlements adjoining the city.

Policy would optimise procedure for PPP projects

By Aigerim Bulambayeva

ASTANA – Kazakh Minister of National Economy Timur Suleimenov spoke about the current state of private-public partnerships (PPP) and resulting policy measures during the Nov. 7 government meeting.

He presented statistics indicating 116 contracts worth 139.5 billion tenge (US\$418.6 million) have been concluded in compliance with PPP mechanisms, 53 of which worth 70 billion tenge (US\$210.1 million) have already been put into operation. Currently, 63 facilities at a cost of 69.5 billion tenge (US\$208.6 million) are in the construction phase. The work is divided among 45 educational complexes, 27 health care facilities, 17 cultural and sports arenas, seven service and procurement centres and three smart city energy and passenger transportation projects.

Karagandy region is the leader with 21 signed contracts, followed by Kostanai and South Kazakhstan regions with 17 and 13 contracts, respectively. Aktobe region and the city of Astana have attracted the largest investments for project costs, with the former garnering 16.6 billion tenge (US\$49.8 million) and the latter, 15.1 billion tenge (US\$45.3 million).

In his report, Suleimenov also addressed the draft law improving PPPs submitted to Parliament in Au-

gust. He noted it has been approved by the Mazhilis (lower house) and is currently under consideration by the Senate (upper house). The draft law would optimise PPP processes by excluding two of five stages (de-



Timur Suleimenov

veloping project concept and examining contract project) in development and approval.

"In total, these changes will enable reducing the timing of the PPP agreements from seven months to three months," he said.

The Ministry is also seeking to optimise the timing of PPP agreements by considering the policy regarding standardised documentation. New types of contracts for road maintenance, medical equipment leasing, polyclinic trust management and school maintenance have been devised in addition to the previously-developed 10 standard projects. Regions can now refer to the specified documentation as a model, which will allow them to improve the timing to develop tender documentation and contracts.

Flying minibuses to connect cities and villages

Staff Report

ASTANA – Small passenger airplanes will soon begin flying between small Kazakh cities and villages, according to the Facebook page of Acting Deputy Chairman of Civil Aviation Committee of Ministry of Investment and Development Tota Amirova.

"We are now working to acquire a large number of small new aircraft and have already called these aircraft affectionately minibuses. They will fly between small towns and villages. Their capacity is 17-19 passengers," the Acting Deputy Chairman said.

She also noted that an important factor in implementing such flights is the cost of such small aircraft, which has to be moderate and can

be lowered if large number of aircraft purchased at once.

The Civil Aviation Committee plans to open flights to the Alakol Lake, Kenderli, Beineu, Zaisan, Turkestan, Zharkent, Kulsary, Moyinkum, Arkalyk, Torgai and other regional airfields in the coming years. Implementation of small aircrafts for air medical service is under consideration as well.

The government is developing domestic airlines and creating new air routes. Such companies as Qazaq Air and Bek Air were specially created to boost the development of domestic flights, making them safer and cheaper. These companies have fleets consisting of small aircrafts and offer the best quality / price ratio.

Astana Club's third meeting focuses on viability of cooperation in Eurasia

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – More than 60 participants from 28 countries, including prominent politicians, scholars and leading experts, spoke about global policy issues requiring resolution, sanctions confrontations and prospects of cooperation in the great Eurasian landmass Nov. 13-14 at the third annual meeting of the Astana Club.

Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev's participation became a major highlight of the event.

"The speakers raised the issues related to nuclear disarmament and protectionism in world trade. They expressed interest in the further vision of Kazakhstan on the Syrian issue, the Iranian nuclear programme, the investment policy prospects and the country's plans for economic cooperation in a global and regional context," said Kanat Zhumabayev, executive director of the First Kazakh President Foundation, at the Nov.14 briefing.

Astana Club meetings are held according to Chatham House rules, which implies anonymity of expert opinions expressed during the discussions.

"The principle of anonymity makes it possible to freely discuss and express different opinions. This year, we also used the principle of panel session," he said.

The rules do not, however, preclude experts from speaking their mind to reporters outside of the discussion hall. Former Polish Prime Minister Włodzimierz Cimoszewicz used such opportunity and noted there were "interesting debates and rich discussions" at the sessions.

"It was the right decision to choose that kind of topic about Eurasia, because in the changing world when almost everywhere, everything becomes new unlike it was before, it is the perfect time to think in terms about the future



Photo credit: Oromon.kz

of cooperation and the relations of Asia and Europe. Traditionally, geographic distance was a barrier and an obstacle to developing intensive relations. But today it is no longer a major problem. There are means to overcome that barrier," he said.

He also spoke about the role of Kazakhstan in international relations.

"Many people, especially most of the political leaders, are very well aware of the significance of Kazakhstan's initiatives concerning the de-nuclearisation of the country over 25 years ago and all of the following initiatives concerning the liquidation of nuclear arms. That used to be a kind of traditional area of Kazakh activity. But in the last ten years there were more initiatives presented by President Nazarbayev to the United Nations and other partners; for example, the problem of Syria where Kazakhstan did a great service in the kind of mediation which was difficult at the very beginning," he said.

Cimoszewicz noted the participants were impressed by the country's modernisation plans, including some elements which are directly related to international programmes and projects, the launch of the Astana International Financial Centre (AIFC) and the role Kazakhstan wants to play in the One Belt, One Road initiative.

"Considering the fact that Kazakhstan is a relatively young country and young independent participant of international rela-

tions, we have been witnessing the growing activity of your country in international affairs and politics," he added.

David Chikvaizde, chief of staff of the Director-General of the United Nations Office in Geneva, noted the intellectual and political leadership that Kazakhstan implements on the world arena.

"I would like to note the country's role in mediation, conflict prevention and resolution. It is no accident that the Syrian talks are held in Astana as a supplement to the Geneva talks. Kazakhstan provided a platform for this kind of international meeting due to impartiality, equidistance and a balanced approach to the issue. Kazakhstan also plays an important role in the issues of disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons," he said.

"The Astana Club is a neutral platform with no prejudices," said Yerzhan Saltybayev, director of the First President Foundation's Institute of World Economy and Politics, which organises the club meetings. "Our task is to provide a platform and to give an opportunity to discuss many things. Astana secured its role as a global neutral platform, where strategic dialogues take place at the highest political level. This fact attracts new participants to the club. The club has become a centre of attraction for authoritative experts, politicians and diplomats from around the world. The format proved its relevance. Therefore, this work will be continued."

Kazakhstan to start aviation fuel production in 2018, reducing dependence on Russia

Staff Report

ASTANA – Three Kazakh oil refineries will start producing aviation fuel in the second half of 2018 and are expected to be able to fully supply the Kazakh market.

"We expect that in the second half of 2018, we will fully supply domestic market with aviation fuel, and we will be able to control its cost and regulate it. I think that by July, when the Astana International Financial Centre [AIFC] will be presented, we will fully supply our country with aviation kerosene," said Kazakh Minister of Energy Kanat Bozumbayev during a Nov. 15 round table at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Discussing issues related to the opening of the AIFC, Ambassador of the Netherlands Dirk Jan Kop asked how foreign investors will get to Astana, when the capital of Kazakhstan cannot be reached by air from all countries of the world.

"I would like to say that in 2016 British Airways and Austrian Airways stopped flying to Astana and KLM stopped flights after several years. The problem is not a shortage of passengers: they had flights. It happened because they did not have incomes, because the fuel costs were twice as high as in Europe. There are three refineries in Kazakhstan that will start producing aviation fuel only in a year, and there is dependence in avia-

tion fuel from Russia and Europe. I would like to know, here you create an 'island' of experience, which should involve foreign banks, organisations, foreign interest, and what if no one can come to you?" he asked.

Bozumbayev confirmed that Kazakhstan depends on Russian fuel. According to him, the country used to get Siberian oil from Russia that was light and contained a small amount of sulphur. Currently, Kazakhstan's Pavlodar refinery receives heavier oil from the Bashkortostan deposits, and because of this the plant is not able to produce quality aviation fuel.

"Therefore, several years ago it was decided to modernise all three

refineries, and the modernisation of these plants is nearing completion. The two plants – Pavlodar and Atyrau – will complete their modernisation by the end of this year; the Shymkent plant will complete modernisation in the second half of 2018. After the completion of modernisation, all three refineries will produce about 900,000 tonnes of aviation fuel, which we will certify according to Western standards," he explained, noting that in January or February, high-quality fuel will be produced in the Pavlodar and Atyrau refineries, but it will take time to certify it and receive permission among aircraft engine manufacturers and airlines that fly to Astana.



NATIONAL NEWS IN BRIEF

Four working groups will be created to oversee the switch to Latin-based script, said Kazakh Prime Minister Bakytzhan Sagintayev at a Nov. 16 national commission meeting. The groups will develop spelling and orthography rules; work on methods of teaching, learning and gradual introduction into the educational system; systemise the Kazakh language terminological fund based on Latin script and adapt Latin script to IT technologies. The transition will be carried out in three stages in 2018-2020, 2021-2023 and 2024-2025.

Central Asia's first biogas plant with a 0.5-megawatt capacity was launched Nov. 17 in Shymkent, reported Kazinform. "The new technologies of the Hedviga Group, a Czech company presented at EXPO 2017, were used. Thermal and electric energy is produced by cleaning sewage from the waste treatment facilities and extracting biogas from it. As a result, this technology significantly reduces pollution and improves the environment. There are plans to implement 14 projects with a total capacity of 183.9 megawatts in the region, four of which have already been implemented," said South Kazakhstan region Akim (Governor) Zhansait Tuimebayev.

A satellite for earthquake prediction studies is expected to launch in the country, according to the Ministry of Defence and Aerospace Industry. The scientific and technological space system, composed of two satellites and a ground control complex, is in the final stage of development. "The first satellite is designed to develop a new satellite platform developed by a joint team of Kazakh and British specialists. As a result, we will have an average resolution satellite of remote sensing and the nanosatellite designed to develop the methodology for predicting earthquakes developed by Russian scientists," said a ministry representative.

Three projects worth 17.2 billion tenge (US\$52 million) and creating 360 additional jobs are planned in the East Kazakhstan region by the end of this year as part of the regional Business Road Map. "The oilseed processing plant with a production capacity of 200 tonnes per day will be launched in December in Ust-Kamenogorsk. The welding robot system for ship hull assembly is expected to be introduced at the Ust-Kamenogorsk reinforcement plant. The Altai Ken-Baitu company intends to increase the amount of ore processing and the quantity of output at the gold recovery plant. The project costs 16.2 billion tenge (US\$49 million)," said regional entrepreneurship and industrial-innovative development department head Maksat Musapirbekov.

The Kazphosphate mineral fertilizer plant plans to increase production to 500,000 tonnes, according to Kapital.kz. "The plant was reconstructed in 2016 as part of the state industrial-innovative development programme. This year, 300,000 tonnes of phosphorus mineral fertilisers were produced, of which 108,000 tonnes were sold on the domestic market," said Kazphosphate general director Mukash Iskandirov. Approximately 200,000 tonnes are exported to Afghanistan, Argentina, China, Russia, Ukraine and Uruguay. This year, six projects valued at 8.3 billion tenge (US\$25 million) have been implemented and 398 jobs created. Thirteen additional projects worth 18.8 billion tenge (US\$56 million) are planned, creating 1,448 new jobs in the region.

Security measures in the Caspian Sea are expected to be strengthened, Kazinform reports. "The vessel traffic intensity and the volumes of oil and fuel transported provide a potential risk of water pollution. The Transport Committee has begun work to expand the legal and regulatory framework for protecting the marine environment and preventing emergency situations," said the Nov. 20 press release from the Ministry for Investment and Development. This year, measures were taken to prevent terrorist attacks. Requirements for port security assessment were introduced. An emergency response plan should be available for every port and ship, the ministry said.

EURASIA&WORLD

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 22, 2017

EXTERNAL NEWS IN BRIEF

The Centre of Kazakh Literature and Culture opened in the Tokyo Central Library Nov. 15, reported the press service of the Kazakh Ministry of Culture and Sport. The centre was opened as part of the international presentation of the country's "Modernisation of Kazakhstan's identity" programme, and similar centres have been opened in 11 countries: South Korea, Kyrgyzstan, Finland, Hungary, Russia, Armenia, Malaysia, Turkey, China, Georgia, and France. Kazakh Ambassador to Japan Yerlan Baudarbek-Kozhatayev, the director of Tokyo Central Library and Director of the Kazakh National Library Umitkhan Munalbayeva participated in the opening ceremony along with prominent Kazakh scholars, members of the Japanese intelligentsia, representatives of the Kazakh diaspora in Tokyo, students and schoolchildren.

Permanent representative of Kazakhstan to international organisations in Vienna Kairat Sarybai and other members of Kazakhstan's delegation participated in the 49th session of the Preparatory Commission of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organisation (CTBTO) that was held in Vienna Nov. 13 to 15. The diplomat elaborated on Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev's initiatives on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation proposed during the opening ceremony of inauguration of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Low-Enriched Uranium Bank, as well as the results of the Conference of the Pugwash Movement of Scientists held in Astana.

A Week of Kazakhstan's Economy in Germany was held from Nov. 13 to 16 in Frankfurt am Main, Kazinform reports. On Monday, Nov. 13, a Kazakh delegation led by Vice Minister for Investment and Development Timur Toktabayev met with Managing Director of Possehl Spezialbau Group GmbH Ottmar Rienhoff-Gembus and Rainer Baumann of Baumann Holding to discuss issues associated with the implementation of meat processing projects in Kazakhstan and the development of necessary infrastructure. At the Monday round table, organised by the Kazakh-German Business Council for strategic cooperation, Toktabayev noted that Kazakhstan and Germany traditionally enjoy mutually profitable cooperation in spheres like engineering, subsurface management, oil refining, energy efficiency, development of transport and logistics infrastructure, and pharmaceuticals. He added that Kazakhstan accounts for more than 85 percent of Germany's trade turnover with Central Asian countries.

A Kazakh delegation including Kazakh Ambassador to Finland Murat Nurtleuov, Aigul Kuspan, the Director for Europe of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Almat Karimov, the Director of the Container Transportation Department of KTZ Express took part in a ceremony in early November to mark the dispatch of the first container train on the route Kouvola (Finland)-Buslovskaya (Russia)-Altyntkol (Kazakhstan)-Xian (China). This train is expected to complete the more than 8,000-kilometer route in 10 days. The new route is the fifth corridor established by Kazakhstan in cooperation with other Asian and European states in the framework of Kazakhstan's Nuryly Zhol economic stimulus initiative and China's Belt and Road Initiative.

Kazakh Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Roman Vassilenko and Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Bulgaria Yuri Sterk held political consultations Nov. 15 aimed at intensifying the countries' entire range of relations, including trade and economic cooperation. Having noted the substantial growth in trade turnover in the current year, the diplomats of the two countries stressed the importance of expanding cooperation in energy, investment, agriculture, trade and tourism, as well as the efficient use of the transit and transport potential of the countries. The parties reached an agreement to increase cooperation in the aforementioned areas with the active involvement of representatives of the two countries' business circles.

Central Asian nations agree to increase cooperation within region and with EU

By Aigerim Seisembayeva

ASTANA – Foreign ministers of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan signed Nov. 10 in Samarkand a programme of cooperation between the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of Central Asian States for 2018-2019.

The five ministers met on the margins of several events taking place in the ancient city simultaneously, including the European Union – Central Asia ministerial meeting and an international conference on security and sustainable development in Central Asia under UN auspices, titled "Central Asia: one past and a common future, cooperation for sustainable development and mutual prosperity."

The five-party document is intended to expand contacts and coordination between the foreign ministries. Central Asian foreign ministers agreed to cooperate on international issues and within international and regional organisations.

Along with the Central Asian foreign ministers, the heads of the foreign ministries of Afghanistan and Iran, the European Union High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Federica Mogherini, heads of secretariats of international organisations, scientists and NGOs took part in the conference under the UN auspices.

Kazakhstan stands for the creation of a model of a regional zone of peace, security and cooperation in Central Asia and Afghanistan, Kazakh Foreign Minister Kairat



L-R: Kyrgyz Foreign Minister Erlan Abdyldayev, Kazakh Foreign Minister Kairat Abdrakhmanov, European Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development Neven Mimica, EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Federica Mogherini, Uzbek Foreign Minister Abdulaziz Kamilov, Turkmen Foreign Minister Rashid Meredov, Tajik Foreign Minister Sirodjiddin Aslov.

Abdrakhmanov said at the conference.

"Since gaining independence more than 25 years ago, President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev has been actively promoting the policy of regional integration that takes into account the interests and expectations of all the states of the region. Today, this process receives a new impetus, as we observe a surge of regional contacts at all levels," he stressed, noting that Kazakhstan welcomes the initiative to hold regular meetings of Central Asian leaders. Such an idea was voiced by Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev as he opened the conference, and Abdrakhmanov said President Nazarbayev was considering inviting his colleagues to Astana for such a meeting during the Nauray celebrations. Abdrakhmanov stressed that se-

curity and stability are interlinked with sustainable development at the national and regional levels. Kazakhstan assumes stable models of economic and social progress, stable political institutions prevent the spread of common threats and challenges such as terrorism and extremism, drug trafficking, organised crime, illegal migration and human trafficking. A joint regional approach helps overcome natural disasters and catastrophes, including the tragedy of the Aral Sea and the use of trans-boundary water resources, he noted.

"That is why President Nazarbayev proposed in his policy address to the UN Security Council in early 2017 the creation of a model zone for peace, security and cooperation in Central Asia and Afghanistan, from where the spirit of

trust and cooperation will extend to neighbouring countries and regions," he said.

Abdrakhmanov noted some elements of such a zone already exist, including cooperation within the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea, the Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone, the Central Asian Regional Information and Coordination Centre (CARICC) among others.

In this regard, Kazakhstan offers a comprehensive approach based on three principles: the security-development nexus, the regional approach, and the coordinated efforts of UN agencies and institutions.

Abdrakhmanov also noted Kazakhstan supports the decision of the European Union to update the EU Strategy for Central Asia. The document is expected to be elaborated by the end of 2019 and establish priorities for further cooperation.

In developing the new EU Strategy for Central Asia, Kazakhstan proposes to focus on increasing the impact of the document, in particular, the preparation of projects with results that will strengthen region's potential.

Speaking about the development of transit and transport potential, the minister noted that Central Asia should not remain simply a transit region. The EU's experience and assistance should be used to help diversify Central Asian economies and in-demand high-tech industries.

The meeting of the EU-CA Foreign Ministers in Samarkand resulted in the adoption of a joint communiqué which outlined the mutual vision of further cooperation.

In Samarkand, Abdrakhmanov

met with Mogherini, as well as the European Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development Neven Mimica. The meetings particularly focused on assistance to Afghanistan and Kazakhstan's official development assistance projects, which allocated more than \$450 million over the past several years.

Another important event was the signing by the foreign ministers of Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan of an agreement on the area of the junction point of the state borders of the three states. The agreement is part of the completion of one of the stages of international legal formalisation of the state border between Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan and will create a solid basis for strengthening mutual respect, sovereign equality and the territorial integrity of the three bordering states.

"Since the first days of independence, President Nazarbayev paid close attention to the delimitation of the state border. In fact, this is a matter of responsible state-building and security of the country. The trilateral agreement signed today is largely historical for Central Asia, since it finalises the legal registration of the state borders of our three states," Abdrakhmanov said after the signing ceremony.

He also met separately with Kyrgyz counterpart Erlan Abdyldayev to discuss regional and bilateral cooperation and integration within the Eurasian Economic Union. They also affirmed their desire to strengthen bilateral relations and resolve trade and economic issues.

Nazarbayev, Putin discuss developing human capital at interregional forum

Continued from Page A1

Nazarbayev also considered the possibility of opening branches of Russian universities in Kazakh regions with an increased demand for educational services.

He highlighted prospects for cooperation in healthcare, healthcare digitisation and common telemedicine network development.

"The work on digitisation has started within the EAEU [Eurasian Economic Union]. I suggested holding a special EAEU forum on digitisation in Astana in the first quarter of next year. Kazakhstan and Russia should become locomotives in this sphere," he said.

In terms of labour market and social protection, the Kazakh President noted the dependence of labour mobility on the citizens' awareness about the demand and supply in the labour market.

"We need to work out the mechanism of creating a single integrated Eurasian electronic labour ex-



Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev (L) and Russian President Vladimir Putin.

change," he said. Nazarbayev also said tourism had not been previously discussed at an interregional forum. He thus proposed to devote the next forum to the topic of "New approaches and trends in tourism development in Kazakhstan and Russia" and to conduct it in Kazakhstan, in the city of Petropavl in 2018.

He also noted both countries support the China-Kazakhstan-Russia-Europe high-speed railway project, which will positively influence cooperation between the two countries.

Putin supported many of Nazarbayev's statements, noting Kazakhstan and Russia are strategic partners. He particularly highlight-

ed Kazakhstan's contribution to the settlement of the Syrian conflict within the Astana Process.

"Largely thanks to the Astana talks, there appeared an opportunity to find an early resolution to the Syrian crisis and for Syrians to reach agreements on launching a political settlement process," he said.

Speaking about the forum, Putin noted interregional cooperation is developing successfully and covers a wide range of economic, social and humanitarian issues.

"The regions of our two countries are cooperating very closely. About 400 agreements on cooperation already exist between the regions of Russia and Kazakhstan... A comprehensive programme of Russian-Kazakh interregional cooperation for 2018-2023 has been elaborated for the forum. The document is aimed at enhancing the regions' interaction even more. Priority will be given to trade, economic and investment cooperation," he said.

He emphasised that it was due to

the business initiatives of Kazakh and Russian regions that mutual trade has grown considerably since the beginning of this year. In January-August 2017, mutual deliveries of goods and services reached \$11 billion, a 30 percent increase compared to the same period last year.

"The accumulated Russian investments in Kazakhstan exceeded \$10.8 billion, and Kazakhstan's investment to Russia reached \$3 billion. We must not stop here, that is why we instructed our governments and the intergovernmental commission to take additional measures to remove barriers to the movement of goods, capital and labour," said the Russian President.

Regarding the digitisation issue, Putin expressed hope that the forum would help establish interregional cooperation in the introduction of electronic services and products in municipal administrations, housing and communal services modernisation, healthcare and environmental protection.

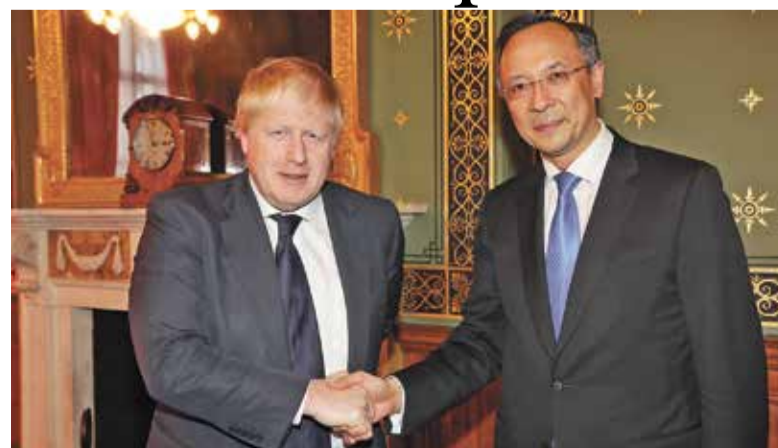
Kazakh, British foreign ministers agree to greater transit, Silk Road cooperation

Continued from Page A1

Abdrakhmanov and Johnson also touched on meetings between Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev and British Prime Minister Theresa May, including at the G20 summit in China in 2016 and Nazarbayev's November 2015 London visit which resulted in agreements worth \$12 billion.

"Kazakhstan will continue strengthening its strategic partnership with Great Britain in order to modernise the economy and increase investment and trade exchange based on the agreements at the highest level," Abdrakhmanov said, adding the United Kingdom plays an important role in Kazakhstan's economic development.

Britain is one of Kazakhstan's major trading partners and one



of the six largest investors in the Kazakh economy with more than \$12 billion invested so far. Bilateral trade in 2016 was \$1.2 billion and more than \$1 billion in the first nine months of 2017.

Kazakhstan is also using Brit-

ain's experience in creating AIFC and thousands of Kazakh students, including Bolashak presidential scholarship holders, study in British universities.

In turn, Johnson also noted Kazakhstan's importance to the UK

and Britain's intention to deepen wide-ranging cooperation.

Abdrakhmanov's meeting with Johnson was part of his visit to Britain during which the Kazakh Foreign Minister also met with the leadership of Metalysis company, which is implementing a high-tech project in Kazakhstan, and TheCityUK, which is cooperating with the AIFC.

In addition, Abdrakhmanov attended the annual meeting of the Eurasian Council on Foreign Affairs (ECFA) Advisory Council. The council was founded in 2014 and is an independent think tank studying Central Asian states' development and relations with European countries.

"Kazakhstan is working hard to improve the investment climate further and is interested in expanding investment cooperation with Euro-

pean companies, including British ones," said Abdrakhmanov.

He stressed Kazakhstan ranked 36th in the World Bank's Doing Business report this year, while the European Union is Kazakhstan's largest trade and economic partner and investor, which on average accounts for up to 50 percent of trade and investment into the Kazakh economy.

The annual meeting of the ECFA Advisory Council discussed the conceptual approaches to the development of relations between Kazakhstan and other Central Asian countries with Europe and cooperation in transport, logistics, energy and financial technology. Participants stressed Kazakhstan's geo-economic location in the heart of Eurasia, its efforts to develop transit and key role for the implementation of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

ECONOMY

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 22, 2017

GE Digital CEO says digital transformation transforms global industry

By Aigerim Bulambayeva

ASTANA – Bill Ruh, CEO of GE Digital and Chief Digital Officer (CDO) of GE, lectured at Nazarbayev University Graduate School of Business Nov. 14 about the changes in the industrial due to the digital transformation and his company's solution to the challenge. As part of his first visit to Kazakhstan, and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) countries as a whole, he also commented on cooperation between GE and the Samruk Kazyna Sovereign Wealth Fund.

"The entire industrial world is being changed and people who will not embrace the changes are going to lag behind," he said.

Ruh pointed to film manufacturer Kodak, which collapsed due to the pervasive changes in consumer



Bill Ruh

goods market fuelled by digitalisation. The next set of companies to fall for the same reason, he believes, are those in the industrial area.

One must not perceive those changes as strictly negative, however, as this is also the perfect time

to seize the opportunities created by the changes. As an example of success stories, he spoke about Uber and Airbnb, both of which, not owning any assets, became very productive through digital technology. Ruh suggested those in the audience, specifically the aspiring entrepreneurs, follow their lead.

GE Digital transforms industry, bringing value to customers, he said. "We all understand how the digital world and the Internet are changing the consumer world, but what people do not understand is that the industrial world is about to go through the same transformation that we saw in the consumer world. The energy arena is one of the first areas to embrace digital technology and GE is leading this. What we are doing is we are taking the physical world, the machines that operate industrial systems, as well as the digital world

and then bringing them together, so that we can drive greater productivity and make them more efficient. If you look at it, GE is doing this in the energy market, where through Predix we are connecting our electrical grids. Already, about 4 percent of the world's electricity is running through Predix," he said.

Predix is GE's software platform for collecting and analysing data from industrial machines. With Predix digital solutions, industrial companies can achieve higher business results, effectively managing their assets in real time, Ruh claimed.

Earlier this fall, General Electric and the Samruk Kazyna Sovereign Wealth Fund inked a preliminary agreement to explore opportunities for cooperation in sustainable digital systems for Samruk Kazyna industrial enterprises and other Kazakh companies. The companies agreed

to evaluate the possible localisation of Predix-based digital solutions – from edge to cloud – which would help nurture the nation's developer community in partnership with the region's leading universities.

Ruh shared his vision on the opportunities of future cooperation.

"GE has been in Kazakhstan for 70 years (starting when the country was a part of Soviet Union). We have been investing, hiring people and creating jobs in this environment for a long time. Looking at the future, we are working with Samruk Kazyna on rethinking how we can help them operate their businesses, become more efficient in energy, mining, healthcare and everything they do. We are looking to how we can collaborate, so that we can sell our joint products to the industrial customers in the whole Central Asian region," he said.

ECONOMY NEWS IN BRIEF

Trade turnover between Kazakhstan and Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) countries exceeded \$12 billion from January-September, reported 24.kz. The hike represents a 30-percent increase compared to the same period last year, noted the Ministry of National Economy. The volume of exports to EAEU countries reached approximately \$4 billion with the larger part of the trade accounting for Kazakh imports. Kazakhstan exports mineral products, metals and items made from them as well as chemical industry and animal and vegetable origin products, machinery and equipment, according to the ministry press service. The nation imports machines and equipment, mineral products and chemical industry items.

Kazakhstan's index of industrial production has reached 107.5 percent since the beginning of the year, reported khabar.kz. The extraction of crude oil, natural gas, metal ores and coal and production of food products, oil refining and medicines have all increased. Production growth has been observed in 14 regions of the country, according to data from the Ministry of National Economy. Production of cigarettes, rubber and plastic products, computers and electronic equipment has decreased.

After a drop in July, the aggregate volume of second-tier bank (STB) assets is growing for the second consecutive month, reported ranking.kz. The size of the banking sector decreased 2.6 percent to 24.4 trillion tenge (US\$73.27 billion) at the end of September compared to the 19.3-percent increase to 25.1 trillion tenge (US\$75.37) the previous year. The loan portfolio share in assets volume decreased from 61.7 percent to 56.9 percent since the beginning of the year. In September, the STB assets portfolio grew 1.5 percent or 354.8 trillion tenge (US\$1.06 billion).

The EXPO 2017 legacy is expected to attract approximately \$40 billion in foreign investments in the next 10 years, according to Astana International Financial Centre (AIFC) Governor Kairat Kelimbetov, reported khabar.kz. He believes the AIFC, Astana international IT start-up hub and Green Technologies Centre, which will begin their work as early as Jan. 1, will provide the main inflow of investments. "We expect that the international stock exchange will start operating in the first quarter, where the privatisation of Samruk Kazyna Fund companies will be conducted. The possibility of privatisation of Air Astana, Kazatomprom and other companies next year is being discussed. We expect a corresponding decision of the government and Samruk Kazyna next year," he said.

The ninth Baikonur Invest forum dedicated to developing international cooperation was held in Kyzylorda, according to the regional akimat (administration) press service. Representatives of local and international business communities and heads of financial institutions, corporations and research institutes from all regions of the country and abroad, as well as delegations from countries including China, Iran, Poland, Russia, South Korea, Turkey and Uzbekistan, took part in the symposium. Event participants organised an exhibit of investment projects and more than 30 memorandums and agreements on mutual cooperation were signed.

The Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) Customs Code will enter into force on Jan.1, reported khabar.kz, as EAEU nation heads have signed the corresponding joint statement. The new customs legislation was developed taking into account the current development level of electronic technologies and contains many aspects useful for entrepreneurs, according to the Eurasian Economic Commission press service. The EAEU Customs Code will replace the Customs Union Customs Code in effect since mid-2010. The new document gives powerful impetus to transferring customs technologies to information lines and also eliminates many of the problems that have accumulated in law enforcement practice.

EBRD predicts Kazakh economy to grow 3.8 percent in 2017

Continued from Page A1

The EBRD tracks the economies of 37 emerging countries, financing their projects and supporting reforms aimed at sustainable and environmentally-friendly market economies. The recent report shows that economic growth is observed in 27 emerging countries this year. Growth in the region is expected to continue in 2018 but at a more moderate pace, according to EBRD.

The report also says that the current outlook is subject to risks, including geopolitical tensions, persistent security threats, the growing appeal of populist anti-globalisation policies in advanced economies and a high degree of concentration in the sources of global growth.

The Russian economy, being the largest in the EBRD region and hav-

ing a large influence on Kazakhstan's economy, has now pulled out of recession after a cumulative contraction of 3 percent over the last two years. Russia is expected to see GDP growth of 1.8 percent this year and 1.7 percent next year. However, the report says that investment activity in Russia is constrained by economic uncertainty, and signs of stress have appeared in the financial sector.

The bank believes the increase in the oil price – compared with 2016 – has been a positive factor for Russia, and also for other commodity exporters and countries in Central Asia and eastern Europe and the Caucasus that rely on Russia for remittance flows or as a destination for their exports.

The gap in growth rates between the east and west of the EBRD region is also expected to narrow, according to the report.

Shymkent hosts AgriTek 2017

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – More than 50 companies from Kazakhstan, Russia, South Korea, Turkey and Uzbekistan exhibited products including agricultural machinery and equipment, irrigation technologies, fertilisers, protective equipment for greenhouses, plants, seeds and seedlings, livestock and veterinary technologies at AgriTek 2017, held Nov. 8 in Shymkent.

The event attracted about 1,500 visitors, according to Kazinform.

At the opening ceremony, South Kazakhstan region Akim (Governor) Zhansait Tuimebayev noted agriculture in the region is becoming a new driver of the economy.

"Modern technologies are used in the crop sector due to state support. There are more than 1,300

hectares of greenhouses belonging to 5,000 farms in the region, 17 of which are automated industrial greenhouses. In addition, new technologies are widely used in the dairy industry. Up to 7,000 litres of milk are received per year from every cow due to modern equipment. The production of poultry meat will increase up to five times as a result of the use of digital technologies," he said.

Seven hectares of almond orchards, and 59 hectares of walnuts, have been planted. The drip irrigation method originally introduced on 7,500 hectares has expanded to 58,500 hectares. Greenhouse area in the region has increased by 1,294 hectares, accounting for an 80-percent share in the country.

"It is difficult to achieve results without introducing modern technologies in agriculture. The state began to issue investment subsidies from

25 percent-50 percent to purchase new equipment. To increase the efficiency of production, the special subsidies for high-grade seeds and fertilisers are also taken into consideration. Concessional loans at a 2-percent rate are issued for spring field harvest campaigns and loans at 6-8 percent rates for other areas. State support is aimed at increasing the productivity of agricultural products; that is, obtaining high quality products," said Tuimebayev.

The agricultural crop area reached 818,000 hectares this year, an increase of 29,000 hectares compared to 2016. As a result, this year's gross agricultural output volume reached 376.5 billion tenge (US\$1.1 billion).

Farm machinery manufacturing issues and ways to produce agricultural machinery, equipment and tools were discussed at a seminar within the exhibition.

Number of transit flights through country increased by 5.2 percent

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – The Civil Aviation Committee, which recently reported the number of transit flights (indirect flights with a connection) through Kazakh airspace has grown by 5.2 percent, is working to attract more air traffic through the nation.

The committee noted 183,877 flights were registered in Kazakh airspace in the first nine months of this year. Almost 50 percent, 87,688 flights, are transit flights representing an increase of 5.2 percent compared to the same period in 2016.

According to the committee's report, its subsidiary organisation, Kazaeronavigation, negotiated with representatives of the International Air Transport Association (IATA), airlines and air navigation service providers to attract air traffic flows through Kazakh airspace. Corresponding steps have also been taken to restructure the airspace management and increase the length of international air routes. Radio equipment has been purchased and experts are being trained according to international standards.

Most of the flights are made by airlines from Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) nations and countries beyond the region carrying passengers from Europe and Russia to Southeast and Central Asian countries. The trans-Asian network of routes passing through Kazakhstan accounts for

approximately 30-40 percent of the total transit traffic between Europe and Asia, with an average of 300-350 flights per day.

The main airlines using the country's airspace are Uzbekistan Airways (up to 200 flights a week), Turkish airlines (up to 130 flights), Russian Aeroflot (up to 130 flights), Russian Ural Airlines (up to 110 flights), Cathay Pacific Airlines (100 flights), China Southern Airlines (100 flights) and Siberia Airlines (up to 100 flights). Air India, British Airways, KLM, Lufthansa, Pakistan Airlines and Thai Airlines each carry out 40-80 flights a week.

Transit passenger traffic has grown more than 20 times in the last seven years, from approximately 20,000 in 2010 to nearly 478,000 in 2016. Air transit is an important component of the Kazakh economy, as every transit passenger leaves about \$600 in Kazakhstan and \$200-\$250 without transportation costs.

The government is taking action to increase these indicators. A 72-hour visa-free regime for Chinese citizens travelling on Kazakh airlines through the Almaty and capital airports had been in existence during EXPO 2017. A visa-free regime is also in place for citizens from the 45 countries of the European Union, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) as well as the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Malaysia, Monaco and Singapore.

FROM THE HEART OF EURASIA

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BUSINESS

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 22, 2017

BUSINESS NEWS IN BRIEF

The Mangystau region has presented the Business-Kapital project, which will provide support for Zhanaozen entrepreneurs, according to the press service of the regional administration. The programme is financed by Damu Entrepreneurship Development Fund and OzenMunaiGas. "This programme is the application of state support measures within the Business Roadmap 2020. Everyone who wants to do business will be able to apply for the new programme. ... Over 1 billion tenge [US\$3 million] will be allocated for projects of local entrepreneurs. These funds will be placed in second-tier banks for subsequent financing of projects in Zhanaozen on preferential terms. In fact, funds from the local budget will not be involved," said Akim (Governor) Yeraly Tugzhanov. He stressed that the economy of Zhanaozen should be diversified through financial support to new facilities in production and services.

The Baiterek 4 company in the South Kazakhstan region has started exporting its products to China, according to kapital.kz. The enterprise makes canned vegetables in the amount of 1,500 tonnes per year. Most are sold in Almaty and the western region of Kazakhstan. "The demand for our products is growing every day. I think consumers are happy and now we have started exporting to foreign markets. Right now, 20 people are involved in production, and 40 people work during summer," said Deputy Director of Baiterek 4 Bakhytzhon Ospanov. The products are also shipped to the Sairam district of the South Kazakhstan region and to the markets of Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan.

A rice milling plant was launched in the Kyzylorda region through the Baikonur-Invest forum, according to the website of the regional administration. The enterprise employs 80 people, and plans to increase that number to 100 in the future. According to Daulet Sarsenbayev, head of the Abai Daulet plant, it processes seven tonnes of grain per hour through a no-waste production process. The region collected more than 500,000 tonnes of rice this year. Torem Hoshemi, an Iranian variety of rice, was planted in the region and an agreement was signed at the forum to export Kyzylorda rice varieties to Iran.

The administration of the Kostanai Region signed a memorandum with Global Gas Group on the construction of a gas processing plant in the region, reported inform.kz. According to Kostanai Akim (Governor) Arkhimed Mukhambetov, the investment agreement is worth 20 billion tenge (US\$60 million). "Here the company plans to implement three plants: the construction and operation of the distribution infrastructure for the supply of natural gas, the construction of liquefied natural gas production and the organisation of a multidisciplinary enterprise for the production of the Globalgasauto gas-engine system," he said. The gas processing plant's capacity will be up to 200,000 tonnes per year. The gasification of Astana and the northern regions of the country is planned to be implemented through public-private partnerships. "At the same time, the cost of gas will not be more than 35 tenge [US\$0.1] per 1 cubic metre. Within the [public-private partnership], our company will invest a total of 77 billion tenge [US\$231 million]," said head of Global Gas Group Oleg Goncharov.

Kazakh residents trading online will be exempt from income tax, said First Vice Minister of the National Economy Ruslan Dalenov during the presentation of a new tax code in the Senate. "The next amendment concerns electronic commerce. Today, mainly, the trade of individuals and the self-employed has 'migrated' to the web, the internet, WhatsApp, Instagram," he said, according to inform.kz. "We tried to give an impetus to electronic commerce by exempting from corporate income the individual income tax of persons who deal exclusively with electronic commerce. This amendment will operate for five years and will develop e-commerce, transfer it into legal paths," said Dalenov.

Kazakh-British investment forum participants sign agreements, enhance cooperation

By Aigerim Seisembayeva

ASTANA – The Kazakhstan-United Kingdom Investment Forum became the venue Nov. 8 for discussing Kazakhstan's vast investment opportunities and signing a number of documents between the nations' institutions. The items included a memorandum of cooperation between Kazakh Invest and the British Chamber of Commerce in Kazakhstan, a memorandum of understanding between Kazakh Invest and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) and a tripartite agreement among the Astana International Financial Centre (AIFC), the City of

London and the London Stock Exchange to train and develop Astana Stock Exchange personnel.

The event, held in London, presented Kazakhstan's economic modernisation with its comprehensive privatisation programme currently being implemented, new investment strategy and investment cooperation opportunities, as well as AIFC and Kazakh Invest's activity, reported the foreign ministry's press service.

In his speech, Kazakh Ambassador to the U.K. Erlan Idrissov said that in 25 years Kazakhstan and the U.K. have strengthened relations and created a truly strategic partnership. As one of the largest investors in the Kazakh economy,

the U.K. has become an important trade and economic partner. He noted the two countries have actively cooperated on a number of priority projects, including establishing and developing both the AIFC and the national privatisation programme, as well as projects within the One Belt One Road Initiative.

AIFC Governor Kairat Kelimbetov noted the financial centre offers a number of privileges for investors, whose contributions will continue to create favourable conditions for attracting investment to Kazakhstan.

"The AIFC has every opportunity to become the gateway to Eurasia, providing trade and financial flows between the countries of the West and the East," he said.

Kazakh Invest Deputy Chairperson Birzhan Kaneshiev outlined new investment opportunities for sectoral and regional projects. Kazakhstan's national investment strategy has the U.K. as one of the priority countries for attracting investment, he said, adding cooperation between the nations will continue to strengthen.

Lord Mayor of London Dr. Andrew Parmley highlighted the cooperation potential between the U.K. and Kazakhstan both in terms of One Belt One Road and in developing the AIFC. In particular, he noted the City of London is ready to provide the Kazakh capital with as much support as needed for the financial centre to become as large

as possible in the region. He added Great Britain could be closely involved in implementing Kazakhstan's privatisation programme.

The event was jointly organised by the City of London Corporation, the AIFC and Kazakh Invest and was supported by the Kazakh Embassy in the U.K. Attendees included the U.K. Prime Minister's Trade Envoy to Kazakhstan Baroness Emma Nicholson, head of the EBRD representative office in Kazakhstan Agris Preimanis and heads and representatives of top British transnational companies such as Aggreko, Connect Ireland, International Development Ireland, Metalysis, Sentinel and WilliamHare.

AIFC, green tech centre and IT start-up hub to open in 2018

Continued from Page A1

"The AIFC international presentation will take place July 5 next year, but we will start operating Jan. 1," said AIFC Governor Kairat Kelimbetov.

The centre will consist of several components including the Astana International Exchange (AIX), which is being created with foreign partners including NASDAQ and the Shanghai Stock Exchange (SSE), the number three and four stock exchanges, respectively, in the world. SSE signed a shareholder agreement with the AIFC authority providing it with a 25-percent stake in AIX and opening access to China's investment liquidity. A technological agreement has also been inked with NASDAQ, providing AIFC with the services of the most popular global trading platform.

"We have strong cooperation, understanding and friendly relations with the Moscow Stock Exchange. They helped us develop a regional financial services hub and we will also develop new technologies, such as blockchain technology," said Kelimbetov.

He noted AIX is expected to start operating in the first quarter of 2018, adding partial privatisation of the Samruk Kazyna Sovereign Wealth Fund companies will also occur on the exchange platform.

"In the first five-seven years, we expect the AIFC to become a regional financial centre and within 10 years we plan to join the top 20 leading Asian financial centres," he added.

The green tech centre, officially the Future Energy International Centre for the Development of Green Technologies and Investment Projects, will be launched following AIFC. The centre will promote practical transition to a green economy by creating a sustainable framework necessary to advance renewable energy, clean technologies and sustainable development. Nazarbayev announced the initiative at the UN General Assembly's 70th session in 2015.

"The centre will ensure the interaction of countries, primarily from the Central Asian region, in the transfer of green technologies and consulting, training and technology demonstration, including expert examination and advice on

green financing, which will enhance the implementation of green projects in all countries of the Central Asian region," said Minister of Energy Kanat Bozumbayev.

He noted specialised international organisations, countries and companies where the green sector is currently developed are expected to become partners.

"I am sure that in the future, the new centre will contribute to the global sustainable development through the support of green technologies," he added.

The Astana Hub international IT start-up park will offer a number of advantages for its participants, such as tax preferences, developed infrastructure, affordable leases, favourable legal and visa regime and access to financing.

"The hub will be registered at the AIFC; therefore, financial or-

ganisations and fintech start-ups will have privileges on corporate income tax (CIT) and individual income tax. Non-financial organisations and start-ups will have tax incentives for CIT and social tax," said Minister of Information and Communications Dauran Abayev.

The idea for the hub was outlined in the Digital Kazakhstan state programme, while the conceptual vision was based on international experience.

"After holding consultations with a number of international companies, we worked out our own action plan for creating and developing a start-up ecosystem and attracting a critical start-up mass from around the world to develop a technological entrepreneurship culture in Kazakhstan," he said.

The hub will be housed in a 10,000-square-metre expo pavilion.

"Companies will be able to place orders and invest in start-ups, while accelerators and incubators will provide expert and consulting support. The government will coordinate the legal basis to promote innovation and universities will be a source of critical mass. One of the main tools will be hosting all sorts of hackathons of internal and international scale," he added.

The three projects will ensure a \$40 billion inflow in investments, noted Kelimbetov.

"For the first time in the post-Soviet space, we are creating a platform where investors' rights will be protected within the framework of the legal system that is most familiar to them, the common law," he said.

Fintech start-up holds its first global ICO

By Frol Leandroer

ASTANA – LendEx financial-tech (fintech) start-up plans to initiate an ICO (Initial Coin Offering) using the Ethereum platform based on block chain technology. The investments will be used to launch the LendEx P2P (peer to peer) lending platform, which will focus on online lending to clients in Central and Southeast Asia.

"We are talking about a target audience of 500 million people which belong to the so-called unbanked segment or who do not have access to financial products, in particular, to loans. The LendEx online platform, built with the help of block chain technologies, will provide crypto investors with access to the platform and will allow issuing microcredits for borrowers checked in national currencies," said fintech entrepreneur and start-up author Alexey Sidorov.

During the ICO, crypto investors will be able to buy LendEx tokens depending on the type of loan portfolio and risk/return ratio (from A to F).

"The market is being dominated by speculative types of investors which resell the tokens two, three times more at the peak of popularity. The second type of investors, which is not as common but we think that the future is in them, is the classic investors, who do not seek quick benefits and expect long-term investments but who are close to the buy and hold approach. We are betting on them, because in the

long run they will form the market of crypto-investment when it becomes more mature. They make a deeper analysis of the product itself, analyse the technical part and management and look at the team's experience. Based on this, they make more informed decisions and understand that they need to diversify their assets and they need to invest in companies that have come for a long time," he added.

The LendEx release will be held in two stages: the actual ICO and pre-ICO, which will begin Dec. 1.

"We plan to attract \$20-\$30 million for ICO in the next 12 months and about \$1 million for pre-ICO. During the pre-ICO, we will check the demand for our product from potential crypto-investors and crypto-enthusiasts. These funds will be allocated for the development and improvement of IT infrastructure, marketing and access to other Asian markets," said Sidorov.

The LendEx team presented its start-up Oct. 19 at the FinTech Innovation Day start-up conference in the capital. An international jury selected the best ideas, entering one of the gurus of venture business billionaire Tim Draper. His company, Draper Fisher Jurvetson, is a world leader in venture capital investment in technology companies and he is enthusiastic about the prospects of the bitcoin industry. The best start-ups selected by the jury will go this month to the Singapore Fintech Festival, the largest financial technology event in Asia.

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EDITORIAL & OPINION

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 22, 2017

EXPO 2017 to benefit Kazakhstan and world long term

The success of any major event is judged not only by the number of its visitors or how well it is organised, but also by its legacy. Major events can be a significant catalyst for positive change, elevating the host's global stature and turbocharging its economic, political and social development. A truly successful international event can even have a positive influence far beyond the host nation's borders.

Now that a few months have passed since EXPO 2017, it is worth analysing the legacy of this major event. While it is too early to comment on the successes of the long-term legacy of EXPO, it is certainly possible to examine the near-future impact of the event on Kazakhstan and the world.

Firstly, it is most welcome news that the Astana International Financial Centre (AIFC), the international centre for green technologies and the international IT start-up hub are expected to start operating in 2018 on the territory of EXPO 2017. Often, unfortunately, the site of a major event ends up being unused after the event has finished. This certainly isn't the case with EXPO 2017.

Each of the organisations that will be located at the EXPO site will contribute greatly to Kazakhstan and the region. For example, the AIFC will transform Astana into a financial hub in Eurasia and help to attract more foreign investment and capital. In addition, its establishment will help to enhance international cooperation, as the financial centre will partner with the NASDAQ, Dubai and the Shanghai stock exchanges.

Meanwhile, the establishment of the Astana Hub international IT start-up park, which will also be registered at the AIFC, is an important step towards the development of information and communication

technologies, which have become a major engine of world trade, services and data exchange.

While attracting investment to Kazakhstan was undoubtedly an important element of organising EXPO 2017, it is well known that one of the main aims of the event was to promote sustainable development and green energy. To ensure that the Astana EXPO can be considered a success, it will be important for Kazakhstan to continue to push for development of a green economy in the country and beyond.

Steps are being taken in this direction already. The establishment at the EXPO site of the Future Energy International Centre for the Development of Green Technologies and Investment Projects will promote the transition to a green economy by creating a sustainable framework to advance renewable energy, clean technologies and sustainable development. The establishment of this organisation will also lead to partnerships and collaborations with other countries, which will be beneficial not only for Kazakhstan, but for our partners as well.

In the long term, EXPO 2017's legacy will be judged on whether the event has managed to contribute to global sustainable development. Many scientists are suggesting that the recent floods and hurricanes in many parts of the world are a symptom of climate change. Unfortunately, global warming, through the release of carbon-dioxide pollution into the atmosphere, will cause the seas to rise further and the storms to intensify even more. Now, more than ever, it is necessary to take action to tackle climate change and adopt sustainable living and a green economy. In the short term, EXPO 2017 has certainly contributed towards this goal. Hopefully, its long-term legacy will also lead to such necessary changes not only in Kazakhstan, but also globally.

Central Asia is not a breeding ground for radicalisation

By Svante Cornell

On October 31, a citizen of Uzbekistan was arrested for the terrorist attack in New York city that led to the death of eight people the same day. This drew parallels to the truck attack earlier this year in Stockholm, as well as terrorist deeds in Istanbul and St. Petersburg. In all cases, perpetrators were of Uzbek origin. In addition, over two thousand Central Asians have taken part in the civil war in Syria, fighting for Jihadi organisations like Islamic State or the Nusra Front. Is Central Asia a breeding ground for extremism?

Both in Europe and the United States, this argument is made with increasing frequency. Fingers are being pointed at Central Asian states, as connections are made between the radicalisation supposedly going on in Central Asia and the authoritarian character of these governments and

majority of fighters decided to travel to Syria while labour migrants in Russia. Over 80 percent of Central Asians that traveled to Syria were recruited there. As the liberal Russian newspaper Novaya Gazeta concluded, "the road to ISIS goes through Moscow."



This means that if we truly want to understand why Central Asians are attracted to extremist groups, it is not enough to point at the governance systems in the region, or their economic situ-

gious tradition that could form a counterweight to extremism.

Meanwhile, their societies are changing at a furious pace. The new states of Central Asia are trying to develop new and compelling national identities; but that process takes considerable time.

As a Kazakh research pointed out to me, the big question facing the young generation is: Who am I? What do I believe in?

In Central Asia, governments are rather effective at countering extremist groups: a 16-year old in Uzbekistan, thus, is not likely to have easy access either to extremist preachers or websites.

But when they leave their home countries to work in Russia, Turkey, Europe or the United States, they suddenly encounter groups that compete to fill their life with meaning. A small minority of them – again, just like in suburbs across Europe – appear to fall prey to the simplified and hate-filled worldview of extremists.

Meanwhile, what is really going on in Central Asia?

The region's two largest countries – Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan – have both in the past two years introduced comprehensive economic and political reforms, which among other reduce the power of the presidents, provide for stronger parliaments and judicial systems, and attempt to fight the widespread corruption.

They may have long way to travel on this road. But to point at the weaknesses of these states is in no sense helpful to understand why some Central Asians in exile are drawn to extremism.

The author is Director of the Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Programme, a Joint Center affiliated with the American Foreign Policy Council and the Institute for Security and Development Policy.

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their economic problems. In other words, many appear to assume that repression and/or poverty leads to radicalisation.

The problem with this analysis is that there is no evidence that these individuals were radicalised in Central Asia. The perpetrators in Stockholm and New York left Uzbekistan almost a decade ago. Neither showed any tendencies toward radical views or behavior in their home country. It appears, instead, that they developed such views while in Sweden and the United States, respectively.

How about all Central Asians in Syria?

Even here, the research that is available suggests that the large

ation – even though these may leave much to be desired.

It should also be pointed out that the field of research on violent extremism does not provide any simple answers to why individuals are radicalised. This is the case especially in a world where far more European than Central Asians have traveled to Syria.

Migrants from Central Asia, in fact, do share some commonalities with the young citizens of Europe that traveled to the Middle East for Jihad: a quest for identity and meaning in life.

The Soviet legacy of atheism means that many young people in Central Asia, just like in suburbs across Europe, did not grow up with a strongly rooted reli-

Kazakhstan's adaption to changing world should help it succeed

By Sturla Ellingvåg

President Nursultan Nazarbayev's article "Course towards the future: modernising Kazakhstan's identity" is well written and should be of great interest to many around the world. He displays a clear and strong voice, and has obviously a great overview of history when he describes his thoughts on the past, present and future in the article.

Kazakhstan and the rest of the world have indeed entered a new period in history, which could leave the unprepared behind while others more adaptable will be able to take the front seat. The effort in this article is in my opinion of great importance and deserves recognition on a larger scale.

To adapt in order to be better equipped and prepared for the future is certainly not an easy process, especially for one of the larger countries in the world. It demands a great understanding and respect for history, with its great many learning lessons, and a clear sight and orientation in many directions, all of which President Nazarbayev displays at length in the article. And it requires good solutions and means to see them through.

In short, his words on competitiveness, pragmatism, preserving national identity, on knowledge, evolution and having an open attitude will also cling positively to many in the West. And his ideas



on incorporating the Latin alphabet in Kazakhstan, together with the importance of education for

Kazakhstan and the rest of the world have indeed entered a new period in history, which could leave the unprepared behind while others more adaptable will be able to take the front seat.

the young and focus on English language learning, all seem sound and well thought through.

These adaptations to a changing world should indeed strengthen Kazakhstan's strategically important position in the world. And they could also secure future generations of people in Kazakhstan good and sustainable lives in a new world.

And these words should also sound good both to people in the West and the younger people of Kazakhstan: "Our future will be created in our classrooms" and "Nepotism has no place in such a system. This is the way to build a career only in a failed and under-developed society."

There are many lessons to be learned from the current situation in Europe, with Brexit, the rise of populism, opposition to ruling elites, new challenges because of the migration crisis, terror attacks and much more. The apparent loss of cultural and historical roots to many in Europe has now backlashed, and we are indeed facing a new future. Cultural and national identity are considered more important now than in the past three decades. Those who will win, those who are best prepared for the future, will be the ones who are best at adaptation, and who are able to lean on the past while looking ahead for the future. I acknowledge President Nazarbayev's attempt at exactly this, and wish him and the whole country of Kazakhstan the best for the future with these plans.

The author is famous founder and expedition leader, historian and economist from Norway. He became well known for testing DNA both from the living and the dead travelling to unique locations around the world to debunk historical facts and prove historical myths.

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OPINIONS

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Role of new regional policy of Uzbekistan in political and economic processes in Central Asia

By Vladimir Norov

Vladimir Norov, former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Uzbekistan and current Director of the Institute for Strategic and Interregional Studies under the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, participated in the Astana Club meeting in the Kazakh capital on Nov. 13-14. These are his remarks provided exclusively to The Astana Times, edited for space and publication style.

Despite the fact that for the first time the representative of our institute is participating in the meetings of this platform, we are well aware of its high intellectual status, which allowed Astana Club to prove itself as an international debate ground for discussing the most urgent issues, which are affecting the world as a whole and the Eurasia region in particular. In this sense, I would like to note that Astana, the most northern capital in Asia, has confidently declared itself as one of the centres for holding representative forums of international importance.

This year alone the capital of fraternal Kazakhstan hosted many important events at a high level, including the Summit of the heads of Shanghai Cooperation Organisation member states, the International Specialized Exhibition EXPO 2017, the first summit of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation on Science and Technology. In a short time, the new capital, which was born as the architectural masterpiece of the first President of Kazakhstan, gained the status of a nationwide idea, became a symbol of independence and global success of the young state.

Uzbekistan welcomes Kazakhstan's foreign policy initiatives and active efforts of President Nursultan Nazarbayev, aimed at strengthening regional security, enhancing the authority and role of Kazakhstan in the world arena.

The personal contribution of the head of Kazakhstan in strengthening relations with Uzbekistan is invaluable. The acknowledgment of this was the presenting to the leader of Kazakhstan of the high state award of Uzbekistan, the Order of "El-yurt Hurmati."



Central Asia is an integral and organic part of Eurasia, being located in the heart of the continent. Our region plays the role of an important link connecting Europe and the Middle East, South and East Asia. The ability of the Central Asian countries, in working together, to ensure peace, stability and prosperity in the region will

It is encouraging to note that today in Central Asia there is a qualitatively new dynamic in the development of interstate relations. Noticeably intensified political dialogue at the highest and the high levels and interdepartmental and interregional relations of neighbouring countries have increased.

largely determine the dynamics of the most important processes in Eurasia.

Describing the core directions of Uzbekistan's modern foreign policy, President Shavkat Mirziyoyev has confirmed that the region of Central Asia is a main priority and called this "a conscious choice."

"A peaceful and economically prosperous Central Asia is our most important goal and key task," the President stated during the 72nd session of the United Nations General Assembly. He has once again spoken of his readiness to reasonable compromises with the countries of Central Asia on all issues without exception.

In this regard, it is encouraging to note that today in Central Asia there is a qualitatively new dynamic in the development of interstate relations. Noticeably intensified political dialogue at the highest and the high levels and interdepartmental and interregional relations of neighbouring coun-

tries have increased. As a result, we are observing an increase in trade and economic relations, and, most importantly, a new impetus has been given to the process of resolving long-standing region-wide problems.

All this gives grounds for asserting that 2017 is really "historical," in many cases a "breakthrough" year for the people of our region. Thus, our nations have demonstrated their readiness and desire for cooperation and a responsibility for a common future.

At the same time, at the international conference "Central Asia: one past and a common future, cooperation for sustainable development and mutual prosperity" in Samarkand on Nov. 10, President Mirziyoyev stressed that the

proaches of the Republic of Uzbekistan on further strengthening cooperation in Central Asia declared by the head of our state:

First, further development of trade and economic ties, creating favourable conditions for the growth of mutual trade turnover and strengthening the cooperation. According to UN experts, effective cooperation of Central Asian countries could increase regional GDP at least twice in 10 years.

A practical contribution to this task could be the creation of a Regional Economic Forum and the establishment of the Association of Heads of Regions of Central Asian States, which will create direct dialogue between the business communities of our countries and strengthen inter-regional ties.

Second, we need to use the transit and logistics potential of the region more effectively and ensure the advanced development of the transport and communication infrastructure.

The poor development of transport and transit corridors and infrastructure in Central Asia and the low level of their interconnectivity negatively affect the development of trade relations and restrain transit flows.

In this regard, we believe that it is necessary to develop and adopt a region-wide Programme for the Development of Transport Communications. In order to organise a thorough discussion of this issue, an international conference "Central Asia in the System of International Transport Corridors: Strategic Perspectives and Unrealized Opportunities" is going to be held in Tashkent in 2018.

Third, countering the challenges and threats of a transnational nature will be effective only in the framework of bilateral and multilateral cooperation mechanisms of the countries of the region.

We are deeply convinced that it is necessary to abandon the division of security threats into "our own and others" and continue to adhere to the principle of "indivisibility of security." It is important to note that in the final communiqué of the conference in Samarkand, participants agreed that the security of Central Asia is an integral part of global security.

At the same time it is proposed:

– to continue the comprehensive assistance in Afghanistan's integration into regional trade, economic, transport, communication aid energy links;

– to fight against extremism, paying more attention to the issues of countering radical ideology, the influence of which often falls on youth. Central Asia is one of the "youngest" regions of the world in terms of the age composition of the population: young people make up about 60 percent, while in the world this figure does not exceed 20 percent.

The President of Uzbekistan previously declared a number of initiatives in countering extremism from the UN platform and other authoritative international organisations, including the development of the Convention on the Rights of Youth and the adoption of a special resolution on "Enlightenment and Tolerance," the establishment of the Imam Bukhari International Research Centre in Samarkand and the Centre for Islamic Civilisation in Tashkent.

Fourth, there needs to be a swift and definitive completion of the process of delimitation and demarcation of state borders, while strengthening the confidence measures along them.

Taking into consideration this issue, it is necessary to continue coordinated and scrupulous joint work to solve the complicated issues arising at the negotiations on the delimitation of state borders. I am sure that by taking into account mutual interests on the basis of reasonable compromises and equivalent exchange, we soon will be able to announce the solution of this most important and sensitive problem.

Fifth, one of the key tasks in the region includes resolving the problems of equitably using water resources based on international legal norms, which take into account the interests of all the states of the region.

Uzbekistan supports draft conventions developed by the United Nations relating to usage of water resources of the Amu Darya and Syr Darya river basins.

Without adequate consolidation, both at regional and international levels, it is impossible to

develop an appropriate response to the Aral catastrophe. We consider it necessary to intensify the activities of all states of the region in solving the problem of the Aral Sea area and in order to attract donor assistance to the implementation of socially significant projects and programmes.

Sixth, the important direction in interstate relations is strengthening the cultural and humanitarian ties and contacts of friendship and good-neighbourliness between our states and peoples.

In our opinion, the idea of creating a "Central Asian TV channel" aimed at covering the most important processes which are taking place in the states of the region will help our people get acquainted closely with the history of our countries and peoples.

Summarising the above, I would like to express the opinion that there are no alternatives to joint efforts in building a peaceful and prosperous Central Asia.

The participants of the international conference in Samarkand on ensuring security and sustainable development under the auspices of the United Nations, noting the historical nature of its convening, welcomed the initiative of holding consultative meetings of the heads of Central Asian states to maintain a regular confidential dialogue and develop coordinated approaches on topical regional issues.

This idea is also consistent with Kazakhstan's initiative to hold regular five-side consultations between foreign ministries of our countries and develop a programme for their cooperation.

It should be noted that the expert community of the region put forward an initiative on the formation of a regional expert council, holding joint permanent meetings of representatives of leading analytical centres in Central Asian countries.

At the same time, it is important to note that we are not talking about creating a new international organisation in Central Asia or any integration structure with its charter and supranational bodies. This activity will be aimed exclusively at "checking the clocks" on key issues of regional development.

Innovation park supports digital industrial transformation, cooperates with multinational companies

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – The Special Economic Zone "Park of Innovative Technologies" (SEZ PIT) was the Asia-Pacific category winner in fDi's Global Free Zones of the Year 2017. Experts noted the investors enjoy preferential tax rates, including zero-percent property, corporate income, social and land taxes. The international programmes for domestic and foreign start-ups based on venture financing were also specifically recognised.

The Astana Times interviewed Autonomous Cluster Fund CEO Sanzhar Kettebekov to learn about the start-up acceleration, innovative solutions for subsoil users and Industry 4.0 laboratory.

Tech Garden's activities

"The entry to the most prestigious free zone ranking proves that measures implemented by the government and the fund in this area are effective and trustworthy," said Kettebekov.

The Autonomous Cluster Fund, a managing company of SEZ PIT and Tech Garden Innovative Cluster, was established in 2015.

"A new development strategy for local companies has been recently developed and it takes into account new requirements to target external markets. Currently PIT has 134 companies and 1/3 are new comers who joined free zone



Sanzhar Kettebekov

under our guidance and leadership," he added.

The total revenue of the companies has doubled since 2015 to 132.6 billion tenge (US\$398 million).

At present, the technopark has 66 members working remotely according to the extraterritoriality principle, 46 of which are located in different areas of Almaty.

"With the help of government we opened IT quarter in Almaty. The main goal of IT quarter is to unite IT companies and innovative start-ups in order to have a synergistic effect of joint work. By the end of this year 10 companies will join IT quarter, and next year up to 40 companies will join us as well," he said.

Start-up acceleration initiatives

The Startup Kazakhstan international acceleration programme

has also been launched, aimed at developing domestic and attracting foreign start-ups to the country.

Start-ups at the Tech Garden office will participate in the acceleration programme in Almaty and the Silicon Valley. The investment in start-ups will be up to US\$100,000.

"Overall, we plan to finance around 500 innovative start-ups by 2020 year. The key object is to incubate at least 50 high-tech and export-oriented companies. While this model of attracting startups to the market is a new experience for us it is widely used in developed countries. Foreign startups are officially entering Kazakhstan and hiring local work force that will lead to further development of en-

"With the help of government we opened IT quarter in Almaty. The main goal of IT quarter is to unite IT companies and innovative startups in order to have a synergistic effect of joint work."

trepreneurial culture and exchange of knowledge and experience. Our main focus is still on support and developing Kazakhstan startups. Foreign startups are helping to achieve this," noted Kettebekov.

He stressed the importance of establishing effective cooperation with global innovation centres. Tech Garden offices have already

opened in Silicon Valley and Russia's technoparks in Skolkovo and Novosibirsk.

"This autumn, 10 companies took the acceleration training programme at our Silicon Valley-based office. They were sector-led companies, such as Yvision, Orion M2M, Smart Pay etc. The training programme included series of lectures, professional panels, business workshops and one-on-one meetings with mentors, experts, business development specialists and potential partners. According to the participants' opinion, the training helped them to take a completely new look at the projects and make appropriate adjustments to the business

model for entering new markets," he added.

The Almaty Tech Garden also offers innovative solutions for subsoil users.

"We see high demand for innovative solutions but domestic developers have low qualities compare to the foreign ones. Therefore, our objective is to grow

the critical mass of high-tech companies with an appropriate level of competences. At the same time, we should foster a cooperative culture between major enterprises and domestic developers. We have an effective tool that allows the subsoil users to transfer 1 percent of their income to test innovative solutions and this gives an opportunity for tech companies to supply services to subsoil users," he said.

The fund cooperates with ERG, Kazzinc, Kazakhmys, Voskhod-Oriel and other companies.

"As many as 54 projects like production optimization, energy efficiency, geological exploration etc. worth 2.3 billion tenge have been already funded under this model. We plan to introduce a special information system to automate the process of mining planning and 3D modeling at AK Altyntalmas JSC. As a result, we expect a 5 percent decrease in production costs, a 10-15% increase in productivity, 100% downtime removal," he said.

Challenges in attracting investment

"The main function of Special Economic Zone "Park of Innovative Technologies" is serving as the ground for digitalization of the industry. There are sample projects for digitalization, model factories, lab complexes. We have high de-

mand for this kind of solutions not only in domestic market but in foreign market as well. Thus, we form an ecosystem where local developers can raise their competencies and become part of a global supply chain," said Kettebekov.

The Tech Garden is working to create competence centres in partnership with multinational corporations including IBM, Autodesk and IntelliSense.io.

"Multinationals provide expertise and half of the investments. That proves that market is interested in our activities," he said.

A laboratory for Industry 4.0 is being created in partnership with IntelliSense.io, a British technology company. The main task of the centre is to introduce the best practices in processing, enrichment, metallurgy and training. As a result, 75 percent of the working processes in the mining and metallurgical company are expected to be digitised.

"We have been working in the partnership with Metalysis, a British innovative metallurgical company. Together we are creating R&D Centre to examine the potential to make 3D powder out of domestic raw material and to implement demo projects of making metal powder. Development of this direction can make Kazakhstan a main exporter within 4-5 years since there are still no leading countries in this area," he said.

EURASIA&WORLD

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 22, 2017

President addresses global issues in Astana Club speech

Continued from Page A1

The United States increased its military spending to US\$611 billion, China to US\$215 billion, Russia to US\$69 billion, India to US\$56 billion, and this is a large part of the total national income of these countries," said Nazarbayev.

According to him, the increase in military spending not only poses a threat to security and peace, but is also ineffective distraction of economic and human resources from real needs. He noted that international terrorism has significantly spread over recent years and the world is on the edge of the world war.

"Today, any place in the world can become the object of destructive strikes. Since the beginning of the third millennium, the number of terrorist attacks, as well as the number of deaths, has increased tenfold; terrorist attacks have occurred in 104 countries, which are more than half of the world. By geography and scale, we are, conditionally, in the state of the third world war – a war against terror. And the attacks are shifting from developing to developed countries. According to Global Terrorism Index, 2015 was the worst year in terms of terrorism for OECD countries. The number of attacks was 731. At the same time, terrorist attacks occurred in 21 of 34 OECD countries. Pseudo-Islamic sects expand the area of their influence, aggressively penetrating the territories of many states. Despite the contradiction between the world and regional powers, it was possible to coordinate actions in the fight against the Islamic State in the Middle East. However, it must be understood that defeated militants will begin to revive cells in other territories, and this is a serious challenge for the whole of Eurasia," he stated.



Photo credit: alonka.kz

As the fourth issue, the Kazakh leader highlighted uncontrolled global migration, noting that over the past 25 years the number of international migrants has doubled and now exceeds 250 million people. At the same time, limited food resources are particularly relevant in the context of global population.

"Migration processes lead to a conceptual rethinking: there has not been such a significant demographic imbalance in the history of mankind. In the developed countries the population is one billion people, in developing countries it is 6.5 billion," said Nazarbayev.

People move somewhere else mostly because of poverty and wars, said the President. This leads to social tensions, crime and unemployment.

"The flows of migrants from the Middle East and Africa took Europe by surprise. They provoked socio-political crises, as well as national-populist and, frankly,

xenophobic sentiments. At the same time, the expenditures for refugees in countries such as Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey costs between 1.5 to 3 percent of the GDP of these countries," he said.

The problem of uncontrolled flow of people is often linked with the issue of life support resources and their inevitable shortage. The struggle for fresh water becomes a reason for interstate contradictions, like in a situation between India and Pakistan, said Nazarbayev.

"With the growth of population on the planet, the food crisis in some regions of the world is inevitable. There is a decline in arable land. The fertility of soils is declining. According to the calculations of experts, in the next 40 years it is necessary to increase the acreage for grain at least twice. It is important to identify the agriculture of the Eurasian countries, including Kazakhstan as a major producer of food products," he added.

According to him, to solve these issues, Eurasia is able to offer a unifying agenda in the field of security, economic growth and dialogue. The implementation of the Belt and Road Initiative, the Eurasian Economic Union, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, Kazakhstan's own Nuryl Zhol infrastructure programme and other projects makes it possible to create a fundamentally new geo-economic configuration in the Eurasian continent, he emphasised. A broader conjugation with the European Union and ASEAN has a great potential for the development of Eurasia, as well as the whole world, he added.

"I think that the development of mankind is our future. It is the subcontinent of Europe and Asia that, in cooperation among themselves, trading in a free space, can count on development. For a long time, our region's states were on the periphery of international cooperation because of the distance from the open seas.

Not so long ago in 2011, Hewlett-Packard Company set a goal to establish direct rail supplies between China and Europe. This idea then looked like a real adventure. Today there are about 40 transcontinental routes. ... Over the past two years, direct railroad deliveries from China to Afghanistan, Iran and the United Kingdom were made for the first time. All this allows us to re-position the Eurasian region in a global context. I am convinced that the future rests on the broad integration based on the principles of equality, mutual respect and following the principles of international law," he said.

Kazakhstan, having regained its independence 26 years ago, strives to be useful for the whole world and to serve peace and cooperation and seeks mutual trust in Eurasia, he ended.

Astana Club as a dialogue platform

This year, the Astana Club meeting has gathered more than 60 participants from 27 countries, including politicians, diplomats and researchers from leading think tanks.

Turkey's ex-President Abdullah Gül, Czech Republic's ex-President Vaclav Klaus, Slovenia's former head Danilo Türk took part in those discussions for the first time.

"In my speech I noted how Kazakhstan has become a centre of independence, prosperity and economic development, and I think President Nazarbayev serves not only his country, but the whole region of Eurasia. ... The whole-making initiatives of the country made this region, especially Kazakhstan, a centre of stability. Astana has become a platform for Syrian talks; Astana unites many international organi-

sations around itself. And we feel very proud for a brotherly nation, which has become a platform for making important international decisions," Gül said at a media briefing afterwards.

The central theme of this year's Astana Club meeting was Greater Eurasia-2027: Confrontation or Partnership and was meant to seek strategic solutions to global policy issues.

The Astana Club, according to its organisers, discusses regional development trends, international issues, growing tensions, trade and sanction confrontations, international terrorism and security, migration and ecology, integration processes and economic cooperation.

"Astana has secured the role of a global neutral platform, where strategic dialogues take place at the highest political level. It is this factor that has drawn genuine interest and attracted all the new participants of our meetings," Yerzhan Saltybaev, director of Institute of World Economics and Politics which organises the Astana Club, said prior to the event.

According to participants, the club has provided a way to share opinions on today's hottest topics.

"There are many opportunities here to exchange perspectives on some of the most important issues of the day, including assessment of the situation in the world from President Nazarbayev, who seems to be very well informed, and wide range of issues from the Rohingya crisis in the South East Asia to the migration crisis in Europe, opportunity to hear from some prominent former statesmen about their take on the situation," said Senior Fellow and Director of Russia and Eurasia Programme at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace Eugene Rumer in a comment.

Saudi ambassador notes potential for increased Kazakh-Saudi cooperation

By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – Celebrating the 23rd anniversary of Kazakh – Saudi Arabian relations, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to Kazakhstan Dr. Dahir Mootish J. Alenaze discussed the state of cooperation and priorities for his term in a recent interview with The Astana Times.

Alenaze called the bilateral ties "friendly and based on mutual trust," noting numerous agreements signed during Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev's October 2016 visit to Saudi Arabia. He also said such high-level visits strengthen cooperation.

Alenaze also said the two countries can expand bilateral trade that amounted to \$11.8 million between January and July this year with Saudi exports accounting for \$3.13 million and Kazakh imports \$8.65 million.

"We need to note here that the growth of trade turnover is impeded by difficulties in transportation of commodities. The sides are considering the possibility of establishing a special investment fund that will fund joint projects in Kazakhstan and this will probably contribute to the increase in trade turnover volumes between the two countries," said Alenaze.

A lack of direct commercial flights also impedes aspects of cooperation but, said Alenaze, the governments are trying to rectify that.

Alenaze began his post last March and hopes to strengthen cooperation and stimulate financing and support of infrastructure development projects in Kazakhstan through the Saudi Arabian Development Fund.

Saudi Arabia is among the biggest investors in the Kazakh economy and has funded numerous projects, he said, including the construction of socially significant facilities.



Dahir Mootish J. Alenaze

Saudi Arabia helped fund the construction of the building of the Senate, an upper chamber of the Kazakh Parliament, part of the Osokarovka-Vishnevka highway, the Children's Tuberculosis Hospital in Semei, the Cardiology Centre in Astana and a mosque in Petropavlovsk. The kingdom also supplied equipment to the Scientific Centre of Pediatrics and Pediatric Surgery and the Maternity and Childhood National Science Centre in Astana.

"I also plan to focus on deepening economic, science and technical cooperation in oil, metallurgy and industry across all levels," said Alenaze, highlighting additional potential in nuclear and renewable energy, as both countries possess significant resources.

"Saudi business people are willing to cooperate in metallurgy and mining and allocated \$50 million for that purpose. If new fields are discovered, Saudi Arabia is ready to build plants there, which will certainly have a positive effect on economy and society and will contribute to creating new workplaces," he added.

Agriculture is a field of particular interest to Saudi Arabia, said Alenaze, as the kingdom intends to import Kazakh mutton in large volumes, approximately 5,000 – 6,000 heads per month.

"This will certainly be useful for Kazakhstan as well, as many Kazakh agriculture companies need investments," noted Alenaze.

Saudi Arabia is ready to finance Kazakh projects in these fields, he added.

During President Nazarbayev's 2016 visit to Saudi Arabia, he invited Saudi business people and heads of leading companies to participate in Kazakh infrastructure development programmes, including a privatisation programme envisioning the sale of state-owned enterprises in metallurgy, oil processing, energy, transport and logistics.

The ambassador noted Kazakh efforts to improve investment climate and attract potential investors. "Kazakhstan has offered simplified tax procedures for business people, eliminated administrative barriers, set up special free economic zones and this all is done to boost business and improve investment climate within the country," noted Alenaze.

Kazakhstan and Saudi Arabia are also cooperating within multilateral frameworks, including in the Islamic world.

"Kazakhstan plays an important role in the Islamic world through its membership in the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation and the development of the Islamic Organisation for Food Security within the OIC, which was established at the initiative of Kazakh President and which consists of 32 countries," Alenaze asserted.

Astana also hosted the organisation's first ever summit on science and technology in early September, which, according to Alenaze, featured a "good message" promoting the involvement of young people in the Islamic world in science and technology.

The Saudi envoy also noted bilateral cooperation in education, emphasising the need to promote exchanges among young people. Currently, 26 Kazakh students study in Saudi Arabia, but Alenaze said it is crucial to also attract students from Saudi Arabia to study in Kazakhstan.

Experts say Kazakhstan's European aspirations merit support, recognition

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – The issues of Kazakhstan's identity relating to how it sees itself, its future and its place in the world are drawing increased interest among scholars both within the country and worldwide.

Is Kazakhstan part of Asia? Or is it part of Europe? Or, perhaps, is it the embodiment of Eurasia, whatever that may mean? The questions like these have been raised at least since the world's ninth largest country, straddling both Asia and Europe, became independent in 1991. But they came into much sharper focus when President Nursultan Nazarbayev published a programme article last April, titled "Course towards the future: modernisation of Kazakhstan's identity."

A recent report "Kazakhstan in Europe: Why Not?" authored by Stockholm-based Institute for Security and Development Policy (ISDP) Director Svante Cornell and Swedish Defence Research Agency analyst and ISDP non-resident senior fellow Johan Engvall discusses the country's place in the European context and its relation with the European Union (EU) institutions stressing the European features prevailing in Kazakh society and government.

The report defines Kazakhstan as a secular state with a civic conception of the nation based on an inclusive, citizenship-based understanding of membership in the national community.

In a Nov. 8 interview for this story, Cornell noted European integration is an important issue because the country is embarking on far-reaching reforms of its politics and economy – even of its identity.

"For Kazakhstan to reach its goals to be among the world's 30 most developed states, it will require considerable development of the country's institutions and governance," he said.

Cornell added there is great potential for cooperation between Central Asia and the EU.

"Over time, the EU's engagement in the region has grown, a trend that is continuing. There is a realisation of

the importance of Central Asia both to international security and in terms of continental trade. Meanwhile, the reform efforts currently under way in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan have caught the attention of European observers, countering a long-standing attitude towards the region in Europe that has been predominantly skeptical. The task will be for the EU to find appropriate mechanisms for its engagement in the region. The regular meetings at the foreign ministerial level are a good start, but it appears there is significant potential for the EU to be engaged on a more intensified level in the reform efforts currently underway," he said.

Europe can also strengthen cooperation with the country both institutionally and bilaterally.

"The EU can make available to Kazakhstan the processes of cooperation it has made available to countries in the Eastern Partnership, for example. The Council of Europe can also open its doors to Kazakhstan and support Kazakhstan's reform efforts with technical assistance. While Kazakhstan has to meet the organisation's criteria for membership, the Council of Europe has yet to express an openness to Kazakhstan's membership. If it does so, it could boost Kazakhstan's reform process while making available its experience in governance reform," he noted.

This is a timely report on a controversial topic for European audiences, said lecturer of the Institute of Diplomacy of the Public Administration Academy under the President of Kazakhstan Aliya Tskhay.

"Brexit and the rise of populism and ultra-nationalism in Europe have challenged the meaning of European values and essentially what Europe is today. Some 5,000 kilometres away, Kazakhstan is going through a period in its history when it is trying to find answers to similar questions – what values do we hold, who are we and where are we heading? Thus, such a comprehensive study of European identity in Kazakhstan and whether Kazakhstan could be considered as a European state challenges the tradi-

tional view on Kazakhstan as an Asian state. At the same time, Dr. Cornell and Dr. Engvall highlight the issues Kazakhstan has to overcome in order to engage more with the EU institutions, for instance with the Council of Europe," she said.

Tskhay, who attended the presentation of the report in Stockholm in October, noted the uniqueness of the work as it covers all aspects of the country's economy, politics, reforms and society and points out similarities with European states.

The report can also help professionals and researchers in their studies, as there is a vast amount of literature on Eurasian identity and only a few touch upon European identity.

"Analysts and policy makers in Europe and Kazakhstan can now start thinking about Kazakhstan as European and what it would mean. The EU institutions and states could think of designing new strategies and programmes to engage and bring Kazakhstan closer. On the other hand, Kazakhstan could think whether it wants to utilise the potential of cooperation with Europe on the basis of its European identity component," she said.

Establishing its identity as an essential link between Asia and Europe gives Kazakhstan a certain place and role it could further exploit in its foreign relations.

"This is a unique feature of Kazakhstan that it can combine both Asian and European identities and define its own vision of this mix in the concept of Eurasian identity. Therefore, I think it is important to keep in mind that Kazakhstan's closer relationship with the EU will also depend on the commitments towards the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU). Therefore, in line with Kazakhstan's bridge identity between Europe and Asia, the suggestion of President Nursultan Nazarbayev to develop cooperation between the EU and EAEU seems a rather plausible idea that could overcome many obstacles. Not only could this be a platform for a closer cooperation between two entities, but it could also bring together its member states," she said.

Nation&Capital

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Kostanai teacher creates steampunk masterpieces

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Cultural centre brings Kazakhstan and Japan closer, promotes Japanese traditions, language learning



By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – This year Kazakhstan and Japan are celebrating the 25th anniversary of diplomatic relations between the countries. The Astana Times interviewed Nazerke Dautbayeva, manager of the Kazakh-Japanese Centre for Human Resource Development, to learn about its activities and events.

The centre was opened in 2000 as part of the agreement between Ryskulov Economic University and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). It has since moved to Kazakh Economic University (known as Narkhoz due to the old acronym of its name) in Almaty.

“Our cultural department conducts master classes, a Study in Japan education exhibition, the Day of Japanese Culture, calligraphy and language courses and visiting tea ceremony events,” said Dautbayeva.

The team consist of approximately 15 individuals with two-three freelance teachers, local specialists in Japanese language and culture and coordinators from Japanese organisations.

“In addition to regular employees, we are supported by other Japanese residents living in Kazakhstan, such as teacher Onishi sensei who works at Kazakh National University and conducts a course in Japanese calligraphy,” she noted.

The centre also organises business seminars and lectures by Suzuki Hajime with JICA support.

The capital-based centre offers language courses and visiting classes at the National Library. The one-semester course, with classes held twice a week, is available each year; the visiting classes are given on Saturdays for approximately three months. The course materials, programme and teaching methods are provided by the Japan Foundation. The cost is 47,000 tenge (US\$141.85) per semester, which lasts about four months.

More than 7,000 people gathered in Almaty Oct. 7 for the Day of Japanese Culture coordinated

by the Japanese Embassy in Kazakhstan, Kazakh Association of Japanese Businesspeople, Kazakh Association of Japanese People and Central State Museum. The programme included a demonstration of Japanese martial arts, performance by the Oedo-Taiko drum group, Yosakoi-Soran dances, a tea ceremony, calligraphy, origami and other exhibits.

“The annual event is aimed at strengthening cultural cooperation, developing ties and deepening mutual understanding between Kazakhstan and Japan and introducing local residents to the traditions and customs of the Land of the Rising Sun,” said Dautbayeva.

The centre is also welcoming visitors to tea ceremony classes each Friday through the end of the year.

“We plan to celebrate our centre’s 15th anniversary. We will organise master classes and a concert programme in December,” she added.

Dautbayeva spoke warmly about the “In Memory of Hiroshima and Nagasaki” exhibit, presented in Almaty and Semei in 2014 and dedicated to the victims of the 1945 atomic bombings. It featured photographs showing the tragic consequences in the two cities, video chronicles, documentaries about atomic catastrophe and the destruction caused by bombing, diaries of survivors, “Voice of Hibakusha” with eyewitness accounts of the Hiroshima bombing and paper cranes, the Japanese symbol of healing.

“I believe that this exhibition became our most interesting project. It was a large, one-time event. The preparation took almost half a year and we tried hard to organise an important and symbolic event,” she said.

Kazakh TV launches show covering hottest trends in music



By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – Kazakh TV has launched a new television show covering trends in Kazakh music. Host Timur Balymbetov discusses the hottest news from Kazakh show business, video clips and concert performances.

“HOT Q means HOT Queue, that is the queue of the best singers with their best videos. Also Q means Qazaqstan. Our show strives to choose and present our viewers the best of the best, the hottest of the hottest! We present the show every week and each episode is posted on our Youtube channel as well,” said Balymbetov in an exclusive interview with The Astana Times.

The “Hot Q” is a musical entertainment show lasting 25 minutes. The TV channel plans 16 series to be shown in Russian, English and Kazakh.

“We try to cover all musical genres of domestic music industry, but unfortunately some genres aren’t developed well. For example, Kazakhstan rock musicians aren’t as effective and popular as pop ones. They don’t produce video clips. I

really want to make a show with Kazakhstan rock chart of the best rock bands, but it isn’t possible. If I do, that will be a show presenting retro video clips,” said the HOT Q anchor.

“Also, I would like to highlight that we aren’t doing a show for young people only. We cover many genres and that is why this show can be interesting for people of different ages,” he added.

The format of the show is a caravan of videos and concert performances by Kazakh artists with high quality graphics. The main themes are the Kazakh wave in hip-hop, the best fusion ethno projects, alternative music and synth-pop, Top 10 best works of the year and the most viewed Kazakhstan clips.

There are many promotion tools for singers, but the video clip is undoubtedly one of the most proven and effective. And the better a video clip, the more dividends it brings to a musician.

The show is on the air till January 2018 and is available at www.kazakh-tv.kz. The channel’s instagram page: www.instagram.com/kazakh_tv.

Crown Agents brings its experience to Kazakhstan

By Zhazira Dyussebekova

ASTANA – Crown Agents, one of the world’s leading experts in strategic decision-making for public sector management which has been operating for more than 185 years with a presence in more than 100 countries, has come to Kazakhstan. In an interview with The Astana Times, company chair Marie Staunton talked about the firm’s projects and goals in the country and the region.

“We are an international company, partner of governments, international organisations and the private sector in the areas of healthcare, supply chain management, governance, economic development and humanitarian action. We help countries respond to natural and manmade crises, strengthen healthcare systems, improve citizens’ access to healthcare, develop the economy and improve financial management,” she said.

“We are delighted to be here in Kazakhstan, working with local partners towards the improvement of local economy,” she added.

Crown Agents hosted a panel discussion exploring the potential of frontier technologies to accelerate economic growth at the seventh annual USAID Central Asia Trade Forum, held in October in Almaty.

“Our panel session gathered experts from the United Kingdom, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan to discuss innovative solutions such as body cameras and solar which may contribute to bolstering trade and economic growth across Central Asia through saving time, money and improving security. We also highlighted the importance of proper



legislation in the implementation of frontier technologies, as local laws are still prohibitive,” she said.

As part of its work in Kazakhstan, the organisation is partnering with local company Batys Transit, drawing on its years of expertise in implementing relevant projects across the country.

“Cooperation with local companies is not only an opportunity to contribute to the development of Kazakhstan’s economy, but also to provide support to efficient and transparent business that helps drive improved standards across the region,” said Staunton.

Crown Agents helps governments use resources more efficiently.

“Through supporting public procurement reform, we help save money by finding the best solutions for the lowest prices. We also work to establish transparent systems, which are important for foreign investors and donors who need to be sure that all grants are allocated properly,” she added.

The company is open to all propo-

sitions from state bodies and believes its expertise can help Central Asian countries build transparent and reliable economies, as well as help state institutions work effectively.

Crown Agents has been working in the region for 25 years in close cooperation with governments, donors and development partners. Its operations began in 1992 and the office in Bishkek was launched in 2013.

“All these years we have been working in procurement and supply chain management, providing various consulting and financial services to our clients, including the Global Fund, the Asian Development Bank, the World Bank and the government of Japan. Our projects in the region deal with a wide range of topics, including improving procurement systems, healthcare system development and supporting international trade,” said Staunton.

One of its long-term and broad projects is rationalising transport and trade logistics to enhance transboundary trade in Central Asia.

“In order to accelerate border

crossings and therefore expand trade, Crown Agents identified bottlenecks and physical and institutional needs to facilitate the creation of a single window network in all countries of the Central Asian Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC). Under this project, funded by the Asian Development Bank, CAREC countries have been able to use Crown Agents’ experience in customs and trade facilitation. We implemented the single window mechanism around the world to optimise the flow of trade and transport information, even before the arrival of the goods to the border,” she said.

Crown Agents also conducted monitoring global fund projects in Georgia, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. As a local agent of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (GFATM), it has monitored grants worth more than £175 million (US\$229.2 million) allocated to control the fatal diseases in the three countries.

With the official assistance of the Japanese government, Crown Agents is currently working on procurement to develop Central Asia, as well as increasing trade effectiveness with the help of single window in Tajikistan.

“We hope to continue making important contributions to the discussion on the potential of frontier technologies to accelerate economic growth and have seen lots of interest from both the private sector and state bodies. We look forward to the opportunity of working with them to bring international experience to the countries of Central Asia in order to help the region realise its enormous economic potential,” said Staunton.

Global Shapers Astana Hub empowers youth

By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – The Global Shapers community empowers youth and contributes to driving change and action to address salient local issues. Former capital hub curator Aiman Yedigeyeva and current curator Kuanysh Taishibekov spoke about the organisation’s history, goals and projects in a recent interview with The Astana Times.

Established in 2011 by World Economic Forum founder and executive chairperson Klaus Schwab, Global Shapers is a community of 6,930 self-empowered and self-organised individuals aged 20-30 who demonstrate potential and commitment to change and action to address pressing issues. The millennial generation accounts for nearly 50 percent of the global population and Schwab’s initiative came at the right time.

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THINGS TO WATCH & PLACES TO GO

ASTANA ARENA

November 23 at 10 p.m. FC Astana - Villarreal CF

ASTANA OPERA

November 26 at 7 p.m. Bravery of Song, Sadness of Art
Song, concert

November 29 at 7 p.m. Voice of the Steppe, concert

December 3 at 12 p.m. Musical Diversity of Voices, concert

December 6 at 7 p.m. Karagoz, ballet

ASTANA BALLET

November 30 at 6 p.m. Arnau, dance concert

BARYS ARENA

December 3 at 5 p.m. HC Barys – HC Metallurg
Magnitogorsk

December 5 at 7.30 p.m. HC Barys – HC Traktor
Chelyabinsk

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 22, 2017

Cosmonaut makes orphanage boy's dream come true



By Frol Leandroer

ASTANA – As part of the Believe in the Dream! Project, the Kazpravda.kz online edition team gave Anatoly “Tolik” Oleinik, a boy living in an Astana orphanage, a chance to move one step closer to his cherished dream of becoming an astronaut. An excursion to the National Space Centre was organised for Tolik, where he tried on gloves from a spacesuit, explored a descent vehicle, saw images of Earth from space and made friends with Kazakh cosmonaut Aidyn Aimbetov.

Tolik lives in a capital city orphanage with his older sister, Irina, who has already benefited from the same project, becoming a chef and baker for a day.

On the way to his destination, Tolik was told that he was being taken to the heart of Kazakhstan's space industry, the National Space Centre. A surprise was waiting for Tolik there: cosmonaut, Major General of the Air Forces of Kazakhstan and Kazakhstan Garysh Sapary Vice President Aidyn Aimbetov. Aimbetov personally took the boy on a tour of the centre and told him what to do to become a cosmonaut. Having met Aimbetov, who flew to space in September 2015, earning the honorary title of the People's Hero of Kazakhstan, Tolik was over the moon.

After the meeting, the cosmonaut took the boy to the museum, where he showed him his own spacesuit from two years ago. Aimbetov even allowed the boy to try on some of the equipment.

As Tolik put on the gloves of a real cosmonaut, Aimbetov told him trivia about space. “Cosmonauts put on spacesuits through a special hole in the suits. In addition, all suits come in a standard size; to adjust it to a cosmonaut it is specially regulated. Also, a person can grow by about five centimetres in space, this is because in a vacuum there is no force of gravitation and the spine becomes straight, so you can still grow up when you go into space,” he told the young dreamer.

At first, Tolik was very reserved; too shy to speak, he just listened to Aimbetov's space stories. Still, the cosmonaut and the boy did not miss the opportunity to make memorable photos.

“Most importantly, Anatoly, take care of your health, do sports, no matter what – you can run, swim,

do everything you like. You need to eat well, do not have bad habits, do not smoke or drink alcohol! Most importantly, you must study hard. Quite possibly, you will take the first expedition to Mars,” Aimbetov said.

After a tour of the museum, Tolik and Aimbetov went to the Earth remote sensing centre. Tolik was very surprised when he learned that the planet can be observed from space.

Shortly before arriving at the National Space Centre, the capsule in which Aimbetov descended to Earth was brought from Russia. During their visit, the cosmonaut decided to show the boy how it looks. Tolik became the first child to see it. The descent module impressed the boy: he looked through the porthole with great curiosity, trying to see how it was built inside.

When the tour came to an end, the modest Tolik and Aimbetov had become such good friends that he did not want to leave the National Space Centre and even began to have fun.

“Well, Anatoly, now we will be good friends! I wish you good luck!” the cosmonaut told the boy.

Aimbetov gave the young dreamer a model satellite building set; a book about Kazakhstan's first cosmonaut, Tokhtar Aubakirov; and an autographed picture of the two of them together.

“Thank you for such happiness, everything was cool, I liked everything! Now I am sure I will become a real cosmonaut!” Tolik exclaimed.

Having taken a step toward his dream, the project team believes that before too long, the whole country will know the name of Anatoly Oleinik, cosmonaut.

Kostanai teacher creates steampunk masterpieces

By Yerbolat Uatkhonov

ASTANA – Dmitry Govorkov, a teacher at Kostanai Construction College, has an interesting hobby. He creates carnival masks, notebooks and jewellery boxes in steampunk style, using mechanisms from useless alarm clocks as ornaments for his works, reported Khabar.

Creativity has always been a part of Govorkov's life. As a youngster, he painted pictures.

“I entered a university to become an architect, but now I work as a teacher of special disciplines at Kostanai Construction College,” he said.

The teacher has developed the unusual hobby over the last four years and his collection consists of dozens of parts.

“In general, you can use any piece of any mechanism, but the gear is the symbol of this style. In general, you can use a lot of things. Basically the parts are mechanical, because steampunk is still based on the mechanisms. Here, I have the details of alarm clocks. Actually, almost everything from alarm clocks is there – gears, keys, different switches,” he said.

“You never have to think about what to present to your friends and relatives. For example, I made a steampunk casket for my spouse and presented on New Year's Eve. No one else will have such thing,” he added.

Govorkov's wife supports his endeavours and participates in photo shoots, which he recently did in his favourite steampunk style. He decorates and processes photos, matching them to the design.



Dmitry Govorkov

He is continuing the back to the future movement and is currently working on a new mechanical item. He will soon show it in an exhibition at a specialised art school.

“I think such products bring us back to childhood and fairy tales and I find them very interesting. It takes a lot of time to make them,” said Varvara Pinayeva, a student at the construction college.

Originating in science fiction, steampunk is now a fashion and philosophy in the Victorian style. The reign of England's Queen Victoria was marked by locomotives, airships, reckless scientists and analogue dials and steampunk is symbolised by metal, mechanisms and high aesthetics.

Govorkov usually looks for raw material at flea markets, turning old, useless things into masterpieces. He has exhibited his work several times at a charity fair, but doesn't want to monetise his unusual hobby until the details of steampunk style become more popular in the country.

Global Shapers Astana Hub empowers youth, provides channels for action

Continued from Page B1

The network spans 378 city hubs in 156 countries worldwide with a common goal of making a positive change in their communities. It “believes in a world where young people are central to solution building, policy-making and lasting change,” according to its website.

“Schwab realised that gathering world leaders [at the World Economic Forum] was not enough, therefore he decided to gather young leaders,” said Taishibekov.

“Global Shapers are people 20-30 years old from diverse backgrounds and working in different fields for whom making a change is not only words, but a life motto. They have experience in business and large-scale projects,” added Yedigeyeva.

The first hubs were launched in New York, London, Tokyo, Johannesburg, Lagos, Riyadh, Geneva, Amsterdam and Istanbul, subsequently rapidly spreading across the world. The Astana Hub was organised in 2012.

As a rule, the Global Shapers board contacts inspiring and distinguished individuals in each country who are capable of building a solid following of young people, said Taishibekov. The local network selected Sayasat Nurbek, then head of Kazakhstan's Centre for International Programmes. The community is represented in Astana and Almaty, with more than 25 people in the capital hub.

“These are very different people with a common goal to make Astana better,” said Yedigeyeva.

Taishibekov noted the capital hub recently recruited new members.

“We have selected seven new members just recently. We have a difficult selection process. We received 50 applications,” he said.

New members are on a one-month probation period to test one's commitment.

“A person that can make one project within a month will be able to make a large project in a year,” noted Yedigeyeva.

“The hub has a mandatory meeting once a month. We also have working groups that are involved in different activities and they can meet whenever they want,” added Taishibekov.

The hub's most prominent projects are Global Talks and Shapers Share events.

“Global Talks is when we invite distinguished politicians, businesspeople and figures who are usually not available to youth, so that they share their life experience and knowledge. We had a good turnout recently with 1,500 applications,” said Yedigeyeva.

The uniqueness of the platform, however, is in its informal lean-coffee format, noted Taishibekov.

“There is no camera. Questions are not sent beforehand. Different themes are discussed and different questions are posed from the audience. We try to put the person's position aside and try to open up the person,” he said.

Recent speakers include prominent businessperson and billionaire Alexander Mashkevich, former head of the Kazakh Finance Ministry's state revenue committee Daulet Yergozhin and the then Kaznex Invest Chairperson Borisbiy Zhangurazov.

Shapers Share is meant to inspire young people, as self-made individuals tell about their experiences and achievements.

The capital hub also organised the Shape Eurasia forum in 2014, bringing 150 people from 55 countries to the city. Similar types of events are organised in each region, with the hosting city changing every year.

Discover Expo, coordinated by the capital hub, attracted shapers from across the world to the city this summer to familiarise them with the international exposition.

“We invited shapers from around the world to the expo. We welcomed them in Astana and they were really impressed. We also organised meetings with business people and different organisations. We toured them around Astana,” said Taishibekov.

The Global Shapers community connects young people worldwide to the best things, noted Yedigeyeva, who stressed the significance of networking.

“Global Shapers for me is primarily networking and an opportunity to meet different people. Wherever you go, it means new acquaintances. Secondly, when we visit different events [organised by shapers], such as Shape Europe, we have an opportunity to get acquainted with politicians and businesspeople, the opportunity otherwise you do not have,” he said.

Networking with “amazing people in any place of the world” is what members derive from being a shaper, according to Aizhan Kapysheva, a Global Shapers alumna and current graduate student at Columbia University in New York.

“There is a global community online and when I go to any city worldwide, I usually reach out to shapers from that local community,” she told the paper.

Kapysheva joined the Astana hub in 2014.

“I wanted to join a group of young people who wanted to do something positive in society. The year 2014 was when Astana hosted the Shape Eurasia event and as the Astana hub shapers, we were organising the event, putting together the programme for 70 participants,” she added.

She also participated in the Shapers Share event, discussing

her experience of enrolling in the Ivy League university with other students.

“We did a presentation and a hundred people attended. Some of them later sent their applications and got into graduate school; for instance, one person got into the School of International and Public Affairs [at Columbia University],” noted Kapysheva.

Similar motives inspired Jamilya Nurkanova, who is currently pursuing her master's degree in political science and international relations at Nazarbayev University, to join Global Shapers this year.

“The primary reason why I joined Global Shapers was to find myself in a community of young people who are driven by an unparalleled zeal to contribute to their society and try to change it for the better,” she said in an interview for this story.

As one of 60 winners of the Many Languages, One World international essay contest, Nurkanova had a chance to speak in the United Nations General Assembly Hall this summer and present an action plan within the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Working as a team increases the efficiency of projects implemented by the hub, said Nurkanova, who is involved in the project seeking to launch an empowerment summer school throughout orphanages by summer 2018.

“The beauty of Global Shapers is that we brainstorm our projects together, we think of the organisations that can jump on board and be interested in the implementation of our ideas and we get to roll our sleeves and get to work,” she said.



WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 22, 2017

49-year-old bas-relief unveiled in Arman movie theatre



By Dana Omirgazy

ASTANA – A bas-relief masterpiece created 49 years ago was recently unveiled in the Arman Cinema in Almaty.

The work of art was discovered by theatre director Baurzhan Shukenov when he watched a black and white video about the theatre's opening. After replaying the video many times, he realised the bas-relief was hidden behind the drywall inside the building, according to *vlast.kz*.

"I thought for a long time that I had to find the bas-relief. After all, it was created to give the building its aesthetic value and uniqueness

as an example of Soviet monumental art. Now it takes on even greater value, as a phenomenon of a bygone culture," Shukenov told *The Astana Times*.

Architects Alexander Korzhembo, Alexey Panin and Innokentiy Slonov designed the building in 1968. Korzhembo imagined the edifice as a splinter of ice which had descended from the mountains. The structure had an interior summer courtyard with a fountain, statue and rose garden and bas-relief with a small pool on the second floor.

The bas-relief is surprising in its beauty and greatness. The composition depicts a man holding a compass and a woman with a cup.

Its designer, Second World War veteran Viktor Konstantinov, graduated from the Leningrad Higher Industrial Arts School in 1958, then moved to Almaty. Many of his works have survived to this day, including a decorative composition in front of the Alatau Hotel. He made several bas-reliefs in Arman Cinema measuring 220 square metres.

The building was renovated as a nightclub in 2000 and the management removed the summer courtyard, installed a glass roof and covered the walls with plasterboard. Seventeen years later, Shukenov wants to restore the building to its original form.

"We won't change the concept,

probably. However, we will approach the building as an institution of culture and art, not only as a movie theatre. We will try to restore unique elements of the façade and interiors. Now, we are working on the design of these changes together with the authors of the building project," he said.

In advance of the cinema's 50th anniversary, the administration intends to reinstate the building's elevation and remove the entrance-way which appeared about 20 years ago.

"We will also change a lot of things inside. Now, we need to think about the restoration of this bas-relief," added Shukenov.

Farleon: next wave of electronic dance music

By Zhazira Dyussebekova

ASTANA – Armada Zouk, sublabel of famous Dutch music label Armada, recently compiled its list of the most talented acts under the banner ADE Talents 2017. Farleon (Sultan Karimov) made the cut with his track "Stop Signs" featuring Jason Gaffner.

"Want to discover the next wave of dance music stars before anyone else? Immensely skilled but often overlooked, the talents of today are the luminaries of tomorrow," notes the description on the playlist.

The nod is not the first time the Kazakh DJ, sound producer and beat maker has been mentioned by Western labels. Last year he had a record deal with Hexagon, sub-label of Spinnin Records, and reportedly was recently offered a deal with Sony Music.

It all began when Farleon's father bought a synthesiser for his siblings and him.

"By the age of three, I could play by ear every song I heard. During my school years, I often participated in the creative activities of the school. By the age of 15, I realised that I wanted to create something of my own, not to play somebody's music. I had a great desire, but I had no necessary tools and understanding where to start and how it all works. After some time, a friend showed me FL Studio, where your musical ideas can become real," he said in an interview with *The Astana Times*.

Farleon needed almost two years of practice and experience exchange before his first track was released on a label. He has mainly been influenced by French electronic duo Daft Punk and at different times was inspired by Justice, Wolfgang Gartner, Mord-Fustang and Deadmau5.

"I like to create different music; I cannot tie myself to a certain direction. But because of the great love for funk and disco, I often use the elements of these genres in my music, whether it's an electro guitar, the sounds of analog synthesisers and other elements," he said.

"I do not want to stick myself to one [style]; I like to create, play different music. I try to pay great attention to melody. I love when it's beautiful, emotional," he added.



DJ Farleon

The stage name was created when the producer was 16.

"When I started to create instrumentals, I wanted some kind of exclusivity. There were many ideas, but I stopped at this. In fact, my nickname means nothing," he said.

Farleon's inspiration comes at different times in different ways – after a hike with friends in the mountains, a recently-watched movie or the morning weather. Sometimes he gets ideas during his sleep, sometimes while working. There is no unique recipe or ritual – it is all quite unexpected.

"In short, I work on the track to the maximum until I start to like everything. If I feel that the track needs vocals, we look for vocalists and discuss further work. After the vocals are recorded, I listen to them for several days and after that I can make the final touches. But sometimes, those vocalists with whom I keep in touch send me their ideas to remake something, fix it as I see it. Usually, it ends up with me redoing the whole track," he said.

Kazakhstan may appear to be a country that has never been associated with music, especially electronic music, and the idea of earning a living by beat making would seem impossible. Farleon says it is more than doable, however, with everything depending on the person and the number of available platforms. At the same time, he admits it is hard to predict the future of electronic music in the country.

"There is practically no club scene in Kazakhstan, except for Almaty. Our club scene is very far behind Europe and the United States. I hope that the appearance of talented musicians will lead to some positive changes," he said.

Sundet Baigozhin becomes Teatro dell'Opera di Roma's newest soloist

B7 Dana Omirgazy

ASTANA – Astana Opera House principal soloist and Honoured Worker of Kazakhstan Sundet Baigozhin will soon be signing a contract with the Teatro dell'Opera di Roma, reported the theatre's press service. The well-known opera singer underwent a rigorous audition process and will become the first Kazakh soloist to perform in one of Europe's most famous opera houses.

Many talented baritones from around the world participated in the audition, but only five contenders reached the finals. The strict jury consisted of the opera house's artistic direction and famous opera singers and teachers and Baigozhin was offered a two-year contract.

Jury member and renowned baritone Domenico Colaianni noted Baigozhin's skills are in no way inferior to the artists of the legendary Milanese Teatro alla Scala.

Baigozhin performed Count Almaviva's aria "Hai gia vinta la causa" from Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's opera "Le Nozze di Figaro," Figaro's aria "Largo al factotum" from Gioachino Rossini's opera "Il Barbiere di Siviglia" and Onegin's aria from Pyotr Tchaikovsky's opera "Eugene Onegin."

"I am a patriot of my country, I love our opera house and I want all my future achievements to benefit our motherland. It is extremely important for me to contribute to the Rukhani Janghyru (Modernisation of Kazakhstan's Identity) programme of President Nazarbayev. The President's message talks about the neces-



Sundet Baigozhin

sity of popularisation of Kazakh art in the world cultural space. Part of this idea is a call for new names of Kazakhstan, who would become representatives of our country, to appear on the theatrical Olympus of Europe. I would like to express my gratitude to the Ministry of Culture and Sports of Kazakhstan, as well as my colleagues and the opera house management, for their support, trust and the opportunity to perform in bright productions and concert programmes at home and abroad," said Baigozhin.

The singer noted he will have a great deal of work in the next two years in Rome.

"I need to prove myself, show my best side. This invaluable experience is important for my artistic growth. In the future I hope to please the classical art lovers with new roles, new performances. It is known that the dream of outstanding baritone Yermek Serkebayev was to glorify the culture of Kazakhstan at the best venues in Europe. I would like to realise the dream of my idol, because Kazakh opera art is worthy of being known all over the world," he added.

Baigozhin is a laureate of many prestigious international competitions, including the International Vocal Artist competition of Bibigul Tulegenova grand prix, the

winner of Italy's Toti Dal Monte International Competition for Opera Singers (Treviso) and Arena di Verona Foundation opera singers' competition and others.

The artist has performed in many of the world's celebrated venues, such as Carnegie Hall in New York, the Berliner Philharmoniker (Germany), Théâtre des Champs-Élysées in Paris and Wiener Konzerthaus (Austria), as well as in Belarus, Japan, Jordan, Russia, South Korea, Turkey and Turkmenistan. He has performed the leading parts of Marcello in Giacomo Puccini's "La Bohème" and Figaro in "Il Barbiere di Siviglia" at the Teatro Filarmonico in Verona.

New sports drama to be unveiled in December

Staff Report

ASTANA – Kazakhstan's first sports drama television series, about the challenging path of a young man in a professional cycling, was shot in the country, *24.kz* reports.

As the producers note, the main characters of the series, "Arman Zholynda" ("Path of the Dream") were shot without doubles. To make the show look as realistic as possible, the actors mastered professional cycling techniques and learned to reach speeds of up to 70 kilometres per hour, at least on mountain descents.

"You have to keep your feet straight, you cannot turn fast, you have to bend your elbows. There are certain rules in terms of professional cycling. The coach was following us, I think I did well," Zhasulan Kopbergen, who plays the show's main character, said.

"A professional sports career

always requires sacrifice, but the protagonist of this film, in addition to physical tests, had to go through psychological ones too. However, his difficult fate did not break him, but on the contrary, strengthened him," the annotation to the series says.

Though the series is about sports, its producers say it is still designed for a wider audience.

"It's probably more family, because apart from cycling, family values are included in it. We have a grandfather who replaced the father to the hero in the film; a mother who brought up the guy who became the champion of Kazakhstan," producer Ardager Santybayev explained.

"Soul musical accompaniment, amazing landscapes and unexpected angles give the film a dynamic and the right atmosphere. All 12 episodes are full of emotion," the producers say.

The series will be broadcast on the Khabar TV channel in December.

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 22, 2017

Criminal justice system to be digitised

By Zhaniya Urankayeva

ASTANA – Kazakhstan's criminal justice system will be fully digitised by 2018, said Kazakh Prosecutor General Zhakip Asanov at a Nov. 15 Parliament's plenary session. The meeting was dedicated to the first reading of the draft law on the modernisation of the procedural justice for law enforcement.

"We plan to start the digitisation process in the criminal justice next year. The process includes the receipt of application and covers all the investigation, trial and execution of punishment. Each case starting from the beginning of the criminal and pre-trial investigations to serving sentence will be digitised," said Asanov.

The planned digitisation of criminal trials will allow Kazakhstan to share that experience with other countries.

"Foreign experts said that digi-



Photo credit: panam.kz

talisation was carried out only in pre-trial investigation in Saudi Arabia, Lithuania and Georgia. But the digitisation of the entire system to solve the problem in any case hasn't been introduced yet.

Our progressive experience allows us to share this knowledge with other foreign experts," he said.

Currently, more than 400 cases have been transferred from paper to electronic format in six regions of

the country as a pilot project. About 200 electronic sanctions have been received. IT-system developed by the Prosecutor General's Office required no additional funds from the budget. The full transition of criminal cases to digital format is to be completed by the end of 2018.

"The most important thing is that the digitisation will strengthen the protection of human rights. This will provide transparency of investigation. Prosecutor's control will increase and corruption will decrease. IT system will greatly facilitate the work of both the investigator, the prosecutor, and the judges," he said.

The official also spoke about measures taken during the years of independence to improve the criminal situation, including toughening penalties, humanising punishments, reducing the prison population and increasing enforcement of particular crime categories.

AI for healthcare

By Zhazira Dyussebekov

ASTANA – Kazakhstan is planning to launch a pilot programme incorporating artificial intelligence (AI) in oncology treatment by the end of this year. The technology will help doctors identify key information in a patient's medical records and look for relevant articles and treatment options to eliminate unnecessary care.

"A memorandum of cooperation has been signed between the Ministry of Healthcare and IBM, which provides for Watson for Oncology, a pilot introduction of artificial intelligence in healthcare. Currently, a roadmap for the pilot project is being developed within this memorandum," said Kazakh Minister of Healthcare Yelzhan Birtanov at a recent government meeting.

Watson for Oncology will help doctors identify a timely qualitative diagnosis, which will contribute to better treatment. The programme is able to study and analyse all data on cases described in thematic literature. In addition, the technology is able to provide background information based on analyses published in scientific journals.

Initial cooperation on the project started during Prime Minister Bakytzhan Sagintayev's working trip to the United States last April, when he met with IBM management.

"In the first stage, we plan to upload anonymised data from the cancer registry. In the pilot mode, we will check how the programme will evaluate the actions of our doctors and the compliance of their methods of diagnosis

and treatment with international protocols. Thanks to information technologies, doctors will have the opportunity to learn and adjust treatment," said Birtanov in a July interview.

At present, Kazakhstan has 22 functioning online information systems, according to the Ministry of Healthcare. They are designed to collect statistical information and provide funding for the healthcare sector.

Introducing AI is part of the large-scale healthcare digitalisation project implemented under the programme of the Third Modernisation of Kazakhstan: Global Competitiveness. The procedure claims to contribute to increased productivity for healthcare workers and the population's satisfaction with medical services.

The government is currently working on several projects. By the end of the year, the ministry plans to implement a pilot programme in the Unified Integration Platform, where each Kazakh citizen will have his or her own electronic health passport. Together with UNICEF, the government is also working to develop a Nurse and Care for Young Children mobile app, with introduction scheduled for December.

In 2018, a system of paperless healthcare will be launched in pilot mode in the Akmola, Karaganda, Kostanai and West Kazakhstan regions, as well as in a number of national level organisations, according to Birtanov. Starting Jan. 1, 2019, medical organisations will completely switch to a paperless format to manage medical records, including electronic outpatient cards, electronic medical records and electronic prescriptions.

Digital Kazakhstan programme presented at Web Summit 2017

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – Kazakhstan's digital economy development programme and opportunities for IT activities were presented Nov. 6-7 at the Web Summit 2017 in Lisbon.

Deputy Prime Minister Askar Zhumagaliyev met with the representatives of international Internet companies, leading IT and Silicon Valley-based experts and shared the plans for the digital transformation of the country's economy.

"We spoke about our plans for the sectors and technologies implemented as part of the Digital Kazakhstan programme. The start-up community representatives,

large IT companies and experts also had opportunity to participate in the implementation of this initiative. We proposed unique mechanisms for collecting and storing of proposals through pitches. Proposals were accepted for all sectors of the economy, starting from manufacturing industry to the social sphere and from Blockchain technology to Artificial Intelligence," Zhumagaliyev said, according to Kazinform.

Kazakhtelecom, a multi-service operator, also demonstrated its solutions for government, financial services and productions.

According to Kazakhtelecom Board Chairperson Kuanyshbek Yessekeyev, the conference at-

tracts developers in these areas and our country is becoming an active participant in this process.

"Being an infrastructure operator, our company is implementing the projects for the digitisation of the economy and we are paying increasing attention to the integration of our services to provide end-products for users. These products can be from the field of public, financial services, smart cities, and industry. We are starting to adopt Big Data, Internet of Things, Artificial Intelligence technologies," said Yessekeyev.

The key technologies designed to change people's lives, including robotics, crypto-currency, cybersecurity, blockchain, state regulation

of technological innovations were also on the agenda.

This year, the Web Summit also known as the world's best tech conference and Davos for geeks, attracted about 60,000 people from more than 170 countries, 1,200 world-class speakers and 1,400 tech investors. The event is held annually since 2009.

The Digital Kazakhstan programme seeks to improve quality of life and to increase the competitiveness through the digital ecosystem development. Its main directions include the digital government, high technology digital infrastructure development, transformation in economy sectors and human capital development.

Subsistence level, pension reform increases to be put into effect next year

By Aigerim Bulambayeva

ASTANA – Kazakh Vice Minister of Labour and Social Security Svetlana Zhakupova recently explained the upcoming changes in the country's pension system.

Solidarity pension will rise by 8 percent and basic pensions, as well as other types of benefits, by 6 percent. The increases will change the methodology of assigning basic pensions. All citizens currently receive an equal amount of basic pension payments regardless of their tenure. Starting July 1, that figure will rise as tenure increases.

Work experience will be considered both before and after Jan. 1,

1998, taking into account the list of contributions to the pension fund.

"For example, an individual is to retire next year. Work experience until Jan. 1, 1998, according to the solidarity pension system, is 20 years and for 15 years, this individual has transferred mandatory pension contributions to the accumulative pension fund without any termination. Thus, the total cumulative work experience for this person is 35 years. In accordance with the new methodology, 54 percent of the subsistence level will be assigned to people with work experience of 10 years and less. In absolute terms, this number will be 15,274 tenge (US\$45.80). When work experience exceeds 10 years, there will

be a 2-percent premium on each additional year. Going back to the example, an individual with a 35-year tenure will be granted pension payments equal to 100 percent of the subsistence level," said Zhakupova.

According to data provided by the Ministry of Labour and Social Security, 2.139 million Kazakh citizens receive basic pension payments. With the new methodology, 44.1 percent of those citizens will receive twice as much as they receive today.

The policy reform will solve the issue of pensioners who have long work experience, yet receive less than average pension payment. The change will result in a significant pension raise for them and restore social justice, officials believe.

The subsistence minimum structure will also be updated starting Jan. 1 to correspond with the population's actual consumer spending structure. To date, the figure is 24,459 tenge (US\$73.40) and the upcoming structural change will increase the subsistence level by 16 percent. The reform is expected to improve the quality of life for three million citizens who receive social benefits.

Solidarity pension payments are always indexed 2 percent higher than the inflation rate.

"If in past years, according to official statistics, the inflation rate was 7 percent, then we indexed pensions by 9 percent," said Zhakupova.

700,000 to get vocational education by 2021

By Zhazira Dyussebekova

ASTANA – More than 720,000 citizens will receive free vocational education by 2021, officials announced at a Nov. 7 government meeting.

"The project Free Vocational and Technical Education for Everyone was launched in 2017. A total of 817 colleges are working under it, including 473 state-owned and 344 private. Also, within the State Programme for the Development of Education and Science for 2016-2019, the construction of four colleges for 2,900 places, construction and reconstruction of three dormitories for 520 places is planned at the expense of local budgets," said Minister of Education and Science Yerlan Sagadiyev.

According to government education officials, 100,815 people have been admitted to the educational institutions. The programme also provides short-term courses. This year it is planned that 71,000 people will go through that programme.

According to the minister, about 130 model curricula and programmes have been revised, which enable graduates to obtain up to three work qualifications.

He also said that the educational

process is optimised by eliminating duplicating subjects, as well as changing the content up to 50 percent at the request of employers. By the end of this year, 32 standard curricula and programmes will be updated.

Minister of Labour and Social Protection of Population Tamara Duissenova highlighted another programme – that for the Development of Productive Employment and Mass Entrepreneurship for 2017-2021, under which the training of personnel with technical and vocational education and short-term vocational training is funded by the national government.

In regions, over 60,000 people are on short-term training, she added. Also, mobile training centres are present in a number of regions. They train 1,500 people in five pilot regions. Within the Bastau-Business project, more than 15,000 people are enrolled in training.

"In general, by 2021, 500,000 people will be trained under this programme," she said.

During the meeting Prime Minister Bakytzhan Sagintayev pointed out that the main goal of those programmes is the provision of work, as well as an increase in the amount of allocated loans.

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WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 22, 2017

Altyn Zhurek award winners named

Staff Report

ASTANA – The names of Kazakhstan's newest charity givers were announced in October at Altyn Zhurek awards ceremony at Abai State Academic Opera and Ballet Theater in Almaty.

Charity and philanthropy development among the Kazakhstan people have been gaining increasing support in the last few years. Business communities are also investing significant amounts to develop socially-important projects. Despite the fact that, according to some data, more than 40 billion tenge is spent annually on the nation's charitable efforts, donors' names are not often revealed to the public.

The organizers of the Altyn Zhurek award set their minds on breaking this mold and popularising the idea of philanthropy and charity. Established in 2006 by the Bauyrzhan Public Fund, the award has no analogues in Central Asia and the number of nominees increases every year.

The award is given in 11 categories: Help to Orphaned Children, Support of Education, Care for Disabled People, Support and Development of Sports, Care for Veterans, Philanthropist of the Year, Informational Charity Giver,

Charity Giver of the Year, Organisation of the Year, Contribution to Health Care and Contribution to Kazakhstan's Development.

Nominations are open to commercial organisations and individuals, with the exception of non-governmental organizations, carrying out charitable and social activities in Kazakhstan. Expert and public councils composed of 20 distinguished representatives of non-governmental organisations, state authorities, mass media and business select the winners.

Entrepreneur Birzhan Kuzhakov was among those chosen. Despite his third disability group, he arranged the production of standing frames – rehabilitation equipment for patients with the ICP diagnosis, creating jobs for dozens of people. Rasima Temerbayeva received the award for the Care for Veterans for the Free Lunches project. The two-year programme prepares approximately 100 lunches a day for pensioners and Great Patriotic War (GPW) veterans.

Temirlan Shainussinov from Akterek village in Almaty region was announced as the charity giver of the year. To date, the entrepreneur has built 58 houses for village dwellers and repaired roads at his own expense. Other award nominees and winners included both



outstanding individuals and enterprises such as the 28 Stitches club; Yekaterina Yatsenko, who adopted and took care of 25 children; po-

litical analyst Dosym Satpayev, Magnum Cash & Carry LLP, Kaspi Bank and many others.

The award ceremony was spon-

sored by the Altyn Qyran fund and PetroKazakhstan. In presenting the statuette for Organization of the Year to Kaspi Bank, PetroKa-

zakhstan President Fang Jiazhong noted its significance, as the award enables people to know their heroes.

14,000 babies born with IVF in Kazakhstan in seven years

By Frol Leandroer

ASTANA – Fourteen thousand children during the last seven years were born with the help of assisted reproductive technologies in Kazakhstan, Vice Minister of Healthcare of the Republic of Kazakhstan Lyazzat Aktayeva reported.

"Approximately 4,780 fertilisation procedures were conducted under the guaranteed volume of free medical care, to which the state spent 3.8 billion tenge (US\$11.4 million). As a result, 1,532 children were born. Overall, the effectiveness was about 32 percent within

the guaranteed volume of free medical care," the vice minister said at the ninth international congress of the Kazakhstan Association of Reproductive Medicine in Astana.

The Kazakh Ministry of Health believes that it is time to legislatively form a register of specialised medical organisations and associations with relevant requirements and norms, as well as a register in which patients will be listed.

"Today, according to the statistical reporting of the Ministry of Health, more than 14,000 women are in the infertility registry for infertility, more than one thousand for men. In general, the frequency

of infertile marriage is within 15 percent. According to the World Health Organisation, this level of sterile marriage is a public problem, since it affects demographic indicators," Aktayeva added.

Since 2010, the in-vitro fertilisation programme is included in the guaranteed volume of free medical care and from year to year the number of publicly paid procedures is increasing: nine times (from 100 to 900) from 2010 to 2017.

"The state order for the next year remains within the limits of 2017, that is 900 procedures within the limits of the same financing," Aktayeva summarised.

Fifth Abai Keshi charity gala dinner raises funds for education

By Aigerim Bulambayeva

ASTANA – The life and works of Kazakhstan's most famous poet were celebrated Oct. 29 as the Abai Social Trust Foundation held its fifth annual Abai Keshi (Abai's Evening) charity gala dinner in Atyrau. Approximately 170 guests, including entrepreneurs, artists and sportsmen from different parts of the country, were in attendance.

The event began with an exhibition organised by Zhidebai-Borili the State Historical, Cultural and Literary Memorial Museum in Zhidebai, Abai's motherland in Eastern Kazakhstan. The exhibition was named "All Mankind's Abai" and exposed showpieces that once belonged to the poet. Among those were some unique works.

"As a sportsperson, I found this togyz kumalak (national table game) interesting. I am amazed by the way it is carved out of wood," said Gulmira Botpankulova, a visitor from Oral, who is the first-ever individual

with physical disabilities in Central Asia to skydive.

Foreign entrepreneurs, in turn, were interested in exhibits Abai donated to the Semey Museum of Local Lore in 1885.

The event was accompanied by the orchestra of national instruments Naryn, songs and reading of poems by Abai performed by famous Kazakh artists and cultural figures. The Onerpaz and AIKEN fashion houses presented a fashion show of modern clothes in the Kazakh national style.

The evening's programme has traditionally included a charity auction, where five paintings by contemporary Kazakh artists, donated by ARTIOS Art Advisory were sold. The organisers also held a raffle. The lottery and the raffle enabled the fund to collect 4.475 million tenge (US\$13,425).

The funds raised by the event will be used to implement the "Knowledge. Experience. Development" social project to train employees in correctional education sector in the Atyrau region. The programme includes 10-day trainings on "Development of

communicative and functional skills" and "Teaching academic subjects to children with special needs."

Abai's poems that promoted love for all the humanity are known to have played an important role in the modernisation and moral development of Kazakh identity. Similarly, this event will play an integral part in achieving the goals stated in Kazakh President Nursultan Nazrbayev's article "Course to the Future: Modernisation of Kazakhstan's identity," according to event participants.

"We are planning to hold Abai Keshi in Astana beginning of summer in 2018. Next year, Abai Keshi will also be traditionally held in Atyrau in October. We would like this initiative to grow into a nationwide cultural tradition followed in every Kazakh city. In this regard, we are open to share our experience and know-how with the local NGOs. Our biggest aspiration is to take the event to London and Paris in a few years," said Lyazzat Shatayeva, member of the Board of Trustees of the Social Trust Foundation.

Preschool education promotes early childhood literacy

By Dana Omirgazy

ASTANA – Early age education and preschool programmes affect a child's future academic performance and health. The number of children's centres and kindergartens in Kazakhstan is growing every year and the government continuously encourages businesspeople to open new kindergartens and support them financially.

The capital offers numerous public and private preschool institutions for children ages one-seven. In general, the kindergartens focus on trilingual education, the Montessori programme and physical education. Preschool centres with an English language focus are becoming increasingly popular.

Baby school kindergarten endeavours to create a family-like atmosphere ensuring a child's active cognitive and creative activities.

"Our baby school kindergarten offers pre-school education. Native English speakers conduct lessons every day. Our teachers

use a special programme to teach foreign language. We also have a speech therapist, paediatrician, music teacher, choreographer and pre-school preparation courses," children's centre director Aizhan Ramazanova told The Astana Times.

The centre also has Saturday and Sunday groups with English language lessons. The classes welcome up to 20 children from one and half years to seven years.

Haileybury Kindergarten, based on the British education programme, offers a special course of study including elements of the Montessori system and Steiner's pedagogical theory. The curriculum, along with academic development, also covers social and physical education and develops creative thinking.

"An individual approach to each child helps him or her learn how to cope with new tasks, cooperate and respect each other and comply with the rules," notes the kindergarten's website.

The educational programme includes art and music lessons, physical education and dance. Children learn English from the beginning with visits to the librarian, who reads them tales and stories.

Gymboree Play&Music is among the leaders in development programmes for newborns to six-year olds. For more than 40 years, their specialists have fostered creative abilities, curiosity, literate and clear speech to form a child's sense of self-confidence.

"Gymbo camp for children from three-five years offers English-speaking lessons during four hours every weekday. Children are involved in music, art, sports, dance, yoga, fairy-tale therapy, role-playing and table games in Kazakh and Russian languages," according to the website.

Gymboree centres introduce world languages to kids in a fun way. The chain offers its training programmes in 700 centres in 33 countries.



NATION&CAPITAL
TOURISM

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 22, 2017

Aktau – city by the sea



By Frol Leandroer

ASTANA – Aktau, one of Kazakhstan's youngest cities on the Caspian Sea, offers memorable beach resorts, theatres and night life.

Brief History

Known as Aktau from 1961-1963, the name was changed to Shevchenko in honour of Ukrainian poet Taras Shevchenko, who was in exile in Kazakhstan in the mid-19th century. The industrial city returned to its former designation on Sept. 13, 1991.

The decision to use Aktau as a host for an atomic power plant was made by Soviet leadership in the early 1950s with the participation of the famous Ministry of Medium Machine Building and the leadership of then-Minister Yefim Slavsky. According to this plan, Aktau was indeed home to a BN-350 nuclear reactor in 1973-1992, when it was decommissioned.

The city itself was built from scratch – completely scaled according to the master plan developed by the Leningrad Design Institute, which developed the nation's new cities.

Aktau does not have natural sources of drinking water and is completely provided with purified sea water. The infrastructure provided decent living for people in a waterless desert.

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Aktau has largely become a centre of oil and gas fields opened in the 20th cen-

The city itself was built from scratch – completely scaled according to the master plan developed by the Leningrad Design Institute, which developed the nation's new cities.

tury and those discovered more recently.

Getting to Aktau

Most people fly to Aktau Airport, located 23 kilometres from the city centre. Air Astana and SCAT Airlines offer flights from Aktobe, Almaty, Atyrau and the capital. Due to the taxi situation, it is best to prearrange ground transport to the city.

Aktau does not have a railway station. Visitors arrive at Mangyshlak Station, 20 kilometres from the city, then take shuttle bus number 105 or a taxi.

Where to Go, What to See

The city's embankments and beaches have recently undergone significant improvements. The beach season lasts from late May to late August, when the water temperature averages +18°C. Tourists typically stay near Aktau's many modern recreation centres and beaches during the summer, as the sea is cold the remainder of the year.

Aktau is truly a city where the streets have no names, for it is divided into numbered micro-districts.

The city offers puppet and music-drama theatres, cinemas and night life featuring many clubs and cafes.

Aktau Open Fest has been held annually since 2012. The three-day event, usually on the beach in late August, features songs performed by some of the most popular Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) singers.

The city has a lighthouse in the fourth micro-district which has been working for more than 40 years. It became famous as the first lighthouse built on the roof of a residential building. The city also has a Soviet-era plane on a pedestal.

Aktau's new mall in district 16 includes an ice-skating rink, movie theatre and a wide range of shops.

Where to Stay

The city has a fairly large selection of hotels. One of the first accommodations, the Aktau Hotel, turned 50 in 2016.

Visitors may also choose Renaissance Aktau, part of the Marriott chain, as well as the five-star Caspian Riviera Grand Palace, Grand Hotel Victory and Grand Nur Plaza. The Holiday Inn Aktau opened in 2015.

Expo pavilion reopens as showcase for green technologies

By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – EXPO 2017 ended in September but Kazakhstan's eight-floor, spherical national expo pavilion remains open as the Museum of the Future, showcasing alternative energy technology.

Beginning Nov. 11, the museum presents exhibitions related to solar, wind, biomass, kinetic, water energy and other forms of green energy.

It takes approximately 3-3.5 hours to tour the 25-hectare facility.

The opening of the museum is part of the plan for the post-exhibition use of the expo's facilities. Kazakh President Nursultan

Nazarbayev reiterated the plan to turn the nation's pavilion into the Museum of Future during the EXPO 2017 closing ceremony in September. The entrance on the opening weekend of Nov. 11-12 will be free.

"The infrastructure of the exhibition complex will function fully after the end of the exhibition. Our national pavilion Nur Alem, several other pavilions featuring the exhibition theme will be preserved as the legacy of the expo, as the museum which will be open to visitors, our country and our friends from abroad," said Nazarbayev in September.

Kazakhstan also plans to use part of the infrastructure created for the expo for the Astana Inter-

national Financial Centre. The centre will officially launch next year, adapting best international practices, including English law, with a goal to turn the capital city into the financial hub of the region.

The future energy theme of the exhibition will also live on in the International Centre of Green Technologies and Investments, which government officials hope will contribute to global sustainable development and help Kazakhstan transition to a green economy.

Among other major projects is the establishment of an international technology park for IT start-ups attracting IT entrepreneurs and investors from around the world.

Turgai geoglyphs to host pilgrim international forum in 2018

By Dana Omirgazy

ASTANA – An international forum on developing Kazakh pilgrim tourism and popularising sacred places is planned for next year near the Turgai geoglyphs, said deputy head of Kostanai regional department of entrepreneurship and industrial-innovative development Roza Goryannaya.

"At the Kostanai Invest 2017 Regional Investment Forum held in September, the Ministry of Culture and Sports supported our initiative to hold the forum on the territory of the Turgai geoglyphs," she said.

Relevant agencies created a master plan this year to develop tourism through 2022 focusing on the region's most promising areas of trophy-hunting and health, cultural and social tourism. All events are designed to increase the tourist and investment attractiveness of the region.

"Its implementation implies the allocation of financial resources from the national budget for the construction of an appropriate infrastructure that provides for the preservation of geoglyphs (fencing, observation platforms, etc.)," she added.

Vice Minister of Culture and Sports Askar Batalov encouraged developing cultural and educational tourism. He particularly focused on

the need to make the Turgai geoglyphs part of a tourism investment project.

"It can be a large-scale international festival that will attract many tourists to the region," he said, adding it should be connected with the country's sacred places.

Historian-researcher Dmitriy Dey discovered the Turgai geoglyphs in 2007, which generated great interest among foreign archaeologists, scientists and the mass media. During the past 10 years, Dey and a team of archaeologists and scientists made 14 expeditions and discovered 344 geoglyphs, or large elements produced on the ground. According to the working hypothesis, the earliest geoglyphs date as far back as 8,000 years.

"It would be good if ancient ethnic music and songs were presented at the forum. We deal with a very deep antiquity. We do not have a clear idea, but presumably these ethnic compositions belong to ancient times," Dey said in an interview for this story.

He noted his team is about to launch the Turgai Geoglyphs large international project announced two years ago.

"In February 2018, we will launch the crowdfunding platform with Kickstarter [the world's largest funding platform] to start a great programme. This is an interactive

Historian-researcher Dmitriy Dey discovered the Turgai geoglyphs in 2007, which generated great interest among foreign archaeologists, scientists and the mass media.

project; anyone from any part of the globe can take part in it through the Internet. Participants will receive as full information about geoglyphs in English as possible. To take part in a team of researchers, they can put forward various hypotheses and create a plan of assignments for the summer – what we need to see, explore or shoot. As a result, the Internet community will have some evidence or denial of some arguments. The goal is to attract massive interest. Raised funds will be used to invite foreign scientific institutes and researchers with the equipment which we unfortunately do not have," he said.

Dey was recently included in the list of candidates for the 100 New Faces of Kazakhstan project under the Rukhani Janghyru programme.

Atyrau – oil capital of Kazakhstan

By Aigerim Bulambayeva

ASTANA – Founded as a small fishing village, Atyrau has developed into one of Kazakhstan's biggest industrial cities and is now known as an oil capital of the country.

History

Atyrau was established on the shores of the Yaik River, renamed the Ural by Russian Empress Catherine the Great after the Pugachev Rebellion. The change liquidated any legacy of the uprising and memories of Stepan Razin, one of its leaders who captured the city in 1667-1668.

The city started to grow and expand significantly with the development of the oil industry and construction of the first refineries and oil equipment plant in the country. The fishing industry – the occupation that attracted people to the small city and gave it a boost – never lagged, however, as Atyrau is also home to Kazakhstan's biggest fish cannery. The importance of fish and oil in locals' life is symbolized in the city's emblem – two sturgeons and an oil rig.

Where to Go, What to See

Atyrau is located in the European part of Kazakhstan. During So-

viet days, there was a misconception that the Ural River separated Europe and Asia and the city was divided between the continents. While all geographic societies now agree the Ural Mountains, not the river, carve the combined continental landmass in two, a beautiful and rather sentimental tourist attraction – a border sign with a small gazebo – remains.

The pedestrian bridge, the longest of its kind across the Ural River, is another popular attraction. The bridge has a place in the Guinness Book of Records.

Tourists craving aesthetic pleasure are encouraged to visit Imangali Mosque on Satbayev Street. The main blue dome measures seven metres wide and 23 metres high. The mosque is decorated with several 26-metre tall symmetrical minarets and the building can accommodate 700 visitors at once.

The Uspensky (Assumption) Cathedral, another important religious city landmark, was erected in the second half of the 19th century. The brick building has distinct gilded onion shaped domes.

Getting there

It is extremely important to plan one's visit in advance, as Atyrau is located in the far western portion of the country

and is a distance from Astana and Almaty. As a result, trans-

portation costs are higher than to other cities. Atyrau may be

accessed by ground or air. Railway tickets from the capital vary

from 8,200 tenge (US\$24.60) to 27,000 tenge (US\$81.10), depending on the train type and length of time between booking and departure dates. Prices surge as the departure date approaches, a trend which also applies to airline tickets. Booking a seat a day before departure will cost 77,000 tenge (US\$231.20), whereas one can save half the price by reserving at least a month in advance.

Atyrau Airport is international and has flights to Amsterdam, Baku, Istanbul, Moscow and Tbilisi.

Where to stay

The five-star Renaissance Hotel, on Satbayev Street in the heart of Atyrau, promises a luxurious experience likely to meet the expectations of any guest. The hotel offers an haute cuisine restaurant, spa and lounge bar.

Those reluctant to experiment in terms of accommodations may choose the Marriott Atyrau. The popular international chain, located in the centre of the city, is a five-minute walk from the main attractions.

For tourists on a budget, the city offers the Chagala Hotel, Grand Hotel, and Victoria Hotel. Airbnb and apartment rental through the agencies are another good option.



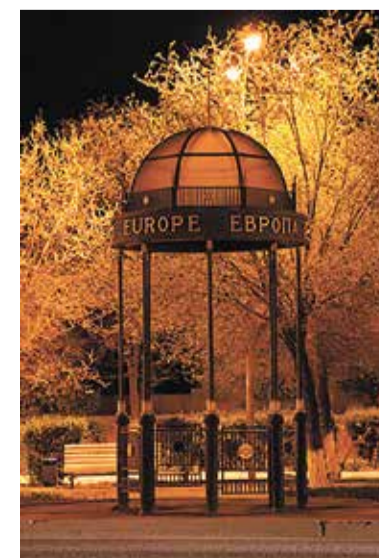
Uspensky Cathedral



Imangali Mosque



City centre



A small gazebo near the Ural River

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 22, 2017

Madina Nurshayeva wins gold at ASBC Asian women's boxing championship

By Anuar Abdrakhmanov

ASTANA – Kazakhstan won one gold, one silver and four bronze medals at the ASBC (Asian Boxing Confederation) Women's Boxing Championships, held Nov. 2-8 in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. Ten fighters represented the nation in all weight categories.

The only Kazakh to claim the top of the podium was Madina Nurshayeva, who captured the spot in the up to 64 kilogramme weight category. She defeated Dou Dan of China in the final bout to win her first medal at such a major international tournament.

"I did not succeed at the previous Asian Championship. I lost to the Chinese athlete in the first fight. I was winning in the course of the fight, but since the tournament took place in China, the victory went to my opponent. That is why I was very nervous this time when I fought against the representative of the host nation again. I gave all my strength to win with a clear advantage and not to give any chance to doubt my victory.



Madina Nurshayeva

This win gave me confidence and helped in the following two bouts. Together with the coaches, we did a great job to be in the best shape at this tournament," said Nurshayeva on her success.

According to the boxer, the final bout was the most challenging.

"I managed to recover well after the semi-finals. Our masseurs, doctors and psychologists who were always with us helped me a lot. My opponent in the final was

a Chinese athlete. When preparing for the fight, we, together with the coaches, watched her semi-final bout where she knocked down a boxer from India. We noticed that my opponent, like myself, works a lot on counterattacks and felt it was right to box at a distance and look for chances to catch her on the counter-actions. I think the correctly chosen tactics helped me win in the final," she added.

Kazakhstan could have won an-

other gold medal at the championships, but Valentina Khalzova (69 kg) lost in the final and had to comfort herself with silver. In the decisive bout, the Kazakh, who is the defending world champion, lost to a Chinese boxer.

The four bronze medals for Kazakhstan came from two-time world champion Nazym Kyzai-bai (51 kg), Rio Olympics bronze medallist Dariga Shakimova (75 kg), 2015 Asian Championships bronze medallist Moldir Bazarbayeva (81 kg) and current world champion Lyazzat Kungeibayeva (over 81 kg).

Commenting on the national team's performance in Ho Chi Minh, head coach Vadim Prisyazhnyuk was optimistic.

"This is just the beginning of the Olympic cycle, so I think our performance was quite good. I can say for sure that our girls showed a great desire to win in all the bouts. There are still many serious tournaments ahead, such as the World Championships and the Asian Games in 2018. We will continue to train hard to improve our boxing and become stronger," he said.

Stanimir Stoilov reflects on FC Astana's 2017 success

By Anuar Abdrakhmanov

ASTANA – FC Astana head coach Stanimir Stoilov is among those who stand behind the team's achievements. The club, managed by the 50-year-old Bulgarian, won the national championship this year for the fourth consecutive time. No other Kazakh coach has managed the feat.

Astana demonstrated decent play recently both in the domestic and international arenas, playing for the third year at the European club tournament group stage. Atletico Madrid, Benfica, Celtic FC, Galatasaray SK and Olympiacos are some of the serious opponents who failed to beat Astana on at least one occasion.

"I think the season was long and difficult," said Stoilov. "How did it differ from others? It is hard to tell. Our team seems to have gained more confidence with every year. That is why it gets easier to secure wins."

"The first season was the most challenging one," the coach explained. "After that, the team played better. I guess our schedule has been quite busy during

these years, especially in summer. We had many long trips and many great emotions. If there had not been any difficult games in Europe, we could have finished the championship earlier, but all is well that ends well. It is always hard to demand from the players to give it their all when they have such energy-intensive matches at European competitions. The guys are great. It is not easy to play with such a tight schedule, but we did it. This means we can do even more."

Needless to say, when a coach secures great results each time he gets a lot of good offers to move

to another team. Foreign newspapers write that Stoilov is one of the candidates to coach Turkish football fan favourite Fenerbahce SK. He said he had not decided on his further plans and intends to discuss it with his current club.

"I have not received any proposals yet to extend the contact with Astana. I always said that when developing the club, it is important for the management to understand which way we choose. If they need me, we will sit down and talk. If we raise the team's class, we can achieve better results. The team needs more strong players, so sponsors need to understand it.

First of all, we will talk about the team's development," he added.

On Nov. 23, Astana will host Spanish favourite Villarreal CF. If the Kazakh club wins the match, it will be a historic achievement, as none of the country's football clubs has ever made it out of the Europa League group.

"We will prepare. I hope we can help the players get in the right mindset. I am very worried about this game. Villarreal is a very strong team, but everybody here expects success from us. We play well at home and I hope we will show a good game and deserve a victory this time," said Stoilov.

The coach is counting on the support of the Kazakh fans in the home match.

"Despite the fact that it is already very cold in Astana, it will be warm at the stadium. You know that Astana has not lost a single match at home in the latest European tournaments. This is, to a large extent, thanks to our fans who always root for us. The team needs the support of its fans. We win together and we lose together. If the fans cheer for us, the team will do 120 percent," he added.



Stanimir Stoilov (C)

Kazakh native, New York policeman wins 13th boxing victory

Staff Report

ASTANA – Kazakh native Dimash Niyazov, a boxer by day and New York City policeman by night, recently defeated American Agustin Mauras, reported vesti.kz.

The pair appeared on the undercard of the battle between Daniel Jacobs (33-2, 29 KOs) and Luis Arias (18-1, 9 KOs). The fight was scheduled as a six-rounder, but Niyazov defeated Mauras with a TKO in the fifth, preserving his undefeated status.

"I've had a good fight and I want to continue to shine. I want a big fight to make a name for myself. Big things are ahead, watch out!" said Niyazov in an interview with Hit First Boxing.

Unlike many boxers, Niyazov has another job as a New York po-

lice officer assigned to Brooklyn. He trains in the morning under the guidance of Ismat Niyazov, his father and one of his coaches.

"The opponent was strong and very stubborn. He had very good technique. I could see that he was well prepared for the battle. Thanks to my coaches and their good tips on technique, I was able to find the right moment and knocked him out," he said.

Niyazov faced some difficulties before the recent test.

"I train after work. It is difficult for me, because at night I work at the police station. There is very little time. I was sick for five-six days before the fight. I prayed and recovered in a couple of days. I dedicated this fight to all my fans from Kazakhstan and the USA, to all my police fans who came to see my fight, to support me. Thank you all very much," he said.

Niyazov is a professional in law enforcement and the ring and despite his young age, succeeds in both areas. He is a U.S. citizen who competes in the lightweight division and is 31st in the American Boxrec ranking.

Kazakh wins gold at World Sambo Championship



Staff Report

ASTANA – Yesset Kuanov won a gold medal in the up to 62 kilogramme (kg) weight category at the World Sambo Championship in Sochi, reported Tass.ru. The event, held Nov. 9-13, gathered athletes from 93 countries.

"In the weight category up to 62 kilogrammes the winner is Kazakh athlete Yesset Kuanov, who won in the finals over Russian Aslan Mudranov. The bronzes go to Vae Tutkhalyan from Belarus and Georgian Tornike Chovelidze," it noted.

Armenian Grigor Mkhitarian took the top prize in the up to 52 kg class, followed by Kyrgyz Mukhmedali Yergeshev. The bronze went to Tolmas Tukliyev (Uzbekistan) and Bolatbek Raimkulov (Kazakhstan).

Russian Daniil Voevodin (up to 68 kg) won the gold by defeating Vachik Vardanyan from Armenia. The bronze winners were Nurgeldi Kiyalbekov (Kazakhstan) and Antoine Lefevre (France).

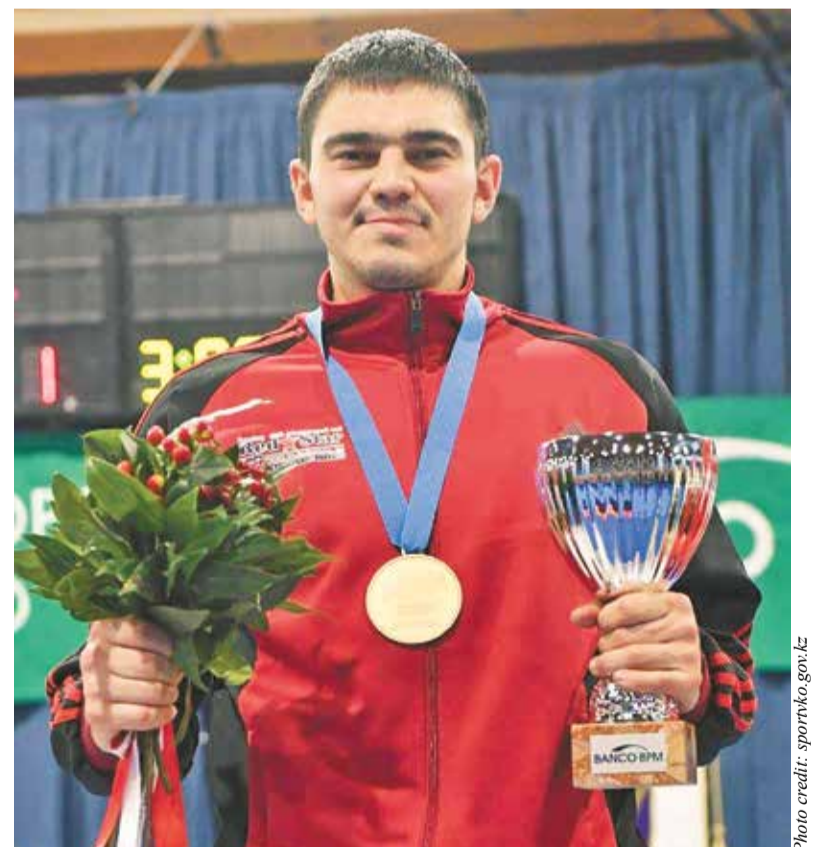
Kuanov, from Aktobe, captured the bronze medal in 2015 and

2016. He was also a winner in the 2016 World Cup and 2017 Asian Games.

Sambo, a Soviet martial arts and combat sport, was developed by the Red Army in the early 1920s to improve hand-to-hand combat abilities. It merges the most effective techniques of other martial arts.

"Under the leadership of Sambo's forefathers Oshchepkov, Spiridinov and Kharlampiev, indigenous fighting styles from regions including Japan, China, Mongolia, India, Africa, Europe, North America, the Caucasus and Russia were studied and blended into what is now known as Sambo. After generations of civilian and military refinement, Sambo has evolved into an extremely formidable fighting art with principles applicable to martial artists of any style. Sambo's arsenal includes, but is not limited to, strikes, joint locks, chokes, throws, ground fighting and weapons. Like all fighting systems, Sambo continues to grow and evolve in both its sport and combat variants," according to online sources.

Ruslan Kurbanov wins bronze at World Fencing Cup stage



Ruslan Kurbanov

By Anuar Abdrakhmanov

ASTANA – Kazakhstan's Ruslan Kurbanov won a bronze medal in the Trofeo Carroccio Men's Epee World Cup in Legnano, Italy, on Nov. 17-18, in which a total of 275 athletes from all over the world took part.

In the course of the tournament Kurbanov delivered a 15-14 win over Bardenet of France, 15-13 over Rezaei Tadi of Iran, 15-13 over Park Kyoungdoo of South Korea, one of the world's highest ranking fencers from South Korea, and 14-11 over Yamada Masaru of Japan in the quarterfi-

nals, before losing narrowly 13-12 to Andras Redli of Hungary in the semi-finals and won the bronze medal.

"We are very happy with the result. Winning a bronze medal at the World Cup stage is a great achievement indeed, but we are already thinking about the next competition, about new results. We are now training hard for the Qatar Grand Prix," said Kurbanov's coach, Sergei Ananyev.

Prior to the Qatar tournament, to start on Dec. 8, the Kazakh athlete will train in Almaty. Kurbanov is ranked 12th in the International Fencing Federation's ranking.



WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 22, 2017

Charity Bazaar to extend goodwill ahead of Christmas holidays

By Dana Omirgazy

ASTANA – The Diplomatic Christmas Charity Bazaar, initiated by the Ambassadors' Spouses Association (ASA), will gather the capital diplomatic community and city residents Dec. 3 from 11 a.m. till 6 p.m. for a shared moment of goodwill benefiting those in need through entrance fees, raffle tickets and sales. Celebrating its 10th anniversary, the event has become a tradition for the diplomatic corps, Heba Osman, ASA President and wife of the Egyptian ambassador, told The Astana Times.

"Fifty-four countries are participating in the bazaar this year, shipping their national products all over the world especially for this event. All products will be available for sale at the bazaar at very reasonable prices, so that all visitors may find some unique and precious gifts for the upcoming holidays, meanwhile helping people in need, as all proceeds will go to support charitable projects in Kazakhstan," she said.

The bazaar has grown in popularity and is attended by thousands every year. The Radisson Hotel has offered a bigger space this year for the convenience of visitors and contributors.



L-R: Hitomi Shimomura, Megumi Kawabata, Sharifah Fadhina, Luzia Schmid, Heba Osman and Slavica Psaltirov Brankovikj.

More than 30 spouses are involved in preparing for the event.

"We start our work on preparations for the bazaar in September and for proper organisation we divided ourselves into seven committees – floor plan, registration

and communication, charity, sponsors, raffle, tombola and publicity," she noted.

Raffle committee co-chairs Megumi Kawabata (wife of the Japanese ambassador) and Hitomi Shimomura (wife of the

UNDP permanent representative) noted one of the main attractions is the grand lottery raffle. An important fundraising tool, this year it will feature many amazing grand prizes, including a mink coat, electronics,

airline tickets to such destinations as Belarus, China, Egypt, Hungary, Italy, Macedonia, Poland, Ukraine and the United Arab Emirates, cruises through Estonia and down the Nile River and more than 100 other valuable prizes in addition to the embassies' gift baskets.

Raffle tickets will be available Nov. 22-24 at the Radisson Hotel and Nov. 25-26 at Khan Shatyr Mall at a cost of 1,000 tenge (US\$3) per ticket. They will be also available from 11 a.m. until the afternoon of the event or until they are sold out.

Sharifah Fadhina, wife of the Malaysian ambassador and tombola committee chair, noted all bazaar visitors will be eligible to take part in the tombola lottery.

"It is an instant lottery with less valuable but pleasant gifts that all embassies kindly provide. We collected around 600 gifts to be drawn at tombola," she said.

ASA receives numerous applications each year from organisations and individuals requesting help, but the assistance it can offer depends on the funds raised.

"We received quite a big number of applications from organisations that need our help and we hope to collect a sufficient amount that will enable us to help

and respond to the received applications as much as possible. All received applications were divided by the charity committee into three groups according to their priority. The first priority applications include requests for people's essential needs such as food, warm clothes and medication," said Luzia Schmid, charity committee chair and wife of the Swiss Ambassador.

Committee members including Schmid and Zhanar Kulzhanova, wife of the Charge D'Affairs of the Portuguese Embassy, carefully study the applications and visit organisations for accurate evaluation. Even after the bazaar, they do not stop following up with the groups chosen for assistance.

Sponsors committee chair Slavica Psaltirov Brankovikj, wife of the Macedonian Ambassador, extended appreciation to all sponsors that provided their support this year.

"It is worth mentioning that the Astana Times and the ATOM Project contribute greatly every year and participate as grand sponsors of the Christmas Charity Bazaar. Last year, we received a beautiful painting by artist and honorary ambassador of the ATOM Project Karipbek Kuyukov as a donation," she said.

EXPO site to host AIFC, educational centre

By Frol Leandroer

ASTANA – EXPO 2017 may have concluded, but that doesn't mean the grounds have become a ghost town. Once the international pavilions have been reconstructed, the vacated premises will be occupied by various organisations, said Astana EXPO 2017 national company chair Akhmetzhan Yessimov.

"For residents and guests of the capital, an ice rink will be launched with the necessary infrastructure for rendering services to visitors. The city government is planning the construction of an ice town, an ice maze and the installation of the country's main New Year's tree. This year, this tree will be here on the territory," he said.

The changes will offer a wide range of winter activities for residents and visitors, while other modifications are underway for year-round use.

"Currently, foreign countries are completing the dismantling of their expositions. I think they will finish this month and we will start reconstruction in the new year," said Yessimov.

He noted various organisations, such as the Astana International Financial Centre (AIFC), will take the place of the international pavilions.

"This is the international financial centre, which is located in pavilions C-3 and C-4. We received a project assignment from the AIFC and we are now starting to develop the submittals. An educational centre will be established in the C-1 13.16 pavilion," he said.

The main idea of the centre is to identify and develop the abilities and potential of future specialists from an early age. Such centres are already functioning in many developed countries of the world and have shown their effectiveness.

"At the earliest stage, the most

important professions for the individual are identified, which can be most successful in the future. This is now a global trend in education, a focus on life satisfaction," he said.

Yessimov stressed this will be the first such centre in the Central Asian region.

"Currently, the concept is being developed jointly with Nazarbayev University. An exhibition complex will be placed in the C-2 pavilion. It will be created as a platform for various exhibitions and international and domestic expositions. Regions of the country will be able to demonstrate their achievements and share their experience on an ongoing basis. As part of the implementation of the President's instruction on digitalisation of Kazakhstan, an international technology park for IT start-ups will be created on the basis of the corporate pavilion. The work is carried out jointly with the Ministry of Information and Communication," he said.

At the same time, the logistics centre will continue to operate as a transport area to provide departure services for international participants, as well as reconstructing the exhibition facilities. The communications centre will become a media hub, as it has all the necessary infrastructure and was effective during the expo.

"I want to stress once again that expo has been one of the most important events in the history of Kazakhstan. It significantly influenced the image of the republic and became the driver of economic development. All the constructed objects are unique in the architectural plan and will always be interesting in content. They will be in demand and will undoubtedly become the property of the republic and the expo itself will be a new business and tourist centre of Kazakhstan," said Yessimov.

New Year Festive Tree will be located at exhibition grounds

Staff Report

ASTANA – The capital's main Christmas tree, as well as the ice rink, will be situated on the expo grounds, said EXPO 2017 commercialisation department director Daulet Yerkinbayev.

"We are opening a unique ice rink. Its area is more than 3,500 square kilometres. It will be no ordinary shape. I can assure you that there have not been such ice rinks before in our country. In addition to this, the main Christmas tree is also to be relocated to the expo territory. Both the ice rink and the Christmas tree will be located near the Nur Alem sphere. The ice town, beloved by the locals and which used to be located near Khan Shatyr [Entertainment Centre], will also be moved to the territory of expo. This is being done in cooperation with the Astana Akimat (city administration)," he said.

The tourist zone opening will be held Nov. 11, with promo days Nov. 11-12. Entrance will be free for all visitors on both days.

Tickets will officially go on sale Nov. 14. The 1,500 tenge (US\$4.50) fee for adults and 500 tenge (US\$1.50) for children covers entrance to the Nur Alem national pavilion, thematic pavilions and best practices zone. Admission

is free for World War II veterans, invalids of all groups, orphans, mothers with many children and youngsters under six.

For visitors' convenience, an underground parking lot designed for 1,000 vehicles will be available.

"The cost of the underground parking is actually very low. The first three hours are absolutely free for all visitors and every subsequent hour will cost 100 tenge (US\$0.30)," said Yerkinbayev.







Ambassadors Spouses Astana

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