



Kazakh President meets with 100 New Faces project participants



Nursultan Nazarbayev (C) meets with the project participants on Dec. 1.

By Dana Omirgazy

ASTANA – Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev met Dec. 1 with the participants in the 100 New Faces project. The project includes 102 exemplary individuals from all over the country, whose sustained efforts could inspire other citizens of modern Kazakhstan.

“I have read your stories, your life. You live in this society, you work and you create. You have come forward and entered the list of 100 new faces, becoming leading personalities. I congratulate you,” the President told the participants.

The project, kicked off June 7 to identify inspiring individuals from different professions. Nazarbayev proposed the idea in the wide-ranging policy article, “Course towards the future: Modernisation of Kazakhstan’s Identity,” published April 12.

More than 2,000 candidates applied and were reduced to 102 after nationwide voting.

“The world rushes forward. Blink and you’ll miss it. Such a time. My time was different, yours is different. We live in the world of competition:

a state competes with a state, the people compete with the people and a man competes with a man. All the time you need to move forward, as if you are flowing against the current. If you stop, the water will take you back. The same is true of life. This is an era of information technologies. Artificial intelligence is progressing. Today, the most severe problems of mankind are being solved, the most incurable diseases will be cured. Artificial intelligence will be everywhere. Everything is changing. And what about consciousness? That is the question. Together with this, people’s consciousness should also change,” the President told the gathering.

Among the 102 faces are 13 sportsmen, 18 scientists, 10 figures of culture, 18 medical workers, 13 business persons and 30 social workers. Their names and stories of strength, inspiration and success can be found at 100esim.el.kz.

Some of them gave a speech during the meeting held on the Day of First President. They shared their challenges and achievements.

Twenty-three year old scientist Maulen Bekturganov from Almaty

produces bionic arm prostheses, making a breakthrough in Kazakhstan’s science to help people return to full-fledged life without leaving their homeland.

“After graduating the Physics and Mathematics School, I began to study robotics. A few years ago, I caught sight of the statistics that more than 14,000 people need prosthetics in Kazakhstan. This figure struck me and I wanted to fix it,” he said.

This year, he founded the MBionics company, where he and his colleagues are working on the development of new versions of bionic prostheses. He plans to work on a similar development of the elbow, shoulders mechanism and other extremities. Bekturganov hopes that by applying new technologies, he can make people’s lives much more comfortable.

A native of Uralsk, 32, Saida Kalykova is the soloist of the State Academic Philharmonic of Astana. Kalykova was an unusual child. At seven years, she entered the music school without her parents’ permission. Having quickly mastered the musical notation, she began playing the piano. But in 1994, after brain

surgery she lost her sight. Nevertheless, she continued to study music. At the age of 13, she gave her first musical concert and at the age of 15 she presented her first musical works.

“Music became the meaning of my life. I hope my story will motivate people to be happy. I think that we should never give up. We must always go forward,” she told the President and meeting participants.

One more story was told by a doctor who treats the youngest patients, babies. Heart surgeon Gulzhan Sarsenbayeva, 42, was among those who conducted pioneer research in the development of paediatric heart surgery in Kazakhstan. Just a few years ago, many Kazakhstan citizens took their children with heart defects to foreign clinics. Now, such surgeries can be conducted in the country.

“I always visit maternity homes, regional hospitals, I can work on Saturdays and Sundays. But I do not feel tired. When a person loves his work, this gives him some energy. The life of a young child is in our hands. For us, it’s a great happiness to see healthy and strong kids who were ill, and, most importantly, to see the happy eyes of parents,” she said.

After Nazarbayev-Jeenbekov meeting, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan ink economic cooperation roadmap

By Aigerim Seisembayeva

ASTANA – A roadmap on bilateral economic cooperation, including on the situation on the Kazakhstan-Kyrgyz border, was signed Dec. 2 by Kazakh First Deputy Prime Minister Askar Mamin and Kyrgyz Vice Prime Minister Tolkunbek Abdugulov during a visit by a Kyrgyz government delegation to Astana.

The 50-point document was concluded upon Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev’s instructions following his meeting with Kyrgyz counterpart Sooronbai Jeenbekov in Minsk Nov. 30.

Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) representatives will govern enforcement of the roadmap at the Kazakh-

Kyrgyz border, Nazarbayev said following his meeting with Jeenbekov on the sidelines of the Collective Security Treaty Organisation Summit in the Belarusian capital. He added that “it is expedient to establish a similar procedure at the Kyrgyz-Chinese border.”

“It is necessary to restore family and brotherly relations between the two countries. It is in the interests of our peoples. This is the desire of our peoples,” Nazarbayev said, according to the Akorda press service.

Jeenbekov, who requested the meeting, said he asked Nazarbayev to lift the restrictions, vowing that he “will take personal responsibility for [ensuring] the order at the border.”

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Government approves 2025 Strategic Development Plan

By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – The Kazakh government approved Nov. 28 a national 2025 Strategic Development Plan designed to ensure long-term growth at the level of Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries.

The plan includes seven major reforms in human capital, technological modernisation and digitalisation, business competitiveness, rule of law, strong regions, urbanisation, modernisation of public consciousness and public sector efficiency.

The project envisions annual economic growth in a 4.5-5 percent corridor eventually bringing

Kazakhstan’s GDP per capita up to \$46,100 by 2025. Kazakhstan maintained 4.3 percent economic growth between January and September, while its GDP per capita was estimated at \$7,510 in 2016, according to a World Bank report.

Kazakh Minister for National Economy Timur Suleimenov stressed three key drivers stimulating future economic growth.

First is productivity growth in existing industries, which, according to the minister, can be fostered through an increase in operation efficiency, reduction in costs for production, transportation and sale, investment in technological modernisation and digitalisation and transition to green economy.

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Nazarbayev meets with Lukashenko, attends CSTO session in Minsk

By Almasbek Zhumadilov

ASTANA – Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev met with Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko, and attended the anniversary session of the Collective Security Treaty Organisation during a Nov. 29-30 visit to Minsk.

The two leaders discussed strengthening cooperation in trade and industry, transport and transit, the space industry and the development of information and computer technologies.

“In a short historical period, significant advances have been made. In difficult conditions we have created a significant political base for bilateral cooperation. Our states are reliable partners who have open and confidential relations,” said Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan’s relations with Belarus.

He also positively assessed 2017 economic relations and cooperation within the Eurasian Economic Union.

“There are 260 Belarusian enterprises, 6 joint major car assembly plants in Kazakhstan. The products of Belarusian agriculture are on the shelves of Kazakh stores,” he said.

Lukashenko said Nazarbayev’s visit would strengthen cooperation.

The talks also resulted in signed agreements, including a bilateral



socio-economic agreement until 2026. The heads of state also said documents signed during the Kazakh-Belarusian business forum deepen relations. More than 150 representatives of Kazakh companies working in machine building, agriculture, production of agricultural machinery and equipment, food and light industry, trade and services, logistics, banking, investment, information and communication technologies took part in the forum.

Kazakhstan and Belarus are among the founders of the CSTO and the Eurasian Economic Union. Among Commonwealth of Independent States countries, Kazakhstan is one of the three largest trade and economic partners for Belarus. Bilateral trade began to recover in

2017 after a significant decline in 2015-2016. The turnover for the first nine months of 2017 increased 60 percent to \$441.4 million.

Kazakhstan and Belarus already cooperate in the industrial sphere. Carriage and mining equipment in Karaganda, tractors, grain and forage harvesters, engines, balers, special (communal and fire) equipment, various types of trailed agricultural machinery in Semey, Kostanai, Pavlodar, Uralsk and medical equipment in Aktobe are being assembled.

Kazakhstan and Belarus are also developing cultural, humanitarian, scientific and technical collaboration. In this regard, Belarusian leader proposed to resume the Days of Culture, which will help to bring peoples of both coun-

tries closer, popularise traditions, achievements and historical heritage. He also declared his intention to maintain contacts in education, culture and health.

In 2012, the Belarusian National Technical University opened the Centre for Kazakh Language, History and Culture named after Abai Kunanbayev, and accordingly the Centre for Belarusian Language, History and Culture was opened in 2013 at the Eurasian National University named after Lev Gumilev. The two governments have regular meetings within the framework of the Kazakh-Belarusian commission for scientific and technical cooperation.

At the CSTO session on Nov. 30, Nazarbayev announced the country’s priorities as the organisation’s incoming chair for 2017-2018. The session also included discussion of measures to strengthen collective security, the adoption of a declaration in connection with the CSTO’s anniversary, as well as a number of political statements by the heads of states on international security issues.

The session concluded with the consideration of the draft decision “On the plan for the implementation of the CSTO collective security strategy for the period until 2025” by the participating leaders of Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan.

PACE calls for enhanced co-operation between Council of Europe and Kazakhstan

By Danat Islambek

ASTANA – The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) Standing Committee adopted Nov. 24 Resolution 2193 (2017), which calls for enhanced co-operation between Kazakhstan and the Council of Europe.

The resolution states that the assembly recognises “the importance of Kazakhstan as one of the pillars of stability in the Euro-Asian region and called for co-operation with this country to be stepped up.”

It portrays Kazakhstan as “a leading actor in addressing challenges faced by Central Asia, including terrorism, drugs trafficking and security issues related to the situation in Afghanistan.”

“On the international scene, Kazakhstan must be praised for its positive contribution to dealing

with major international problems such as the nuclear programme of Iran and the crisis in Syria,” the PACE resolution reads.

Noting that “the political establishment and society at large in Kazakhstan see Europe as a reference point in terms of political, legal, institutional and cultural development,” PACE says, “the political leadership of Kazakhstan has repeatedly stated its commitment to democratic transformation of the country, and has recently initiated a series of reforms aimed at strengthening democratic governance.”

“However, the pace of reform has been slow, the political system remains highly centralised, democratic culture has yet to take root among citizens and dialogue between civil society and the authorities is at a very early stage,” the resolution states.

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NATION

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 6, 2017

Kazakh organisations form Blockchain and Cryptocurrency Association

By Zhazira Dyussebekova

ASTANA – In the midst of the worldwide blockchain and cryptocurrencies craze, Kazakhstan has realised the relevancy of the trend like never before. In mid-November, the Blockchain and Cryptocurrency Association applied for state registration as a legal entity to promote the technology's ideas and draft legislation in the field.

The association was founded by six organisations and 15 more have applied for membership, according to kapital.kz. The timing is right to

unite companies and organisations that are considering working in the market, noted association co-founder and council chairperson Yesset Butin.

“Our main goal is to prescribe the rules of the game in the blockchain market and cryptocurrency in Kazakhstan together with the regulator [the National Bank],” he said. “There are no companies operating in the blockchain market in Kazakhstan, but there are more companies that see the promise of technology for themselves,” he said.

“First, we must follow world trends. The Russian Association

of Blockchain and Cryptocurrency has already been created and literally within a month they managed to achieve certain results. Belarus announced the imminent emergence of such an association. We believe the time has come to create such an association here to unite organisations and companies that work in the blockchain market or plan to work in the cryptocurrency markets,” he added.

The industry is in its early stages, so it is not yet possible to assess the market in Kazakhstan in monetary terms, said Butin. The important thing now is to create

the necessary infrastructure and effective legislation for it to function, including the unified policy required to form a dialogue with state bodies, including the National Bank. The so-called legislative “rules of the game” will mostly depend on the situation in the market in the next two years.

The association also intends to negotiate with universities to implement educational programmes in blockchain technology.

At the same time, Butin sees the worth of the National Bank releasing a “cryptotenge” at a minimum to create a legitimate platform basis to purchase cryptocurrency in

tenge. The cryptotenge could be converted to other world cryptocurrencies as a way to make the concept more easily understood.

He noted people follow the market. The yield on deposits in the currency is decreasing and some banks have become unreliable.

“People are looking for an alternative and find it in the form of cryptocurrency,” he added.

While some countries have recognised cryptocurrencies as an official payment method, others are still deciding. The association founders believe Kazakhstan must find its own path to regulate in the new field.

NATIONAL NEWS IN BRIEF

Kazakhstan intends to create its own way of understanding Islam, taking into account its cultural traditions, said Minister of Religious Affairs and Civil Society Nurlan Yermekbayev Nov. 30. “The interpretation of religious teachings is of great importance. Religion is a set of norms, requirements and rules of life, which can be understood in various ways, and the radicalisation problem lies in the misinterpretation of religious norms. Today, every country adapts religious requirements for modern life, taking into account national and historical traditions.”

The first Robotic Surgery and Transplant Centre will be opened in the East Kazakhstan region. “The centre will closely collaborate with the Syzganov National Scientific Surgery Centre in Almaty and the National Scientific and Medical Centre in the capital. A unique training simulator unit will be available for medical students. They can practice the upcoming operations in a simulation mode without risk for patients,” said Akim (Governor) of the region Daniyal Akhmetov at a Nov. 30 briefing. According to the healthcare strategic plan, all medical institutions in the region will be equipped with modern tools and technology worth 23 billion tenge (US\$70 million). There are about 240 patients on chronic haemodialysis and 80 percent of them expect kidney transplants. Annually, 7,000 procedures, about 20 percent of which are endoscopic operations, are conducted in six surgical departments in Ust-Kamenogorsk.

An Association of Ecological Organisations has been established in Kazakhstan, reports Orcom.kz. “Only 8 percent of non-governmental organisations work in the field of environmental protection and sustainable development. Analysis of the environmental situation revealed many issues that require attention and a step-by-step solution. There’s a wide range of environmental issues, ranging from the water issues and land resources to air pollutant emissions. Consolidation of the environmental community will unite efforts aimed at green economy development and environment improvement. All interested organisations can join the association,” said association chair Aigul Solovyova. The first meeting is scheduled for December.

The Astana-Technopolis Special Economic Zone (SEZ), an area of 584.42 hectares, will operate in the capital for 2017-2042. It aims to create high-tech and competitive industries in manufacturing, to reveal new technologies to accelerate enterprises, to improve economic and social conditions for research and to provide assistance in their commercialisation. It is planned that computers and peripheral equipment, irradiation equipment, electromedical and electrotherapeutic equipment, software, computer programming and other items will be produced on the SEZ. The projects will be implemented based on scientific developments at the Astana Business Campus Park and Nazarbayev University.

Kazakhstan is emphasising import substitution and increasing local content in the mining and metallurgical industry, reported Kazakh TV. The enterprises plan to increase the share to almost 67 percent by the end of 2017. “The share of local content was 36 percent in 2009 and today we have reached over 74 percent. The work in this direction will be continued,” said Kazakhmys Corporation Commercial Director Rustam Adilkan at the Forum of Kazakh Goods Producers in Almaty Nov. 29. The company produced about three tonnes of gold worth about \$120 million in 10 months of this year. Raw materials are supplied to Balkhash refineries of Kazakhmys Corporation and Tau Ken Samruk in Astana. The event gathered more than 100 mining and metallurgical companies, 600 representatives of enterprises and national companies, international and domestic suppliers.

Government approves 2025 Strategic Development Plan

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Strengthening and expanding export-oriented production is the second driver, said Suleimenov. That driver includes a focus on goods and services with high added value as well as integration in global supply chains.

Development of new highly efficient industries, which has already been on the nation's agenda, includes the creation of new supply chains and services around the existing industries, transfer and localisation of technology and commercialisation of innovations.

The Strategic Development Plan is a very important document, according to Kazakh Prime Minister Bakytzhan Sagintayev, developed in line with this year's state-of-the-nation address of Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev.

“The document entails the creation of a new economic growth model and improving well-being of people. It is also meant to foster the implementation of the country's key strategic document, Ka-

zakhstan 2050, with a goal to enter the world's 30 most competitive countries. Therefore, we need to properly explain the essence of the document to the public,” he said addressing the government.

The new model will require changes both in the economy and society, according to Suleimenov, which include a focus on production and industry, technology-oriented population, companies and industries, fair competition and prevailing role of private sector.

Head of Talap Centre for Applied Research and former vice minister for investment and development Rakhim Oshakbayev noted it was the first time the document of such strategic importance involved the expert community.

“As I remember, it is the first time the document of such great importance was developed with broad expertise support. Nearly 80 experts attended the discussions and were involved in the development of the document. In general, it raises no questions,” added Oshakbayev.

Agency for Civil Service and Anti-Corruption reports on 2017 activities

Staff Report

ASTANA – Chairman of the Agency for Civil Service and Anti-Corruption Kairat Kozhamzharov briefed Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev on the agency's activities for the last 10 months, including efforts to carry out anticorruption policies, according to Akorda's press service.

Kozhamzharov also mentioned international commendation for Kazakhstan's efforts

“For 10 months of the current year, 3,400 criminal cases have been opened, of which 1,000 cases were passed to the courts. Out of 15 billion tenge (US\$45 million) of the inflicted damage, 11 billion tenge (US\$33 million) has been returned to the state. Seized property amounted to more than 7 billion tenge (US\$21 million),” said the chairman of the agency.

Nazarbayev talked about the importance of society developing an intolerance for corruption.

“When adopting the law on combating corruption, I addressed every-



one, stating that there are no mercy rules for anyone, and no one could escape punishment if he committed corruption crimes. Over recent years, a lot of work has been done concerning the issue,” he said.

He added that all officials are required to save the allocated funds and use them only for the intended purpose. “State money is the money of the people. And work to combat violations and corruption should be properly managed and continue,” he added.

The Kazakh leader has also stressed the need for rational and transparent use of public funds, as well as gave a number of specific instructions.

“Our task is to ensure effective

counteraction to corruption in all directions. This includes the social area, agriculture, construction issues, extractive industries, financial and quasi-public sectors, law enforcement, judicial bodies and other spheres,” Kozhamzharov told his staff.

The priority task is to unmask the entire criminal chain, from executors to organisers.

“The President of the country has set the task of strictly suppressing corruption by anyone,” Kozhamzharov said. Particular attention is focused on ensuring the economic security of the state. In this aspect, the agency is instructed to strengthen work on monitoring the targeted spending of budget funds.

Country's modernisation model discussed at international parliamentary conference

By Aigerim Seiseimbayeva

ASTANA – The Kazakh Parliament's Mazhilis (lower chamber) gathered experts and politicians from throughout the world in the capital Nov. 27 to discuss the nation's ongoing modernisation processes and exchange legislative support experiences used for reforms in different countries. “Kazakhstan's modernisation model in the new global reality” international parliamentary conference, dedicated to the Day of the First President was held to mark the Dec. 1 holiday in the nation.

Parliamentarians from 15 countries, international experts, members of the Kazakh government and diplomatic corps and United Nations Resident Coordinator in Kazakhstan Norimasa Shimomura were among the attendees.

Addressing the conference, Mazhilis Speaker Nurlan Nigmatulin noted the large-scale reforms initiated by President Nursultan Nazarbayev ensured the economy's steady growth, a fair social policy and steady democratisation of the society.

He focused on the three areas of Kazakhstan's modernisation model – a new level of technological and infrastructure modernisation, constitutional and further political reforms and updating the national identity.

“The comprehensive nature of the modernisation requires the active participation of all the citi-

zens. First of all, this requirement applies to civil servants and especially to us, the deputies of the country's highest representative body exercising legislative power,” he said.

Nigmatulin also highlighted the programme's close connection with global trends. He marked Nazarbayev's initiatives on international nuclear disarmament, combating extremism and terrorism, creating a regional security zone in Central Asia and Kazakhstan's efforts to help settle the Syrian conflict.

“It is therefore quite natural that Kazakhstan was the first Central Asian country to become a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council (UNSC),” he added.

Foreign Minister Kairat Abdrakhmanov dwelled on modernising Kazakhstan's identity, the spiritual side of the effort. He noted Nazarbayev's instruction to ensure Kazakhstan is known not only for its vast mineral resources and foreign policy initiatives, but mainly for its cultural heritage and new achievements in this area.

He marked such events as the modernisation programme presentation at the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) headquarters in Paris, as well as tours abroad by Kazakh artists.

“Just recently, the Foreign Ministry, jointly with the Ministry of Culture and Sports and regional administrations, held the first special press tour for foreign media

representatives from 15 countries within the Modern Kazakh culture in the global world project,” said Abdrakhmanov.

He also stressed the importance of consolidation and cooperation efforts in Central Asia.

“We will work with all our neighbours to put into practice the initiative to hold informal consultations among heads of Central Asian states. We believe the bright spring holiday of Nauryz renewal could serve as a symbolic background for holding the first meeting in many years of Central Asian leaders under the chairmanship of our President,” he said.

Abdrakhmanov also invited the international participants to take part in the sixth Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions scheduled for autumn 2018.

In his speech, Minister for National Economy Timur Suleimenov focused on the technological side of Kazakhstan's modernisation.

“Today, a comprehensive plan is being developed for the technological re-equipment of basic industries until 2025. It includes, among other things, proposals on legislative changes to stimulate digitisation and innovation, measures of state support and personnel training. Measures are also taken to work with large enterprises – the flagships of our industry. We already have some good examples – one of the largest mining companies, KazMinerals, commissioned advanced ore-dressing complexes

at the Bozshakol and Aktogai fields,” he said.

Minister of Information and Communications Dauren Abayev spoke more specifically on the modernisation of Kazakhstan's identity.

“We will carry out large-scale training of schoolteachers in terms of using the latest technologies. Competency centres will focus on re-training traditional industry personnel and much more. That is how, thanks to human capital development, specific tasks will be accomplished to modernise Kazakhstan's identity,” he said.

Shimomura stressed Kazakhstan's active role in shaping the international agenda.

“From the peacemaking and security perspective, Kazakhstan has become a leader in the region, focusing on the interrelationship of peace, stability and development,” he said.

He also noted as a UNSC non-permanent member, Kazakhstan plays a very important role that enriches the entire region.

“Kazakhstan is also a green development pioneer. Your country has signed the Paris Agreement. The EXPO 2017 was held in Astana under the Future Energy theme. All of this indicates that Kazakhstan intends to carry out the agenda on the sustainable development goals,” he added.

Foreign parliamentarians spoke on Kazakhstan's increasing role in the international arena. Russian State Duma Deputy Chairperson

EURASIA&WORLD

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 6, 2017

EXTERNAL NEWS IN BRIEF

UN Under-Secretary-General and Representative for Disarmament Affairs Izumi Nakamitsu recently praised Kazakhstan's global anti-nuclear efforts, reported Khabar news agency. The UN General Assembly demonstrated support for Kazakhstan in late October, the agency noted, by adopting an updated resolution regarding Aug. 29, the International Day against Nuclear Tests. Kazakhstan proposed establishing an annual high-level meeting on this date. "Astana has been planning this vision that was put together by Kazakhstan to get rid of the Semipalatinsk test site and to appeal to all other countries to follow suit. I hope that Kazakhstan will continue, if you will, flying the flag of nuclear disarmament needs. It is definitely one of the needs in the international community," said Nakamitsu.

Kazakh companies such as the Aktobe rail-beam plant are eager to enter the Russian market as a supplier amid the constant growth of trade turnover between Kazakhstan and Russia, which has increased nearly 30 percent or \$11 billion in the first nine months of this year. The plant is the only facility within the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) manufacturing R-65 standard long-length heat-strengthened beams, according to Kazakh TV. The management reports the plant will produce 430,000 tonnes of product a year, including rails for high-speed lines, and manufactured in excess of 116,000 tonnes from January-September. The top consumers include companies in Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

Kazakh Invest presented the country's investment opportunities to leading businesspeople in Germany and Eastern Europe during a conference in Munich, reported Khabar news agency. The delegation spoke about the government's business support measures and the reforms underway in Kazakhstan. The privileges outlined included customs waivers, tax exemptions and comprehensive support at all stages of investment activity for foreign businesses. Similar meetings were held in Bremen, Frankfurt and Hanover.

Kazakhstan's export volumes grew 31 percent in the past nine months, according to Minister for Investment and Development Zhenis Kassymbek. "Kazakhstan exports wheat, sunflower oil, uranium, copper and ferroalloys. This year, exports of processed products grew 22 percent, which exceeded \$11 billion," he said, reported Kazakh TV. Kassymbek noted Kazakhstan focuses on the Central Asian, Chinese and Russian markets. "Russia hosted more than 50 events and exhibitions to promote Kazakh products. The Chinese market has a huge interest in terms of business. Today, the volume of exports of processed products amounted to \$2.5 billion, out of which \$123 million accounted for the export of processed goods," he said.

Kazakhstan presented its various products in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, at the international UzAgro-Expo2017. Uzbekistan, which continues strengthening relations with neighbouring states, is entering a new level of regional integration cooperation, reported Khabar news agency. Kazakhstan has export oil products, metals, foods and transformers to Uzbekistan and the country's producers are expecting to add to the list of exported products. "Our primary goal is to develop agriculture in the region on a larger scale. Approximately 120 large enterprises from 16 different countries presented their achievements at the exhibition in Tashkent, including agricultural and manufacturing products," said exhibition public relations manager Nailiya Tashbayeva.

Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev will take part in the High-Level Kazakh-Turkish Cooperation Council meeting in Turkey in spring 2018, Grand National Assembly of Turkey Deputy Chairman Ahmet Aydin announced at a Nov. 27 parliamentary conference in Astana.

Kazakhstan inks economic cooperation roadmap, eases border control with Kyrgyzstan after Nazarbayev-Jeenbekov meeting

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In October, Kazakhstan enforced strict controls on freight vehicles at the Kyrgyz border. Kazakh customs authorities imposed the restrictions citing Bishkek's reluctance to resolve issues with customs and tax administration, transport control and alleged violations of Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) requirements for safety of products. According to some estimates, those violations cost EAEU member states approximately \$2 billion in lost customs duties and VAT revenues over the last three years. The restrictions did not affect personal travel or empty cargo vehicles.

The initial economic roadmap was drafted after the restrictions were imposed. It was not signed, as planned, in late October.

The updated roadmap is de-



signed to solve bilateral cooperation issues, including in border, transport, phytosanitary and veterinary control and customs and tax administration. The document provides for 16 operational measures, five

short-term measures and 29 systemic measures.

"These measures aim to further adapt the Kyrgyz economy to the norms and requirements of the Eurasian Economic Union in order to ensure the ac-

cess of Kyrgyz goods to EAEU markets," Mamin noted at the signing ceremony, according to primeminister.kz.

After signing the roadmap, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan will adopt new approaches to jointly ensure customs, tax, veterinary, phytosanitary and sanitary-epidemiological control at the EAEU's external borders and ensure export, import and transit through the Kazakh-Kyrgyz border with the participation of the Eurasian Economic Commission representatives.

Kyrgyzstan undertook obligations to ensure due control in the abovementioned areas in full compliance with the EAEU requirements.

"Full and timely implementation of the roadmap will facilitate the creation of a common market based on the principles of transparency, legitimacy and mutual benefit, as well as pro-

vide a stimulus for strengthening mutually beneficial trade and economic ties in the traditional spirit of good-neighbourliness and friendship," said Mamin.

He also noted that "joint work will be carried out to comply with the EAEU technical regulations, including the certification of Kyrgyz goods at Kazakhstan's certification bodies."

Following the signing of the roadmap, the Kazakh border service switched from reinforced border control to normal controls at all points of the Kazakh-Kyrgyz border.

The Nov. 30 meeting between Nazarbayev and Jeenbekov in Minsk was a breakthrough in the almost two-months border issue.

At that meeting, Nazarbayev congratulated Jeenbekov on winning the Oct. 15 election and invited him on an official visit to Astana, according to an Akorda press report.

Astana, Washington discuss strategic partnership

By Almasbek Zhumadilov

ASTANA – The Nov. 30 Kazakhstan – United States Strategic Partnership Commission meeting, co-chaired by Kazakh Deputy Foreign Minister Yerzhan Ashykbayev and U.S. Acting Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs Alice Wells, was mainly dedicated to Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev's official visit to the United States in January.

The meeting in Astana underscored the importance of bilateral relations for both countries. According to the Kazakh Ministry

of Foreign Affairs, the delegations discussed a broad agenda of cooperation issues, including interaction within the U.N. Security Council, implementing the U.S. strategy for the South Asia region and collaboration prospects to help stabilise Afghanistan.

In her remarks, Wells noted the sides addressed a number of important topics including how to best resolve the conflict situation in Afghanistan and ensure ISIS is defeated. She underscored the United States values the strategic partnership with Kazakhstan and intends to maintain strong and stable relations with Astana and Central Asia as a whole.

"Washington views Astana as a leader not only in Central Asia, but on the world arena. We look forward to President Nazarbayev's visit to the United States and certainly it will be a successful and constructive one. In Washington, Kazakhstan has a well-deserved reputation as a country that confidently looks to the future, welcoming the whole world to the stunning EXPO 2017, teaching people trilingualism and holding important forums to discuss issues of religion and peacemaking," said Wells.

Ashykbayev noted the meeting focused on cooperation oppor-

tunities in trade and establishing contacts between businesses in the countries, in addition to security issues and challenges at regional and international levels.

"This meeting is an important element of the strategic partnership between the two countries and all the agreements reached today will serve as a basis for the preparation of President Nazarbayev's trip to the United States," he added.

The delegations considered interaction in regional and international priority cooperation such as developing the C5+1 dialogue and the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Particular

attention was paid to economic partnership, further developing Kazakhstan's investment climate, diversifying the economy and energy efficiency.

Within the cultural and humanitarian partnership, the sides considered consular issues, freedom of religion and cooperation in education, including educational and cultural exchange programmes.

The Strategic Partnership Commission is one of the main mechanisms for reviewing bilateral cooperation and developing new partnership prospects. It is held on an annual basis, meeting previously in March 2016 in Washington.

PACE calls for enhanced co-operation between Council of Europe and Kazakhstan

Continued from Page A1

The assembly further "appreciates the fact that Kazakhstan is party to several Council of Europe conventions, and has requested to accede to a number of other instruments, including in the fields of criminal justice and the fight against corruption." It goes on to encourage Astana to make greater use of the expertise of the Council of Europe, particularly that of the Venice Commission, in the reform process and to accede to Council of Europe conventions that are open to non-member states. Kazakhstan joined the Venice Commission in 2011.

The parliamentarians added that the current co-operation under the "Neighbourhood Cooperation priorities for Kazakhstan" – focusing on reform of the justice system – should be ex-



Axel Fischer

tended to other key areas where the Council of Europe can make a meaningful contribution. They also called upon Astana to complete the internal procedures it started in 2013 for becoming a member of the Group of States against Corruption (GRECO), an institute established in 1999 by the Council of Europe to monitor states' compliance with the

organisation's anti-corruption standards.

The European parliamentarians also encouraged their Kazakh counterparts to make full use of the 2004 co-operation agreement with PACE and to participate more dynamically in activities organised by the Assembly and its committees.

The resolution was based on a report written during one and a half years by PACE Vice President Axel Fischer of Germany. The 16-page report by this member of Bundestag from CDU gives a wide-ranging analysis of the situation in Kazakhstan and an overview of reforms being implemented inside the country and President Nursultan Nazarbayev's international initiatives.

"Kazakhstan is a country with great interest in, and important potential for, developing further cooperation with the Council of

Europe, especially bearing in mind the ambitious projects of political reform and the possible contribution to this process which our organisation can make," said Fischer in his report.

Fischer also laments that in some European countries, "there has been a degree of reluctance to go further ahead in enhancing relations with Kazakhstan, and to look at it as just one country of the region among others, without paying due attention to its particularities, the role it plays in ensuring regional stability and its wish to move closer to European standards in the process of modernisation." He then quotes former Kazakh Foreign Minister Erlan Idrissov, who in a meeting with the PACE delegation on June 1, 2016, said "the time has come to 'adjust the glasses' through which Europe views Kazakhstan."

Convinced that stronger rela-

tions and enhanced co-operation between the Council of Europe and Kazakhstan would be beneficial for both sides, Fischer urges Kazakhstan to take advantage of "the Council of Europe's experience and expertise in accompanying countries on the path to democratic transition."

The Parliamentary Assembly is one of the two main statutory bodies of the Council of Europe, a 47-nation organisation, and is made up of parliamentarians from the national parliaments of the Council of Europe's member states.

Kazakhstan formally established cooperation with the Council of Europe and its structures in 1997. Although not a member of the Council of Europe, it participates in its partial expanded agreements that allow countries outside the organisation to work together with the council on issues of mutual interest.

Kazakhstan's anticorruption efforts noted in U.S.

By Almasbek Zhumadilov

ASTANA – Organisations that assess corruption levels in Kazakhstan praised the country's economic and social political reforms during Nov. 28-30 meetings in the United States.

Deputy Chairman of the Kazakh Agency for Civil Service and Anti-Corruption Affairs Alik Shepkbayev travelled to Washington, DC, for meetings with representatives from the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation, World Justice Project, Freedom House, the World Bank, the U.S. State Depart-

ment and the Political Risks Service.

According to a press release from the agency, Deputy Assistant FBI Director Matthew Moon said Kazakhstan's anti-corruption policy and its tools are progressive and effective. He added that the United States has implemented similar measures which creates opportunity for bilateral cooperation. He also noted that Kazakhstan's 10-15 year goals meet international standards.

Freedom House Vice-President Robert Herman said the Kazakh Agency for Civil Service and Anti-Corruption Affairs is addressing all forms of corruption and is help-

ing form an anticorruption culture across social groups in Kazakhstan.

Alejandro Ponso, chief research director of the World Justice Project, also praised Kazakhstan, saying he witnessed the results of the reforms during a summer visit to Astana and said the reforms could improve the country's position in international ratings.

Also during the meetings, the Kazakh side pledged to provide information on anticorruption measures, involve NGOs in anti-corruption policies and continue to develop an anti-corruption culture.

The Kazakhstan delegation also invited counterparts to attend the

Dec. 8 Modern Anti-Corruption Standards and Development of International Cooperation international conference in Astana.

Shepkbayev also met separately Nov. 24 with representatives of Price Waterhouse Coopers (PwC) and the Transparency Kazakhstan Civic Foundation in Almaty to discuss anticorruption policies.

Shepkbayev briefed PwC representatives on his agency's efforts to create a professional state apparatus and fight corruption. Managing partner of the company for the Eurasian region Henni Mark praised Kazakhstan's efforts in combating corruption.

PwC representatives said the company would like to work with the agency to create a favourable investment climate, solve social problems and build trust in society.

According to Transparency Kazakhstan representatives, the foundation's goals align with those of the agency, including creating government transparency and combining the efforts of the state, society and business to counter corruption. The representatives also said the agency is a strategic partner and that they had been cooperating in recent years.

During the event, proposals were offered to increase the efficiency of the state apparatus.

ECONOMY

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 6, 2017

Nazarbayev discusses energy projects with Royal Dutch Shell, Chevron management

Staff Report

Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev recently discussed the status of energy projects in Kazakhstan, including the Karachaganak and Kashagan fields, with Chief Executive Director of the Royal Dutch Shell Ben van

Berden and Chairman of the Board of Directors and Chief Executive Officer of Chevron John Watson.

Van Buren noted that Nov. 18 marked the 20th anniversary of the production sharing agreement at the Karachaganak and Kashagan fields.

"These projects turned out to be very good and effective, all ex-

penses were repaid on time, and now the projects are working for profit," said Nazarbayev.

Nazarbayev also thanked Royal Dutch Shell for participating in and helping to organise EXPO 2017 and Van Buren complemented Kazakhstan's expo pavilion.

"I would like to congratulate you on the very successful holding of

the EXPO 2017, I had the opportunity to visit the most attractive pavilion at the expo – Nur Alem. And it was amazing," van Berden said.

During a separate meeting with Watson, Nazarbayev praised the relationship between Kazakhstan and Chevron.

"Kazakhstan has a special relationship with Chevron, we have

been cooperating with you for more than a quarter of a century, and I want to personally thank you for our joint work. We have built a mutually beneficial cooperation with you," the President of Kazakhstan said.

Watson also introduced Michael Wirth, who will assume the position of Chevron CEO in February.

Kazakhstan increases its exports

By Zhazira Dyussebekova

ASTANA – Kazakhstan has been ranked 52nd among the largest exporting countries this year, sending more than 800 manufactured products to 113 countries. Exports of processed goods grew 22 percent in the first nine months to \$11.1 billion, a rate expected to grow two times by 2025.

"We are among the world leaders in the supply of uranium, copper, titanium, ferroalloys, yellow phosphorus, flour, cottonseed oil, wheat and flax seeds. Over the

past five years, the qualitative structure of exports has improved significantly, while a third of the exported products fall to the non-primary sector of the economy," said Minister for Investments and Development Zhenis Kassymbek at a recent government meeting.

He added ferroalloys, oil products, copper, rolled metal, propane, butane and zinc exports have also increased. Exports to Central Asian countries increased 30 percent totalling US\$1.5 billion.

The government developed a national export strategy programme

earlier this year in an effort to improve export support.

"In general, the successful implementation of the National Export Strategy of Kazakhstan, along with the achievement of the objectives of the State Programme for Industrial and Innovative Development of Kazakhstan for 2015-2019, will successfully fulfil the task of the head of state to increase non-primary exports by 2025," he said.

Kazakhstan's food products are also in growing demand, judging by the fact the volume of exports totalled 145 million tonnes valued at more than US\$2 billion. Meat

and poultry products have recently started being exported to Afghanistan, Iran and the United Arab Emirates, while vegetable oil and honey is now shipped to China.

Food products are typically exported to Russia and Central Asia, said Kazakh Invest Deputy Chairperson Meirzhan Maikenov at a press conference after the meeting. Kazakh brands have been actively promoted to Russian retail networks in the past few years, resulting in more than 1,000 trade outlets selling Kazakh goods.

"At the same time, I would like to note that Kazakh products are

available not only in the Siberian regions that are close to Kazakhstan. Last week, the first deliveries of Kazakh products were made to the stores of the northern regions of Russia," he added.

"For the first time, Kazakhstan exports electric locomotives and diesel locomotives to Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan and Ukraine and cars assembled in Kazakhstan are exported to Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and China. Work is being carried out to promote passenger cars, rails and products from the military-industrial complex of Kazakh production for export," noted Kassymbek.

The number of exported goods has increased 15 percent every year.

New chairman of Kazakh Invest appointed

By Frol Leandroer

ASTANA – Saparbek Tuyakbayev was recently appointed chairman of the board of Kazakh Invest national company.

Tuyakbaev was appointed to the post of chairman of the board by decision of the board of directors of Kazakh Invest, which is presided by the country's Prime Minister.

Commenting on his appointment

for this story, Tuyakbayev said his main priorities would include implementing the National Investment Strategy for 2018-2022, adopted in August 2017.

"Kazakh Invest serves as the main operator and a one-stop shop for servicing and accompanying investors," he said in an exclusive interview with the Astana Times. He explained that the strategy focuses on attracting investment from 10 countries – China, France,

Germany, Italy, Japan, South Korea, Russia, Turkey, the UAE, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

Overall, approximately 30 other countries are also viewed as priority including Canada, the Czech Republic, Malaysia, Poland, Sweden, Spain, Saudi Arabia, and Singapore among others.

Tuyakbaev was born in 1979 in the South Kazakhstan region. In 2001, he graduated from the

Middle East Technical University (Turkey), in 2004, from the University of Toronto.

He began his career in 2005. In 2005-2009, he held various positions in the Agency for Civil Service Affairs, the Embassy of Kazakhstan in Russia, the Ministry of Industry and Trade and the Presidential Administration.

In 2012-2017, he worked as a deputy governor of the South Kazakhstan region, overseeing the

issues of investment, industry and entrepreneurship.

From October 2016, he held the post of Chairman of the Investment Committee of the Ministry of Investment and Development of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

He speaks Kazakh, Russian, English, Turkish and French. He replaces Maksat Kabashev as board chairman who went on to become a vice president at Kazakhstan Temir Zholy national railway company.

DOMESTIC NEWS IN BRIEF

According to the Ministry of National Economy, over 10 months of 2017, the total volume of investments in fixed assets reached 6.5 trillion tenge (US\$19.63 billion), which is 6.5 percent more than in the same period last year, khabar.kz reports. Significant growth in investment is observed in trade, industry, construction and agriculture. As for the regions, the greatest growth in investments in fixed assets was registered in the South Kazakhstan region at more than 29 percent. Aktoke region and Almaty showed growth at 27 percent and 15.7 percent respectively. Investment growth in the Atyrau region was at 15 percent.

The press service of the Prosecutor General's Office reported, the number of economic offenses was reduced by 80 percent to 1,400 cases this year. Last year there were more than 7,800 cases. Such figures were achieved through the implementation of the Roadmap for the Protection of Business, the humanisation of criminal legislation and the reduction of the number of requirements for businessmen. "Sanitary and epidemiological authorities and firefighters reduced their requirements by six times. The second is the reduction of functions in the sphere of state control. The army of controllers is decreasing," Deputy Prosecutor General of Kazakhstan Marat Akhmetzhanov said.

Poland has changed its model of support for exports and investment in Kazakhstan, 24.kz reports. Previously, the Polish representation in Kazakhstan was responsible for the development of bilateral economic cooperation. From now on, some of these tasks will be performed by the country's new Bureau of Foreign Trade, which will start operating in Astana in the first quarter next year. Among other things, the bureau will solve the issue of financing mutual investment. For these purposes, a working group was formed and a credit line was set up in a Polish bank. The institution will issue loans worth 300 million euros (US\$355.87 million) to support Polish businesspeople in Kazakhstan. The Polish business community has already invested approximately \$300 million in the Kazakh economy. Trade turnover between the countries has grown considerably and this year can reach \$700 million.

Seventy-nine investment projects worth more than 967 billion tenge (US\$2.9 billion) are included in the Business Roadmap of the East Kazakhstan Region, ortcom.kz reports. According to the instructions of President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev, the focus is on developing the processing and manufacturing sectors of the economy. Some 18,000 permanent jobs are to be created through roadmap projects. Next year, it is planned to launch a full-cycle car factory and a technopark for the production of auto components in Ust-Kamenogorsk. The new enterprise will provide work for 4,000 people. This year, the Aktogai Ore Mining and Processing Plant, one of the largest industrial construction projects in the world, was launched, Dania Akhmetov, Akim (Governor) of the East Kazakhstan region said.

The volume of extraction, export and refining of petroleum products increased in Kazakhstan this year, 24.kz reports. Over 10 months, growth in oil production was 11 percent, and gas 15 percent. Oil and gas exports increased 14 percent and 26 percent respectively. The production of petroleum bitumen also increased by 50 percent to 86,000 tonnes. Since the beginning of the year, more than 12 million tonnes of raw materials have been processed in the country.

In 2017, mutual trade between Kazakhstan and Armenia increased 38 percent, khabar.kz reports. "Compared to 2016, there was an increase in trade turnover this year despite the fact that there are some negative trends in the global economic environment, which, of course, affected the current state of economic ties," Ambassador of Kazakhstan to Armenia Timur Urzayev said. According to statistics, the volume of trade turnover between the countries reached \$2.6 million. At the same time, the ambassador noted the positive dynamics of cooperation within the framework of the Eurasian Economic Union.

AIFC investors' advantages promoted at Euro Finance Week in Germany

By Dmitry Lee

ASTANA – The legal system and the Astana International Financial Centre (AIFC) Independent Courts and International Arbitration Centre are the key features for investors' protection in Kazakhstan, AIFC head Kairat Kelimbetov told the crowd at the 20th anniversary Euro Finance Week. He addressed prominent European financiers and representatives of German political and business circles, including the largest European banks, management companies and key players of the global financial industry Nov. 17 in Frankfurt.

"The AIFC Independent Courts and International Arbitration Centre will begin work in January 2018 on the basis of English common law, which is familiar to investors around the world and gives them confidence," he said. "The high-tech AIFC Exchange will play a pivotal role in the development of the capital market in the region, becoming a platform for privatisation of major investment-attractive companies."

Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev signed the constitutional law in December 2015 establishing the AIFC and forming a leading financial services centre on an international level.

"For the first time in the post-Soviet space, the principles of English law will be introduced. The official language of the financial centre will be English," said AIFC officials.

"AIFC's tasks are to assist in attracting investments in the country's economy by creating an at-

tractive environment for investing in financial services, developing the securities market of Kazakhstan and ensuring its integration with international capital markets. AIFC also intends to develop the insurance market, banking services and the Islamic financing market in the country," they added.

The invited guests included Kazakh Ambassador to Germany Bolat Nussupov and Rothschild GmbH, Frankfurt, supervisory board chair Dr. Klaus J. Mangold, both of whom delivered welcoming speeches.

"AIFC is an effective platform and a powerful driver for expanding financial and investment cooperation between Kazakhstan and Germany. Frankfurt am Main, which is a financial metropolis of the world, links Astana and Berlin and will help realise the potential of our interaction," said Nussupov.

Mangold highlighted Kazakhstan's positive achievements at the international level as one of the most dynamically developing young states.

"The establishment of the AIFC should give an impetus to the economic development of the country," he noted.

Kelimbetov met with the management of companies as such as BNP Paribas, Equinix Germany and Frankfurt Main Finance. Representatives indicated they would be particularly interested in cooperating to attract investments, manage assets and capital and train international level specialists.

Euro Finance Week is one of the largest banking conferences in Europe. It features several streams covering various topics.

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BUSINESS

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 6, 2017

EXTERNAL NEWS IN BRIEF

President Nursultan Nazarbayev has signed the relevant decree for Kazakhstan to have a rating system of regions and cities on ease of doing business, according to the Akorda press service. A commission composed of Presidential administration employees, heads of central state bodies and other organisations will be established to summarise the system and approve the rules for a special award. The honour will be given annually "for significant achievements in the field of support, development of entrepreneurship and creation of favourable conditions for opening and doing business." The commission, working with the President, will decide on the format, time and place of the award ceremony.

After sitting idle for nearly 10 years, the first sugar was made recently at the Aksu sugar plant, according to inform.kz. Sugar beets are delivered to the refinery from the Aksu, Alakol and Sarkan districts. Starting next year, there are plans to begin gradually updating the main and auxiliary production facilities, with a new 5-MW thermal power plant, modern thermal boilers and a turbo generator, noted the report. Work will also continue to further automate the technological processes, which will increase the plant's production capacity in the next three years. "Now, our region has two sugar plants – Koku and Aksu, – which together can process over 500,000 tonnes of sugar beets annually. We plan to launch the Alakol and Karabulak sugar plants. Also, we are thinking of building factories with small capacities. Today we meet the region's demand for sugar, which is about 35,000 tonnes per year," said Almaty region Akim (Governor) Amandyk Batalov. The company plans to process up to 300-350,000 tonnes of sugar beets for the season, with the release of 32,000-35,000 tonnes of sugar.

A facility producing refined vegetable oil is expected to be launched by the end of the year in the village of Kopychenka, Fedorov district in the Kostanai region, said district head Taub Issabayev, reported inform.kz. "There are plans to put an investment project into operation – a workshop for the production of refined vegetable oil with a capacity of up to 7,000 tonnes per year. It was built with German materials and Italian equipment will be used, which will soon be delivered. The raw materials will be from Kazakhstan. In December, we will start the refining and production of oil and later we plan to extract it," he said. The plant is designed to process 47,000 tonnes of oilseed per year; the annual minimum production volume is 7,000 tonnes of oil. Issabayev added the production will be fully automated, thus creating only 12 jobs.

The Atameken National Chamber of Entrepreneurs together with the Ministry of Finance State Revenue Committee announced a project for marking fur garments, reported inform.kz. The process was launched to protect domestic consumers, support healthy competition and protect the market from illegal products, therefore reducing the size of the shadow economy and increasing tax revenue. A special information system has been developed and necessary regulatory and legal acts adopted, according to the report. Entrepreneurs selling fur products must go through the marking process within 90 calendar days from the date of the project launch and importers within 30 calendar days from the date the goods are released for free circulation. An entrepreneur may exhibit fur products for sale only after placing the control signs on them, including when the products were resold from wholesalers to final sellers.

RBK Bank will place 200 million shares of common stock outside the Kazakhstan Stock Exchange (KASE), according to kapital.kz. "By the decision of the Board of Directors, Bank RBK will place 200 million shares of the bank on the unorganised securities market. The subscription is open to an unlimited number of investors. The offering price is 100 tenge (US\$0.3) per share," reads the bank's statement posted on the KASE website.

Mazhilis reviews draft bill on repeated debt restructuring

Staff Report

ASTANA – Deputies of the Mazhilis, the lower house of the Kazakh Parliament, recently reviewed the draft bill on repeated restructuring of the debt owed by the Georgian government. Majilis chair Nurlan Nigmatulin urged the nation's Ministry of Finance to advance the negotiations on similar debts involving other countries.

Georgia took the \$27.774-million loan in 1996 amid an unstable and difficult economic situation, but was not able to begin repayment until 2006. Negotiations



Nurlan Nigmatulin

about repeated restructuring have continued since 2001.

Georgian President Giorgi Margvelashvili's June 2017 visit to the capital concluded with the

signing of a repeated debt restructuring agreement that envisioned a \$2.3-million debt reduction. According to the document, Georgia started repaying the debt again in September.

"The agreement envisions the repeated restructuring of the Georgian debt under certain conditions, including the \$2.3-million reduction in the Georgian main debt in line with the Kazakh debt to Georgia based on the agreement between the national banks of Kazakhstan and Georgia and maintenance of a 4-percent interest rate. The payment schedule also will not in-

clude the accumulated fine incurred for delay in payment and will be prolonged in compliance with the Paris club regulations," said Kazakh Minister for Finance Bakhyt Sultanov.

Georgia will pay Kazakhstan \$37,997,815 until 2025. The Kazakh parliament and government are working on a draft bill, as the current budget code does not stipulate repeated debt restructuring.

"It is good that it was possible to settle these debt issues, but honestly speaking this should not comfort you, especially given the fact there are unsettled disagreements with several other countries con-

cerning debts," noted Nigmatulin.

He called upon the competent bodies to negotiate the issue with those countries with outstanding debt and urged the finance minister to carry out all required legal expertise when signing similar agreements to protect the nation's interests.

"It is not a question to you personally that the agreement was signed in those years, but how could the money be lent without stipulating [in the agreement] the consequences in case we don't receive the payment? The debt must be returned to the state and must add to the budget," he added.

KazTransOil begins pumping Russian oil to Uzbekistan

By Yerbolat Uatkanov

ASTANA – The first batch of Russian crude oil was pumped through Kazakhstan to Uzbekistan by KazTransOil Nov. 16. Such co-operation is possible due to the energy sector cooperation agreement signed by the Kazakh and Uzbek governments in September.

"The beginning of the transit of Russian oil to Uzbekistan is an important event for KazTransOil and for Kazakhstan in terms of increasing the attractiveness of the country's transit potential. From the standpoint of technical readiness, we have been ready to transport additional volumes of oil by this route for a long time. Oil will be pumped through the pipeline system to the Shagyr oil loading station, where it will be shipped to railway tanks and then transported by rail to Uzbekistan according to oil supply schedules," KazTransOil General Director Dimash Dosanov said.

"The volume of transit in November will be 30,000 tonnes. It is planned to transport up to



80,000 tonnes of crude oil using this route by the end of the year," he added.

Russia's oil is carried south using the system of trunk oil pipelines (Omsk to Pavlodar to Shymkent to the Shagyr oil loading station).

As of Nov. 20, KazTransOil's system of trunk oil pipelines accepted 20,950 tonnes of crude oil from Russia, while 13,300 tonnes of the oil had been loaded onto railroad tank cars at Shagyr.

KazTransOil recently reported

its financial results for first nine months of this year, publishing revenue in the amount of 164,618 million tenge (US\$499 million), which is 6.6 percent higher than the similar indicator for the same period in of 2016. Net profits for

the period were 48,077 million tenge (US\$146 million), 11.7 percent higher than last year.

KazTransOil aims to develop, integrate and enhance the reliability of Kazakhstan's main pipeline network; build new oil transportation facilities; increase the company's competitiveness; and create the necessary contractual base to ensure oil transportation across the territories of transit countries. It has established partnership relations with Russian, Ukrainian, Belarussian and Azerbaijani companies to transit Kazakh oil.

KazTransOil is Kazakhstan's largest oil pipeline company and transports oil for the domestic market and for export. Oil transportation via the main oil pipelines is ensured by 37 oil pumping stations, 64 oil pre-heaters and tank farm for oil storage with an overall volume of 1,414,200 cubic metres. Oil transshipment is performed by four loading-unloading railroad racks and oil loading facilities installed at five piers at the oil loading terminal of the Aktau international seaport.

EBRD expands Women in Business programme in Kazakhstan

By Zhazira Dyussebekova

ASTANA – The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) will allocate more funds to its two-year-old Women in Business programme in Kazakhstan. A \$42 million credit line will be provided to local banks, which will lend the funds to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) owned by women.

The EBRD will partner with local banks to mitigate lending risks by providing \$4.4 million for first-loss risk cover, according to its press service. The expanded programme will also benefit from technical assistance available to local banks.

"Over 1,000 female entrepreneurs are expected to receive greater access to know-how and modern business skills by attending trainings and seminars and using the mentoring services that are specially designed to support the programme. These will be essential tools for their companies to grow and become more competitive," noted the press release.

According to the bank's data, women are in charge of nearly half of Kazakhstan's SMEs.

"We are very pleased to extend the Women in Business programme in Kazakhstan. It was the first programme of its kind in the Central Asian region when we launched it in 2015. The rapid implementation has shown the enormous potential of women's

entrepreneurship in the country. The newly-extended programme is also a sign of the effective partnership between the EBRD and the government of Kazakhstan, which is committed to the development of the SME sector in the country," said EBRD Director for Kazakhstan Agnis Preimanis.

The Kazakh Ministry of National Economy will also allocate an additional \$8.7 million to the programme.

"The government pays much attention to supporting business. We have drafted a bill which aims to deregulate entrepreneurship. The approach to inspections will be completely changed and selective checks are supposed to be replaced by preventive control. We hope that all these measures will allow us to increase the number of honest entrepreneurs and will also promote the development of women's entrepreneurship," said Vice-Minister of National Economy Serik Zhumangarin.

In the first phase of Women in Business, the EBRD has provided approximately 12,000 loans through five financial intermediaries worth \$37 million. More than 700 female entrepreneurs benefited from the non-financial services available under the programme.

According to 2015 official statistics, more than four million women ages 16-58 are employed in Kazakhstan. The number of self-employed women is more than one million and women business executives is about 700,000, or nearly 42 percent.

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EDITORIAL & OPINION

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 6, 2017

Turning 20, Astana is the pride of Kazakhstan

When the settlement of Akmola was established on the banks of the Yessil River in 1830, perhaps few could have imagined that this place, which initially had a population of approximately 2,000 people, would one day become a major modern city and a transport and financial hub for Eurasia.

Back in the 19th century, the town had nothing more than a few schools, places of worship and a couple of factories. Today, the capital city of Kazakhstan has become one of the largest business centres in Kazakhstan with more than 150,000 small and medium-sized businesses in the city.

Of course, it was not until Dec. 10, 1997, that Akmola replaced Almaty as the capital of Kazakhstan. Nearly six months later it was renamed Astana. As the city is preparing to celebrate its 20th anniversary as the capital, with the main festivities planned for 2018, it is worth looking back over the last two decades and remember some of the key moments that marked the transformation of Astana into one of the biggest metropolises of the Central Asian region.

In 1999, Astana achieved its first recognition, when the city was awarded the medal and title of the City of Peace by UNESCO. This award was given to the cities, which could achieve impressive successes in socio-economic, political and cultural development, as well as strengthen interethnic and interreligious cooperation. Astana has managed to live up to expectations. Despite the fact that people of up to 100 ethnicities live in Astana and several religions are practiced, the city has enjoyed interethnic and interfaith harmony and peace.

It is, therefore, not a coincidence that in 2003 Astana witnessed another important moment in its history – the first Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions, which brought together the most influential representatives of world religions in the Kazakh capital. To this day, the Congress continues to play a central role in building

bridges and spreading messages of tolerance and peaceful co-existence. Astana will be welcoming world religious leaders once again in 2018.

As anyone who has visited Astana knows, one of its main attractions is its architecture. In 2010, one of the most extraordinary buildings in the region was opened – the Khan Shatyr shopping mall. Designed by British architect Norman Foster, to this day, this iconic building remains the biggest tent in the world.

During its young history as a capital city, Astana has also been privileged to host a number of prolific events. In 2010 the city hosted the first OSCE Summit in the 21st century and in 2011, along with Almaty, the 7th Winter Asian Games, which became the first major multi-sports event held in Kazakhstan.

On Nov. 22, 2012, Astana received perhaps its strongest recognition so far. This was the moment member countries of the International Bureau of Exhibitions (BIE) elected the Kazakh capital to hold the international specialised exhibition EXPO 2017. The event, which took place last summer, gave Astana an opportunity to open its doors to the world even wider. Approximately four million visits, including many guests from around the world, visited the festival of science, technology and entertainment. If prior to this event Astana may have been relatively unknown globally, now Astana has well and truly gained international acknowledgment.

Over the last 20 years Astana has experienced many significant moments. Undoubtedly, more are yet to come including the launch of the Astana International Financial Centre in 2018 and the opening of the new light rail transport system, which is currently being constructed. But it must be remembered that it is the people of Astana who over the past two decades have driven the city towards this growth, prosperity and dynamic development. They will be the ones who will continue to help Astana to achieve more memorable moments and be the pride of Kazakhstan.

Kuwaiti envoy: Kazakhstan provides good opportunities for foreign investors

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – Kazakhstan and Kuwait will celebrate 25 years of diplomatic relations Jan. 11 and in advance of the anniversary, The Astana Times interviewed Kuwaiti Ambassador to Kazakhstan Tareq Abdullah Al-Faraj to learn about the connection and potential for cooperation between the countries.

Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev's official visit to Kuwait in 1997 was one of the most important events in bilateral relations, he said.

"As a result of this visit, the agreement on trade and economic cooperation, the agreement on the promotion and mutual protection of investments and the memorandum on consultations between the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of the two countries were signed," he said.

Kuwait also issued a grant to construct the Kazakh Agriculture Ministry building and loan for the water supply project to the Aral Sea region and the Kazakh-Kuwaiti intergovernmental commission on trade-economic, cultural and humanitarian cooperation was established.

"The committee held meetings three times, two times in Kazakhstan and one meeting in Kuwait. Next year, we will meet for the fourth time. We signed a visa and tourism agreement, we will sign a double taxation avoidance agreement next year and we are now willing to sign new agreements," said Al-Faraj.

The trade between countries reached \$284.1 million, with exports totalling \$260.9 million in 2015. Private sector investment is a promising area of cooperation between the countries.



Ambassador of Kuwait to Kazakhstan Tareq Abdullah Al-Faraj.

"Kuwaiti investors started to come to the country in 2006. One of the biggest private investors is the Americana Group (Kuwait Food Company), which brought franchises including Costa and KFC. Now, we have the Shine Company that is just entering the Kazakh market and brought a Starbucks franchise," he said.

"Now, we are negotiating with the Kazakh government regarding the cargo air service agreement. We plan to sign it at the end of this year. We started exporting lamb from Kazakhstan and we hope we will have more investment opportunities in the future. It's great that Kazakhstan proposes many opportunities for foreign businesses to come here. A lot of things are done for the protection of the investors, especially in agriculture, oil fields and gas. The Islamic Organisation for Food Security also started to operate in the country and it's very important. My priority is to find ways to strengthen relations between the two countries," he added.

A number of joint interests exist between the countries and Kazakhstan is doing many things for its region, as well as Kuwait, said Al-Faraj. He specifically

mentioned establishing the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Low Enriched Uranium (LEU) Bank.

"Kuwait, as well as Kazakhstan, has an overall vision that nuclear energy should be used only for peaceful purposes. Therefore, Kuwait became one of the first donor countries to support the project and allocated \$10 million. We believe that the LEU facility will benefit all countries. The establishment of this bank will prevent the use of nuclear fuel by other countries and will always be under the auspices of the international community," he said.

Al-Faraj noted Kazakhstan has served the entire global community and provided an opportunity to prevent any negative use of nuclear fuel.

"We express gratitude to Kazakhstan for hosting the first Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Summit on Science and Technology. The summit can be described as an exceptional one. It opened great horizons and prospects for all OIC countries. It gathered leading scientists and experts who participated in discussions and important steps were taken in this direction," he said.

He also spoke enthusiastically about EXPO 2017.

"I've been to many places and visited other exhibitions, but the expo in Astana was totally different. I've never seen such good organisation and wonderful buildings. To me, it's really one of the best organised expos I have ever seen, especially the national pavilion of Kazakhstan. It is something really unique and different. This expo was totally not like the others," he said.



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THE ASTANA TIMES

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Kazakhstan Railways: more comfort, better safety, bigger opportunities in light of Silk Road's reincarnation

By Dana Omirgazy

ASTANA – In an exclusive interview with The Astana Times, Kazakhstan Railways (KTZ) President Kanat Alpysbayev spoke about the national logistic operator's priorities, its development within the Digital Kazakhstan programme and the ways to make Kazakhstan more attractive for transit cargo traffic, an area that has seen remarkable changes as Kazakhstan's Nuryl Zhol infrastructure development programme and China's Belt and Road Initiative have moved forward full steam ahead.

The creation of a railway transport engineering cluster is one of Kazakhstan's priority areas. To date, the country has produced more than 5,000 railway products items (spare parts, components, units and equipment for rolling stock). What further tasks has KTZ set for the near future?

In partnership with world leaders in the machinery industry such as General Electric, Alstom, Patentes Talgo S.L. and Siemens, we established the production of modern rolling stock applying innovative technologies.

Freight and passenger diesel locomotives and electric locomotives, passenger and freight cars, materials of the upper structure of the railroad (rails, turnouts, crosses, ferroconcrete bars, sleepers, rail fasteners, repair kits, etc.) are made in Kazakhstan.

During 26 years of independence, 303 diesel locomotives, 62 electric locomotives, 552 passenger cars (including 116 with wide body), 7,321 freight cars and more than 200,000 tonnes of rails were produced in the country.

This fact encouraged producing more railway items (spare parts, components, units and equipment for rolling stock).

The domestic railway engineering cluster includes 189 small and medium-sized enterprises manufacturing components, materials and spare parts.

These enterprises recruited over 12,000 people and manufactured 5,120 types of railway products. Kazakhstan's content occupies 30-50 percent of the output.

In 2016, Tulpar-Talgo started manufacturing wide body passenger carriages, thereby providing more comfortable conditions for passengers. Another 603 modified cars will be produced by 2020. Four trains underwent certification tests and now they are running in the most demanded directions domestically and internationally (Almaty-Tashkent).

Kazakhstan launched production of innovative freight rolling stock: gondola cars, grain trucks and fitting platforms with doubled capacity. The loading capacity was increased by 20 percent, as overhaul was improved by three times (from 160,000 kilometres to 500,000 kilometres).

The country also started producing TEP33A-series passenger diesel locomotives, KZ4AT-series passenger electric locomotives and heat-strengthened rails up to 120 metres long previously not produced in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) countries.

The export potential of railway products is estimated at more than \$3 billion and the geography of the sales market covers about 18 countries.

To date, products made in Kazakhstan worth over 36 billion tenge (US\$109.08 million) have been supplied to Eurasian markets.

On social networks, citizens of Kazakhstan note the increased quality of your company's passenger traffic with the introduction of new wagons and locomotives. Your customers like the polite and caring passenger car attendants, clean and modern cars and locomotives that do not smell of diesel fuel. What are the future plans for passenger transportation?

As part of the efforts to speed up passenger traffic, 15 trains were launched from the Tulpar-Talgo plant, they connect all main cities of Kazakhstan with Astana. The main advantage of those trains is a significantly shorter travel time.

In 2014, the electronic billing system



Kanat Alpysbayev

under the auspices of KTZ was introduced in the country. Today, passengers can buy tickets through 17,000 self-service terminals, over ten websites, the KTJPortal mobile application and the Amadeus international system.

In addition, an automated passenger information system was introduced in order to increase the level of customer orientation. The project is integrated with the ticketing system and informs passengers about emergency situations or delays via SMS.

To increase onboard service, a multimedia entertainment portal has been provided in three branded and 11 commercial trains from Tulpar-Talgo.

The multimedia portal offers information about the train schedule, services, travel conditions and passengers' rights and obligations with possibility of assessing the portal service quality. In addition, passengers can watch movies, cartoons, play games and listen to music on board.

The multimedia entertainment portal is expected to be introduced in the company's all passenger trains next year.

In addition, access to the Internet was provided in the Tulpar-Talgo trains on the Astana-Almaty route this year. The number of trains with Internet access is planned to be increased in the future.

What new technologies does your company plan to use? How is KTZ's automation carried out? Is the company ready to contribute to the Digital Kazakhstan programme?

KTZ developed the Strategy for the Development of Information Technologies until 2025 – Digital Railway for 2017-2025. Under the strategy, the company outlined seven strategic directions for development. They are management of multimodal transport, intelligent systems of planning and management over freight traffic, digital railway infrastructure, digital service for passengers, intelligent transport security, automation of corporate processes and single technological infrastructure.

We began implementing projects applying IoT, BigData and other elements of the fourth industrial revolution.

KTZ plans to implement several projects within Digital Kazakhstan programme. The first is Digital Station designed to ensure audio-visual information about the arrival/departure of trains, as well as to display advertising texts, graphics and video and voice information.

An important task is to provide easy access to the station building for low-mobility categories of people. For this purpose, entry points are equipped with special call buttons (emergency button and help button). When one presses this button, a person receives the necessary help; the attendants come down and help to enter the building. The call button will be installed at a convenient distance from the ground.

Also, we want to provide access to digital services through seamless Wi-Fi network. There are also plans to expand current mobile application functions in terms of online schedule, availability of seats on the train, map of the country's railway network and the cafe and restaurant menus in the station building.

The project of the Automated Control System (ACS) – Magistral, implemented by KTZ jointly with Transtelecom which uses of modern railroad condition diagnostics systems. It is designed to ensure a gradual transition from planned repairs to actual repair conditions.

Magistral is an automated system of complex monitoring and diagnostics of infrastructure condition. ACS looks like a car-diagnostic complex

with special equipment that captures a wide range of different parameters at once. This data is processed by special software and becomes available for specialists. Therefore the work becomes more operational and absolutely transparent.

With ACS, the management will be able to track where, when and how the repair of a track is carried out and much more. This will improve the quality of the diagnostics and significantly reduce the costs of repair works.

To ensure the planned car traffic and movement of freight trains according to the schedule, KTZ decided to introduce an automated system to develop forecast (optional) train traffic schedules.

In accordance with the Digital Railway strategy, we constantly analyse and look for digital solutions to improve the rail service quality provided to customers.

In recent years, the volume of transit container traffic through Kazakhstan has significantly increased. What is the reason? What are the further prospects in this area? How do you resolve the certain contradiction between the relatively higher costs of rail transport in comparison with the maritime shipping? Is there a kind of ceiling in the number of containers that the country plans to transport?

Today, the speed of container trains via Kazakhstan has grown to 1,100 kilometres per day. This indicates that we are ready to deliver cargo from the South Eastern provinces of China to distant countries such as Spain or Great Britain within 15-17 days. In future, we plan to increase the average speed to 1,500 kilometres per day. In partnership with 17 provinces of China, a regular container service has been developed from China through Kazakhstan to Europe, Turkey, Central Asian countries, Afghanistan and the Persian Gulf. In 2016, the growth doubled in the China-Europe-China direction compared to 2015 (from 49,900 twenty-foot

and technological cooperation allows UTLC to demonstrate a high dynamics of traffic growth and facilitate realisation of Kazakhstan's transit potential. This strategic alliance is a key element in the process of linking Eurasian economic integration and the Silk Road Economic Belt.

Kazakhstan develops transportation along the Trans-Caspian route. The Nomad Express container service from China to Turkey has been formed through the sea logistics infrastructure of Kazakhstan in the Caspian Sea. The route is extended to Ukraine and Poland by a single technology with a complex rate per container. The existing and new modern infrastructure of Kazakhstan is actively involved in the transportation process of this global service. They are border checkpoints of Kazakhstan and China at Khorgos – Eastern Gate, transport and logistics centres in the regions of the country, new railway stations and trunk lines to the international ports of Aktau and Kuryk in the Caspian Sea.

Over the past nine years, the total investment in the development of infrastructure, transport and logistics assets and competencies amounted to approximately \$26 billion. These are investments in new railways and motorways, modernisation of infrastructure, new centres for warehouse logistics on trans-Kazakhstan transport corridors for consolidation and reorientation of cargo flows and transport assets of container and wagon logistics.

At present, there are several ways of transporting goods from China to Europe and backwards. Traditionally this cargo is transported by sea at cheaper rates. However, the delivery time by sea can take from 45 to 60 days. This is not suitable for goods that are sensitive to delivery times, such as electronics, pharmaceuticals, food, FMCG goods, etc. In this case, air transportation can significantly shorten the time of goods delivery at a higher transportation cost. Thus, transportation by

compared to the same period in 2016. Thus, in the direction China/Asia-Europe-China/Asia, there were 147,000 TEU, which is 1.5 times more compared to the same period in 2016. In the direction China-Central Asia-China there were 89,000 TEUs, which is 31 percent more compared to the same period last year.

KTZ believes the volume of the container transit through Kazakhstan is largely determined by the competitiveness of its services for exporting consignors in China and European countries regarding alternative routes – sea, air transportation. Given that Kazakhstan occupies only 0.2 percent of the transit market from China to the EU, the key factor in the reorientation of freight flows is not the growth rate of trade between China and the EU, but the rate of increase in the company's share in this flow.

To develop the most promising transit container transportation services through Kazakhstan and achieve the target of 2 million TEUs per year by 2020, the company intends to strengthen the functions of marketing and sales; increase the level of return loading through the intensification of sales efforts to shippers in target markets; optimise transportation costs through further implementation of cost reduction programmes and maintain competitive delivery terms within 12-14 days with a significant increase in the volume of transit to the target levels.

To ensure the growth in the volume of transit traffic, we continue our work within the established strategic alliances along the main corridors. In particular, within the framework of the Joint Transport and Logistics Company in partnership with the Russian and Belarusian Railways, we try to maintain the dynamics of an annual double increase in the volume of transit traffic along the Asia-Europe route and bring the volume to 800,000 TEUs per year by 2020. At the same time, the back loading in the direc-

tion and close cooperation with other railway administrations and partners on the entire route during 14-15 days. Secondly, it is necessary to provide preliminary information on suitable cargo for optimising the time of cargo clearance, as well as timely provision of rolling stock at borders. Also, it is essential to ensure the back loading and looping of routes. This generally has a positive effect on the competitiveness of tariff conditions for these transportations. All this is the work of container train operators. In the next 5-10 years, the speed of goods delivery is expected to increase up to the level of passenger transportation. This is a completely different type of transportation and a new market of freight base, a completely different price and economy of transportation.

KTZ has many plans and many different programmes for the development of transport corridors: China-Europe, China-Turkey, China-Caucasus and others. We see that China is an important player for all known reasons. What are the plans for transportation from China and to China for the next year?

For 2018, the planned volume of transit traffic through Kazakhstan is more than 500,000 TEUs, including in the direction of China – the EU countries – China, China – Turkmenistan/the countries of the Persian Gulf, China – Turkey/Caucasus – China, and China – Russia/Baltic countries – the countries of Central Asia – China.

Currently, as mentioned KTZ works with 17 Chinese provinces and a number of Southeast Asian countries. At the same time, constant work is carried out to expand the geography of routes, comprehensive logistics is being improved. I would like to note that this year the back loading from Europe to China was ensured at 60 percent, which is 10 percent more compared to the last year.

Could you please tell us about KTZ's plans for the development of the ports of Khorgos and Kuryk?

On May 15 this year, an investment agreement was signed with the COSCO Shipping Corporation and the Port of Lianyungang on the joint development of the Special Economic Zone Khorgos – Eastern Gate. The agreement is aimed at further development of cooperation between Kazakhstan and China in the transport and logistics sphere facilitating the integration of the Nuryl Zhol programme with the Chinese Road and Belt programme. Thus, the Chinese partners (Cosco Shipping and Lianyungang Port) acquired 49 percent of the shares in the charter capital of the Khorgos Gateway Dry Port project.

At the Khorgos Special Economic Zone (SEZ), we are implementing joint plans to increase the volumes of handling containers and cargoes, using such mechanisms as joint use of the Cosco and KTZ container park expanding the range of multimodal logistics and improving terminal services and infrastructure facilities (terminals, ports) to ensure optimal logistics and distribution of goods, as well as the integration of IT platforms of companies (Lianyungang Port, COSCO) and other activities aimed at the development.

In December 2016, President Nursultan Nazarbayev launched the railway ferry complex in the port of Kuryk, which has processed more than one million tonnes of cargo so far.

Today, the Kuryk port is one of key logistics link in transportation along the Trans-Caspian International Transport Corridor.

The construction of an automobile pier and the logistics infrastructure of the Kuryk port is about to be completed in the near future.

The port's capacity will exceed 6 million tonnes per year of railway ferry cargo. Moreover, measures are being carried out to improve the logistics services along the Trans-Caspian route. Recently created Nomad Express container service will attract approximately 300,000 additional container traffic by 2020. An additional impetus for the development of transportation through the Caspian infrastructure will be provided by the new Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway line, introduced recently in October this year.



Khorgos – Eastern Gate

equivalent unit (TEUs) containers to 105,000 containers per year). In 2017, the growth rate stood at the same level. We expect an increase in container traffic to over 200,000 TEUs by the end of the year.

Thanks to the alliances and regional cooperation, where the KTZ Group participates, completely new directions and services are being developed; new multimodal logistics solutions for the delivery of goods are being introduced. In recent years, the reciprocal loading in mutual trade of these countries has been increasing with backload from Europe to China of 60 percent. The achievement of target parameters for the growth of transit traffic volumes is ensured amid tough competition with alternative routes and existing logistics supply chains.

In order to develop the Northern Trans-Asian route through Kazakhstan, Russia and Belarus to Europe, a business alliance was established with Russia and Belarus railway companies, the United Transport and Logistics Company (UTLC). This business platform provides an integrated service from China to Europe based on unified technology, quality standards and pricing.

Mutually beneficial commercial

rail is the most optimal solution in terms of time and cost of delivery.

By 2020, the growth of container traffic in the region in transit through Kazakhstan is estimated at more than 2 million TEUs. This will allow the country's transport sector to generate revenues of US\$5 billion.

Transit freight flows are represented by traditional and commercial transportation. Traditional cargo flows go from Russia and the CIS countries to the countries of Central Asia and in the opposite direction transporting such cargoes as timber, oil products, ferrous metals, foodstuffs, fertilisers, and construction-related cargoes.

Commercial cargo flows serve ferrous metals, machinery and equipment, cotton, chemicals, consumer goods, and container transportation from China to Russia, the countries of Central Asia and backwards.

At the same time, the analysis of the Kazakhstan's cargo transportation market confirms that Kazakhstan's container transit market has the largest growth potential.

Over 10 months this year, the number of transported containers in transit through the territory of Kazakhstan reached about 270,000 TEUs, which is 40 percent more

tion of EU-China is ensured at the level of at least 55 percent.

On the Trans-Caspian International Transport Route, we are attracting new participants and extend the corridor with the inclusion of the Ukrainian transport network.

In October this year, a new railway section of Kars-Akhalkalaki was put into operation on the border between Turkey and Georgia, which will give an additional impetus to the development of transit traffic along this route.

We coordinate work with the railways of Iran and Turkmenistan to attract cargo flows along the North-South corridor. And, as I said, we conduct work with all 17 cargo-generating Chinese provinces to increase cargo flows to international transport corridors through the territory of Kazakhstan.

The transportation market has been established. Major transport companies are working in this market. What measures need to be taken to make the transport corridor through Kazakhstan even more attractive and profitable in monetary terms, as well as speed up the transportation of cargo?

First, it is important to ensure delivery speed of at least 1,100 km/

EURASIA&WORLD

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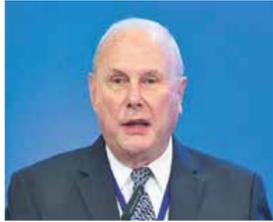
“Flowering” Central Asia will build security and prosperity from within, expert on region says

By Zhazira Dyusseimbekova

ASTANA – In an exclusive interview with The Astana Times, Dr. Frederick Starr, founder and former chairman of the Central Asia-Caucasus Institute and currently distinguished fellow for Eurasia at the American Foreign Policy Council discussed the current situation in countries of the region and provided his outlook on the Eurasian Economic Union.

How would you assess the current situation in Afghanistan, and what do you think the future holds for that country? In your opinion, what can be done to mitigate the situation there, and what is the role of the United States?

The United States has spent



Dr. Frederick Starr

eight years declaring what it was not doing in Afghanistan. At the time, we published a paper entitled “Finish The Job,” which called for opening up age-old transport routes that would give Afghan producers access to markets and foreigners the ability to trade with, and over, Afghanistan. The new policy candidly acknowledges what remains to be done and the obstacles to do-

ing so. Most importantly, it signals to Afghans and neighbours that the United States will persist and work towards a stable and viable Afghanistan. This will not be easy. But with stable borders, vast resources, a very talented rising generation of modern men and women, and many well-wishers, notably in Central Asia, Afghanistan can and, in my judgment, eventually will, turn the corner. This will benefit everyone.

In a recent interview with Eurasia Daily you said that the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) has some element of economics, but the element of politics is bigger, and that ultimately the union is unnecessary. Could you please explain your reasoning?

My continued scepticism about the EAEU arises from the blunt

reality of its being comprised of one very large power and several very small powers. I agree with Ambassador-at-Large of Singapore Bilahari Kausikan that such imbalances, wherever they occur, inevitably impart a political character to the arrangements. Nothing that has been done to date neutralises this reality. As the International Monetary Fund notes, whenever a trading bloc is formed, it may reduce barriers among members but at the price of increasing them with the outside world. And we live in a big world.

How would you characterise the situation in Uzbekistan and the administration of President Shavkat Mirziyoyev?

Recent developments in Uzbekistan are extremely promis-

ing not only for that country but for the region. However, it would be a mistake to think this constitutes a radical change in all areas. Note that President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev and former President of Uzbekistan Islam Karimov signed a strategic partnership agreement and exchanged business delegations nearly half a decade ago, while several domestic legal reforms began as early as 2012. The pace of change is rapid, however, and focuses on the integration of Uzbekistan into world fiscal and financial practices, responsive government, the rule of law and a regional partnership comprising all the countries of Central Asia.

As for the region as a whole, what are the main challenges faced by Central Asia right

now? Which ones need an immediate response, in your opinion?

President Nazarbayev pointed out at last year’s gathering of the Astana Club that the re-emergence of Central Asia as a zone with common interests, common understandings and shared values is a necessary and highly desirable development. He made this statement a week before the elections in Uzbekistan. Now I am particularly heartened that President Mirziyoyev echoes President Nazarbayev’s insistence that Afghanistan, too, is a part of Central Asia and not merely a neighbour. Perhaps it is time for external powers and international organisations and financial institutions to accept this fundamental reality. The main point is that the flowering of Central Asia as a multi-hubbed world region of over 100 talented and energetic million people will build security and prosperity from within, and is not against anyone. All external powers should accept and respect this truth, and practice mutual self-restraint.

We have very friendly ties and people love each other, says Georgian ambassador

By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – Georgian Ambassador to Kazakhstan has praised the countries’ friendly ties and expressed a commitment to bringing the partnership to a new level.

Abashidze arrived in the capital in March on his initial diplomatic mission as an ambassador, he recalled in a recent interview for this story.

“It was the first time I arrived in Astana and my first time in Central Asia. I am very excited. I am always joking that this date marks the launch of the visa-free regime between Georgia and the European Union and while others went to Europe, I went to Central Asia,” he said.

“I am lucky that I am the ambassador of Georgia, especially to such very nice and beautiful country as Kazakhstan,” he added.

Before taking the post, Abashidze worked in the Georgian government, and has served as a deputy speaker of its parliament with responsibilities in foreign relations issues.

Eight months into his appointment have seen several milestones in Kazakh-Georgian cooperation, including Georgian President Giorgi Margvelashvili’s visit to the capital in June and the country’s participation in EXPO 2017.

“The president arrived the day after [the opening of the expo]. We had a very busy schedule. We had



Zurab Abashidze

our first national day on the expo stage,” he said.

In addition to meeting with Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev, the delegation engaged with Prime Minister Bakytzhan Sagintayev as well as Senate and Majilis speakers.

Georgian debt to Kazakhstan was among the issues raised. The country experienced economic problems in the 1990s after gaining its independence and took a \$27 million loan from Kazakhstan to recover its economy, said Abashidze. The sides agreed Georgia would start repaying the loan in September.

“I have to thank Kazakhstan for its support of Georgia, its sovereignty and territorial integrity. We know what it means – this support of Kazakhstan to Georgia,” he noted.

The work to strengthen the current partnerships and set up new ones is continuing, he added, as Georgian Foreign Minister

Mikheil Janelidze is expected to visit Kazakhstan in early 2018.

Nazarbayev made his first official visit to Tbilisi in 2005 and the Georgian government has issued invitations for his return.

“We have to work on the visit of President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev to Georgia. Not only me, but our president, prime minister and high level officials are expecting the visit, because Georgian people love and respect him,” noted Abashidze. “The time has come.”

He noted Kazakhstan has been one of the main investors in the Georgian economy, with direct investments last year of \$435 million. The Kazakh money backed 160 ventures launched in the country in recent years, he added.

“What we can offer Kazakhstan from the investment point of view is that we are closer to the EU (European Union) than Eurasian countries. We are not part of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS),” he said.

The major investment projects include the Rixos Hotel in Borjomi. Since its unveiling in 2015, it has become one of Georgia’s most popular holiday destinations.

“It was built by Kazakh investors. It is one of the biggest projects and very successful in Borjomi, one of the most popular regions in Georgia where the mineral water comes from. It is very famous,” he added.

Batumi port, which belongs to Kazakhstan’s national oil and gas company KazMunayGas and its subsidiary KazTransOil, is an important part of Kazakh-Georgian cooperation. The 826-kilometre Baku-Tbilisi-Kars -railway route recently opened with a ceremony in Baku, which, according to Abashidze, is the “project of the century.”

Trade offers greater opportunities for both sides, with the trade turnover totalling \$62 million in 2016 and \$67.5 million between January-October this year. Abashidze, however, believes the indicators could be higher.

“It is not very high. We have to increase the figures and work very hard. The governments, business community and the Kazakh Invest company are working very well in this area,” he said.

Georgian exports included mineral water and wine and, according to Abashidze, Kazakhstan is among the five biggest consumers of Georgian wine along with China, Poland, Russia and Ukraine. The nation imports Kazakh oil

products, meat, dairy and wheat, he said, stressing the excellence of the latter.

“The quality of Kazakh wheat is good compared to Russia. We want to receive more of Kazakh wheat than that from Russia,” he added.

Georgia’s success in public administration is also among the important areas of cooperation. In recent years, the nation completed successful reforms in the field, eventually managing to tackle corruption and decrease crime rates, serving as one of the best examples in the post-Soviet space.

“Reforming the country is the brand for Georgia, [as it relates to] how we defeated corruption in the government and police. Police do not take any bribes and the criminal situation is very low,” said Abashidze.

“Georgian experts are deeply involved in consulting Kazakh officials, government, judiciary, prosecutor’s office and other institutions. We are happy and glad to have such close relations and that Kazakhstan acknowledged Georgia’s achievements. This may be our investment in Kazakhstan,” he added.

The ambassador praised the friendly ties between people in both nations.

“We are very friendly countries

and people love each other,” he said.

Georgia is among the most popular holiday destinations for Kazakhs due to the visa-free regime, relatively cheaper prices and direct flights. Its national cuisine is also an attraction.

“I was counting this summer how many direct flights we have from Kazakhstan to Georgia and there were 18 per week. Every day from Astana to Tbilisi and I am not mentioning other cities, such as Aktau and Shymkent,” said Abashidze, suggesting other Central Asian countries should use Kazakhstan as an example.

“Tourism is the most popular way to communicate between Kazakh and Georgian people and I was very happy to hear that people here love Georgia. We used to live in a common country, the USSR, and people are mentally very close and we do not have any boundaries in terms of language, because we both speak Russian,” he added.

Abashidze believes in a bright future for the Kazakh capital.

“Astana will become the financial centre of Central Asia and a hub for the entire region. The city is so nice with newly constructed buildings; this is hard work. I wish success to your country and people. I love your country and love your people,” he said.

New Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway route to transport up to 8 million tonnes of cargo by 2020

By Dmitry Lee

ASTANA – The new Baku-Tbilisi-Kars (BTK) railway is expected to transport up to eight million tonnes of cargo by 2020, said Kazakhstan Temir Zholy President Kanat Alpysbayev during a roundtable in Washington, DC, dedicated to continued development of the route.

“Nearly 15,000 containers are to be transported from Turkey to Kazakhstan, Central Asia, China, the Caspian Sea ports, the Black Sea basin and in the opposite direction. Through 2020, we can safely achieve more than seven-eight million tonnes of traffic through our corridor,” he said in an interview with Khabar News Agency.

Companies using the Trans-Caspian International Transport Route will increase cargo transportation five times by 2020, it reported.

“The BTK route will help implement this. The corridor’s profitability is confirmed by the results

– 1.8 million tonnes of cargo were transported within 10 months. The indicators exceed the plan by 80 percent. According to forecasts, by the end of the year the volume will be estimated at 1.3 million tonnes,” it added.

The railway was launched Oct. 30 in Baku. Kazakh Prime Minister Bakytzhan Sagintayev took part in the opening ceremony, demonstrating the importance of the project to the Central Asian nation.

“We have just completed the ambassadorial meeting in Washington on the new Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway,” said U.S. Chamber of Commerce Vice President for Global Initiatives Gary Litman. “Obviously, this is part of the much larger picture that involves Kazakhstan. Kazakhstan provided intellectual leadership to the idea of Eurasian infrastructure and has done a lot to connect countries. The future depends on where the country finds new business opportunities. As a representative of American business, we really want

to get to the point when there are enough people in the region, in Kazakhstan and its neighbouring countries who can take advantage of the wonderful new railroad.”

The roundtable participants also discussed developing transport systems in the entire Central Asia and South Caucasus region. The talks included foreign diplomatic corps, American government officials and various business people who may be contributing to the project.

Azerbaijan Railways head Javid Gurbanov noted the constant growth in trade turnover between his nation and Kazakhstan.

“In the first nine months of this year, the freight traffic between Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan increased 1.5 times compared to the same period last year. This is big. This means that the corridor is already operating in full-fledged mode. According to our estimates and forecasts, by 2019 the cargo transportation should increase by an additional three-four million tonnes,” he said.

Nation&Capital

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Genome – Kazakhstan's first domestically-manufactured cosmetics brand

By Zhazira Dyussebekova

ASTANA – After years of research and testing, Genome Cosmetics opened its first high-tech manufacturing plant this fall in Stepnogorsk, Akmola region. The facility can become the heart of the cosmetics industry in Kazakhstan and Central Asia, said enterprise head Zhanibek Kenzhebayev in an interview for this story.

“Cosmetics for facial and body care are produced under the brand Genome. They are based on a breakthrough technology developed by the joint efforts of scientists from Kazakhstan and Germany. The uniqueness of Genome Cosmetics lies in the use of formulations of the ReH Bio-nucleotide complex, highly active and natural extracts that help to solve one of the most urgent tasks of our dear women – to stay young and beautiful as long as possible,” he said.

Kenzhebayev believes the project will have great significance in the national economy, since the locally-made cosmetics will be competitive with world brands and give a new impetus to developing the industry and a related one, as well as set a new standard for local cosmetics.

The products are presently sold only online at www.genome.kz, with free delivery within Kazakhstan. The price range is 2,500 – 6,600 tenge (US\$7.50 – US\$20).



“We could have opened stores and worked with trade networks, but we wanted to make products available for Kazakh women. To do this, we tried to optimise the business as much as possible. First of all, we focus on online sales. In addition, we make a low margin; we do not have a mark-up of 200-300 percent as usually happens with players in the market. We do not have stores, do not hire sellers and do not spend a huge amount of

money to be exhibited on shelves. We sell everything through genome.kz. In Kazakhstan, we deliver free of charge within three to four days,” he said.

The company plans to sell 20,000 units per month in the first year. The facilities allow producing millions of products annually.

Genome's history began in 2011 after an incident at a pharmacology research laboratory where a group of Kazakh and German scientists

were studying unique pharmaceutical preparations based on natural extracts at the cellular level. While carrying out the tests, they found that active substances have special mechanisms for moisturising, nourishing and regenerating skin cells. Intense discussions of the results led to continued work to create highly-efficient, domestically-produced cosmetics. As a result, the ReH Bio-nucleotide complex was invented.

Continued on Page B2

Scientists produce and maintain automated and robotic systems

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – The world market of robotics, which reached \$91.5 billion this year, is expected to climb to \$188 billion by 2020. Introducing automated and robotic systems is part and parcel of Kazakhstan's national industry 4.0 programme, a process scientists from Nazarbayev University (NU) suggest the nation should begin immediately, reported Kapital.kz.

The country can produce the robot manipulators which are already used at SaryarkaAvtoProm car assembly plant in Kostanai and the solar plant in the capital, said NU Robotics and Mechatronics department professor Dr. Almas Shintemirov.

“The main problem is that the introduction of industrial robots is effective only in large volumes of output on production lines. When executing small lots and individual orders by enterprises, the introduction of robots is economically unprofitable,” he said.

“The biggest problem in robotics is the shortage of qualified specialists. In addition, all components are imported. Even in Russia, not everything is produced; micro motors and micro boards are imported from far abroad. One small micro motor costs \$500 and we need at least five for some products, such as, for example, robotic arm prostheses. A good small DC servo drive with integrated digital control costs thousands of dollars. We need six such servo drives to construct an average robot manipulator,” he added, according to the media outlet.

Nazarbayev University has created all the necessary conditions, corresponding infrastructure and hardware equipment to conduct scientific research in the field, but scientists need a research support system similar to their foreign colleagues to implement engineering developments.

Students and scientists abroad make a plastic prototype using a 3D printer and experts in their engineering centre, or machine shop, help them execute technical solutions. Kazakhstan lacks engineering centres and students and scientists must spend a great deal of time on routine engineering work. Gears, motors, sensors and other electronic components are secured through the public procurement system, which requires several months. As a result, scientists prefer buying inexpensive items from online stores with their own money.

Kazakh companies also cur-

rently need to wait a number of weeks for manufacturer's service providers. After passing relevant training, Shintemirov feels the nation's robotics experts could provide needed maintenance by reprogramming foreign robots and correcting malfunctions.

“If the certification centres of manufacturing companies were in Kazakhstan, we could train these people here. It would make the services of world manufacturers of robotics even more attractive for our business,” he said.

Shintemirov finds the niche for medical robotics rehabilitation very attractive.

“First, these are not mass products, but custom-made ones. Second, now the cost of such devices is very high – up to \$100,000. All these systems are made abroad. Many of these products did not reach Kazakhstan. In this connection, we have plans to create prototypes of low-cost robotic prostheses. Medical robotics and 3D prosthetics are technologies with high added value, but if these products are designed and manufactured in Kazakhstan, they will be several times cheaper, even with slightly less functionality compared to foreign counterparts. We want to start with a lesser complexity – rehabilitation of the upper limbs. I repeat, this market is still not occupied by anyone, neither in Russia nor in Kazakhstan, and if you systematically deal with the development of this area of robotics, you can go to the forefront,” he said.

“The second direction is production of unmanned vehicles, agricultural machinery and ground mobile robots. The territory we have is huge and the population is relatively small, especially in remote regions and rural areas. There are a lot of mineral deposits. Thanks to drones, it is possible to develop a large number of deposits and to develop agricultural land attracting a minimum of workers following the example of RioTinto in Australia, where unmanned dump trucks in quarries are already operating,” he added.

The university is presently concluding an agreement with Russian KAMAZ to develop a universal unmanned truck based on the company's new model.

“There is a huge potential for military robotics. For Kazakhstan, military robotics can be extremely attractive: the borders are long, the population is small, and the army is relatively small. So, we need mobile robots to patrol the borders, a system of circular video control,” said Shintemirov.

Accademia Teatro alla Scala initiates performing arts trainings for Kazakh artistic groups

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – The Accademia Teatro alla Scala has announced the launch of a project of technical, artistic and managerial training for Astana Opera soloists, ballet dancers, choir, technical specialists and managers, according to the theatre's Nov. 20 press release.

“The Accademia Teatro alla Scala is one of the world's major educational institutions. Our creative troupes and specialists should improve their skills to represent our art worldwide. This project will be launched as

part of the Rukhani Zhandyru (Modernisation of Kazakhstan's Identity) programme. The head of state noted that we must demonstrate the best works of modern Kazakhstan to the world with advanced modernisation of the nation's conscience. Our works of art should be known all over the world. By signing this memorandum, the Kazakh Ministry of Culture and Sports intends to implement the President's strategy,” said Astana Opera head Galym Akhmedyarov.

The project is intended for professionals already employed at the opera house as well as to

train new staff in the country in the performing arts field.

The educational programmes at the academy, initiated in early 1990, continue the tradition of the Cadets of La Scala, founded by conductor Arturo Toscanini in the early 1950s to preserve the Italian operatic tradition. World-class stars currently conduct classes.

The academy works in designing and developing educational structures and programmes to produce qualified personnel for live productions and continuing education and training for theatre personnel to promote developing institutions that are fully in line with European standards.

The Accademia Teatro alla Scala also signed a memorandum of cooperation with the Abai State Academic Opera and Ballet Theatre and Zhurgenov Kazakh National Academy of Arts, both located in Almaty.

The Astana Opera cooperates with theatres including Teatro alla Scala, Teatro di San Carlo, Teatro Carlo Felice, Mariinsky Theatre, Novosibirsk Theatre, Shanghai Bolshoi Theatre, Opera Europe and the international opera association. The soloists, chorus and symphony orchestra of the legendary Milanese Teatro alla Scala performed in the capital during EXPO 2017.



Photo credit: accademiateatroalla.it

THINGS TO WATCH & PLACES TO GO

ASTANA OPERA

- December 9 at 6 p.m. La Bohème, opera
- December 16 at 6 p.m. Don Quixote, ballet
- December 23 at 6 p.m. Jazz in Opera, concert
- December 27 at 7 p.m. La Traviata, opera

SARY ARKA VELODROME

- December 10 at 3 p.m. PBC Astana – PBC Lokomotiv Kuban

ASTANA BALLET

- December 22 at 7.30 p.m. Nutcracker, ballet

BARYS ARENA

- December 23 at 5 p.m. HC Barys – HC Neftekhimik Nizhnekamsk
- December 25 at 7.30 p.m. HC Barys – HC Salavat Yulaev Ufa
- December 27 at 7.30 p.m. HC Barys – HC Ak Bars Kazan

PEOPLE

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Kazakh poet and anti-nuclear activist awarded Japan's order

By Dana Omirgazy

ASTANA – Kazakh poet and founder of the Nevada-Semey international anti-nuclear movement Olzhas Suleimenov received Nov. 28 the Order of the Rising Sun, one of Japan's most distinguished national decorations. Ambassador of Japan to Kazakhstan Ichiro Kawabata congratulated and thanked Suleimenov for helping enhance the relationship between Japan and Kazakhstan in their common quest for non-proliferation and disarmament of nuclear weapons.

Suleimenov spoke words of gratitude focusing on his respect to the people of Japan, culture and huge potential of intellectual



Photo credit: kazinform.

and spiritual potential of Japanese people.

"I have attended annual receptions of the Embassy of Japan more than once..., but it is the first

time I am going to be leaving one with the order," Suleimenov emphasised drawing smiles from a large audience composed of locals and foreign audience who gath-

ered at Astana's Radisson Hotel. "We need to take a lot from the experience that the Japanese people have brought out of their past, and sometimes tragic present. We, writers, will continue to bring our peoples together."

In his speech, Kawabata reiterated that nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation are the most important basis for bilateral cooperation between Japan and Kazakhstan.

"This year, Japan and Kazakhstan continue to cooperate closely in the interests of peace and security of the international community as non-permanent members of the UN Security Council," he noted.

Conferring ceremony of the Japanese Imperial Decoration of the Order of the Rising Sun took part during the official recep-

tion on the occasion of the 84th birthday of Emperor of Japan Akihito.

"His Majesty the Emperor Akihito will turn 84 years old on Dec. 23. I would like to commemorate His Majesty's birthday with you. This year, Japan and Kazakhstan are celebrating the 25th anniversary of the joint relations. On behalf of the government and people of Japan, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all those who supported the development of cooperation between our countries in the last quarter of a century," the ambassador said during the official ceremony.

Kazakh Deputy Foreign Minister Roman Vassilenko noted that joint efforts to strengthen peace, disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons were evidence

of the strong partnership between the countries.

"On behalf of the government of the Republic of Kazakhstan, I have a great honour to congratulate Japan on its national day. This year we are celebrating the 25th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between our countries. During this short time, our beneficial strategic cooperation has reached its peak. We have achieved a high level of bilateral political understanding and we are successfully developing economic cooperation between our countries," Vassilenko said.

The official part of the reception ended with traditional sake barrel cracking ceremony. Suleimenov and Vassilenko were called on stage alongside the ambassador to crack open the barrel.

Genome – Kazakhstan's first domestically-manufactured cosmetics brand

Continued from Page B1

The first successful, innovative cosmetics products attracted attention among Kazakh development institutions. With their support and partners from Germany, the team developed unique formulations for skin care cosmetics in 2013. The results made it possible to attract the World Bank's investment to bring the idea to industrial production, with \$1 million invested in the project, said Kenzhebayev.

The intermediate stages of development were presented to President Nursultan Nazarbayev in 2015. He expressed hope that in near future local and foreign women would use cosmetics made by the first Kazakh industrial manufacturer.

Genome is currently an umbrella brand uniting various cosmetic product lines, such as Genome Ad-

emy, Genome Frau Sigrid and Genome Nature.

Selecting Stepnogorsk for the location of the plant was a purposeful decision, said Kenzhebayev.

"Stepnogorsk for many years was one of the centres of biotechnological and chemical research in the Soviet Union. After its collapse, scientific and production potential has been preserved there to these days. The well-preserved infrastructure of industrial hubs meets all the needs of modern biotechnological and chemical industries," he said.

The production laboratory is equipped with high-tech machines and meets the high-quality standards of the International Organisation for Standardization (ISO) and good manufacturing practices (GMPs). The smart ventilation system ensures sterility and air purity in the production premises, holding more than 99 percent of micropar-

ticles with a size of 0.3 microns or more. The water treatment system supplies the whole enterprise with the purest water, removing unwanted chemicals, biological pollutants, solid particles and gases, according to the company website.

Production machines are interconnected by high-precision and reliable electronics, ensuring stable homogenisation and dispersion of cosmetic masses, uninterrupted and low-waste production and accurate bottling and packaging that meet world standard requirements.

"The production laboratory staff consists of the best and the most responsible specialists in the industry who believe in the success of products and carefully supervise their quality. All cosmetic products underwent independent testing and certification and have a 'safe' status, which is regularly confirmed by our own analytical laboratory," added Kenzhebayev.



Karaganda rehabilitation centre uses dog therapy for children with special needs

By Dana Omirgazy

ASTANA – Dogs have long been known to have a positive effect on a person's mental and physical health. Karaganda-based Lapa Pomoshchi (Paw of Help) canine therapy centre uses that understanding to provide rehabilitation procedures for families raising a child with limited abilities.

The centre, featuring new and unusual procedures, was opened in 2008 by volunteers from the Komanda (Team) public association, said founder Yekaterina Klassen in a recent interview with The Astana Times.

"Nine years ago we initiated our courses on canine therapy for children with cerebral palsy, autism, intellectual disability and other developmental features with the help of dogs from the Kara-Ayular Newfoundland kennel. We were confident that these dogs had no aggression; the dogs were perfectly trained, they underwent regular examinations with a veterinarian and liked to work with people," said Klassen.

In the beginning, the team did not have sufficient experience. Trainers did not know much about the principles of holding rehabilitation classes or the peculiarities of the psyche of children with special needs. By studying the process, however, the enthusiastic and committed young people have grown into professionals who have mastered the principles of canine therapy and continue to help children.

"In 2015, we were admitted to the St. Petersburg Community of Canine Therapy and we officially registered the centre. At present, the centre has ten dogs: two Newfoundlands, three Labradors, two retrievers, one husky and one malamute. In general, dogs of all breeds and sizes are suitable for canine therapy. The main thing is

the absence of aggression, learning ability, obedience and the desire to work. Dogs working in canine therapy are eager to communicate and work with children. One of the main criteria for choosing a dog is its attitude toward children. Our therapists are happy to get acquainted with the centre newcomers, help them, willingly participate in games, wait and support kids who do not know how or just learn to walk," she said.

All rehabilitation courses are held individually. Centre specialists develop a specific training programme for each child, taking into account his or her capabilities and characteristics. The child feeds the dog from a spoon and together they perform

those who want to attend courses or help the centre, please contact us +77014583626," she told the paper.

The centre has a few restrictions. Children under two years of age and older than 14, as well as those with allergies, seizures, acute infectious and dermatological diseases, are not recommended for the courses.

The centre works without any state or sponsor support. The main expenses include the monthly premises rent and costs for the dogs' transportation and household chemicals.

"To cover these expenses, we hold monthly events – open door days, fairs and photo sessions. Now, some of the classes are paid by the centre, but most of the classes are free. Cen-



various tasks, such as jumping over barriers, crawling through the tunnel or playing a hairdresser or doctor, noted Klassen.

"We welcome children with the most different diagnoses: autism, cerebral palsy, Down's syndrome, developmental delays and so on. Changes occur even during the courses – communicative and motor skills and the psycho-emotional state of the child improves as muscle tone increases. All children who complete the course of canine therapy show positive dynamics. For

tre specialists, volunteers and volunteers with dogs work for free. Unfortunately, we spend a lot of time organising events and looking for funds to pay the monthly rent. If we had any kind of support, we could focus more time on courses and increase the number of children who undergo rehabilitation every month in the centre. Now, we need to continue training specialists in St. Petersburg, attest dogs, buy equipment for classes and complete repairs in the room, but for all this there is no money," said Klassen.

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 6, 2017

Pixar heroes start speaking Kazakh



A scene from "Coco" animated film.

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – "Coco," Pixar's new feature-length animated film, became the 23rd foreign movie sounded in Kazakh. The film, released Nov. 23, is an example of the Bolashak Association continuing quality dubbing of Hollywood movies.

"Coco" is my third project as a director, the 11th as an actor and the first animated film in my entire career. I am sure that the movie is the most difficult project in comparison with all previous ones. The complexity of the project is in its musicality. The main characters are great in singing and we have no right to sing worse," said Kazakh dubbing director Shakh-Murat Ordabayev, reported Kazinform.

He added that, thanks to the cartoon, he had an opportunity to understand the similarity between Mexican and Kazakh peoples. The main idea is the memory of our ancestors and love of one's family,

qualities that are instilled in both populations, Ordabayev explained.

"Coco" is a warm family cartoon, full of love, beauty and nobility. I recommend all family members watch it, especially in Kazakh," he said.

More than 35 actors were involved in the dubbing. The voice artists included Akarys Ashimhan (Miguel), Olzhas Zhakypbek (Hector), Sailau Kamiyev and Nurken Otulov (Ernesto De La Cruz). Gulzhan Sauttayeva was the text handler and Assel Mamyrova, the interpreter.

"My heroine, like all grandmothers, surrounds the child with her love and care, tries to protect him from difficulties and bad habits and raise him to become a good person. Indeed, this is the role of the grandmother, who believes that children are our future; we must take care of them, protect young children and give them a good family upbringing," said actress Beknazar-Khaninga Leilo, who supplied the voice for Coco's grandmother.

"Of course, we faced many difficulties. The Mexican people are very emotional and bright, so it was hard to show the mood changes of Miguel throughout the entire cartoon. The peculiarity of 'Coco' is musicality, but the protagonist of the cartoon is not a professional singer, but only dreams of becoming one. Akarys is very similar to Miguel, as creativity also lives in his heart," said Ashimhan's mother, Ainur Bermukhambetova.

Since 2011, the Bolashak Association in conjunction with Disney and Meloman has implemented a unique project to translate a series of the best Hollywood films. The project is social and does not pursue commercial goals. World blockbusters, whose average budget exceeds \$200 million, become a national product as the result of high-tech dubbing.

Ordabayev recently finished working on "Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 2" and "Spider-Man: Homecoming."

Satayev's feature "Districts" snatches Asian Film Festival award

By Dmitry Lee

ASTANA – Critically-acclaimed director Akan Satayev, of Karagandy, known for his 2007 blockbuster "Racketeer," has once again delivered a strong message. His 2016 feature "Districts" received the Best Cinematography Award (Panorama Section) at the Asian Film Festival, held Nov. 2-12 in Barcelona.

The film revolves around the life of Arsen, an Almaty boy who had to adapt to the cruel "street rules" on the brink of the fall of the Soviet Union in the late 1980s. The period is thought to be the dawn of the rise of crime the following dec-



dent Askar Ismailov on his Facebook page after viewing it.

"I liked it because it immersed me back 30 years ago. It reminded me of who I was then and am

only central Almaty residents of those times would truly understand the film."

"Districts" won Kazakhstan's 2016 Tulpar Award, the national



A scene from "Districts" feature film.

ade in the post-Soviet independent states.

After moving to the new district, the young school boy goes through stages of adjustment in search of his own identity and learns the hard way that only the fittest survive. He later falls in love with his classmate and faces the choice of whether to continue to follow the rules of the street or listen to his heart.

"I really liked the film! But it's about nothing," wrote capital resi-

dent Ismailov added while the movie is "cruel and without a deep plot, the romanticism of street lifestyle shouldn't be shown to kids and

cinematography prize, as Best Film of the Year. The Tulpar was established to support national cinema, preserving the cultural identity and foundations of national film production and encouraging the best works of Kazakh and Central Asian directors and their promotion among the Kazakh and international audience. The award is given for outstanding achievements in cinematography and exceptional professional contribution to developing national cinema.

International journalists tour major Kazakh cities

Staff Report

ASTANA – More than 20 foreign journalists toured around Astana, Almaty, Shymkent and Turkestan as part of a week-long press tour initiated by Foreign Ministry and Ministry of Culture and Sports. The press tour aimed to help the journalists get a broad view of Kazakhstan's cultural diversity and potential.

"The Kazakh Foreign Ministry arranges press tours for foreign

journalists to cover political and economic events in Kazakhstan on a regular basis. The current press tour within the 'Contemporary Kazakh culture in the global world' project, the first of its kind, is also designed to enhance tourism development and Kazakhstan's overall positive image as a dynamically developing nation," reported the ministry's press service.

Kazakhstan launched this year the Modernisation of Kazakhstan's Identity programme initiated by

President Nursultan Nazarbayev to promote Kazakh culture internationally, Kazakh Foreign Minister Kairat Abdrakhmanov told the press tour participants.

Media representatives from Australia, Austria, Brazil, Canada, Egypt, France, Great Britain, Italy, Japan, South Korea, Switzerland, South Africa, Spain and the U.S. visited the National Museum, Academic Library, the Kazakh pavilion at the EXPO 2017 and the Astana Opera House in the capital.

The tour also included the visits to Otrar, the ancient city, Arystan Bab and Khoja Ahmed Yassawi mausoleums and the Azret Sultan State Historical and Cultural Museum-Reserve in the South Kazakhstan region.

The journalists were also exposed to Kazakh contemporary art at the Kastejev State Museum and visited the Platforma Theatre Centre, the Multimedia Centre for Traditional Music, the Qazaq-Oner Crafts Centre and met with aspiring young poets in Almaty.



Kazakh film director completes black comedy crime caper debut

By Dana Omirgazy

ASTANA – Young Kazakh film director Olzhas Akhmetov is set to release his debut work "Nedelimoe" ("Undividable"), shot in famed US director Quentin Tarantino's style, Dec. 14.

The shooting of the movie lasted only two weeks, though work on the script took almost half a year, informuro.kz reports.

Akhmetov's first film is a darkly funny crime drama. He noted that he did not intend to copy or imitate any of the famous directors in the genre, but that his film does make reference to Tarantino.

"There was no task of making a movie like Tarantino's. We had the task of making a film in one location. Who is shooting in one location? Of course, Tarantino. So somewhere we learned from him. I just wanted to make a new movie," Akhmetov said. "In Kazakhstan, every film is a repetition of another one. I need to show myself off, because this is my debut. It's true, there is a theme of money that is relevant at all times, although I would not call the movie topical."

"Nedelimoe" features a mostly male cast, with only two female roles. According to Akhmetov, the cast was perfect, and he was able to get the popular domestic actors he initially envisioned in the film to actually agree to join the project of a young director.



Olzhas Akhmetov

"We just visualised the script, imagined which Kazakh actor would ideally fit into this or that role," the

"There was no task of making a movie like Tarantino's. We had the task of making a film in one location."

director said. "I did not even think they would agree to perform in my movie, and just sent them a script. It turned out that most people were interested, they liked the script. It's amazing that everyone could fit two weeks of shooting in their busy schedules. I got the impression that someone from above helped me make this film."

Production costs were mainly covered by Akhmetov himself, though he had to sell some equipment and even take on some debt.

COUNTRY

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 6, 2017

Central Asian leaders to be invited to Astana for Nauryz celebration

Staff Report

ASTANA – Heads of Central Asian countries are to be invited to Astana for the Nauryz celebrations in March, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan Kairat Abdrakhmanov said during the Nov. 27 international parliamentary conference dedicated to the Day of the First President of Kazakhstan.

“We will work with all our neighbours to put into practice the initiative to hold informal consultations among the leaders of the Central Asian states and we believe that the bright spring holiday of renewal – Nauryz – could serve as a symbolic background for holding the first meeting of Central Asian leaders, first in many years, under the chairmanship of our President,” Abdrakhmanov said, adding that the Central Asian region is undergoing a consolidation of traditional relations of friendship and brotherhood.

Abdrakhmanov also invited international participants to take part in the Sixth Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions next fall.

The Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions is held every three years in the Kazakh capital to exchange the experience of legislative support of reforms in different countries.

The parliamentary conference dedicated to the Day of the First President of Kazakhstan gathered politicians, deputies and experts from Azerbaijan, Armenia, Bulgaria, Hungary, India, Italy, Spain, China, Mongolia, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkey, UAE, Uzbekistan and the U.S.

Representatives of the diplomatic corps accredited in Kazakhstan, heads and representatives of international organisations, heads of state bodies of Kazakhstan, as well as Kazakh experts and scientists were also present.

Celebrated on Dec. 1 annually since 2012, the Day of the First President of Kazakhstan was established in recognition of the achievements of the First President of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev. It is timed to Dec. 1 to mark the day in 1991 when he was first elected in a popular vote in the country's first ever presidential election.

National Chamber of Entrepreneurs head calls for limiting tax increases

Staff Report

ASTANA – Increases in social taxes could provoke businesses to turn to the black market to avoid payment, Chairman of Presidium of Atameken National Chamber of Entrepreneurs Timur Kulibayev said at the Nov. 29 meeting of the presidium.

“The government keeps raising some payments. So we have more than 40 percent of the so-called pressure, taking into account pension, social payments and compulsory social health insurance,” he said.

“We are afraid now that this will lead to the fact that salaries will again go to the shadow turnover: we already have 2.7 million self-employed, now there are also small businesses that will be hard pressed to pay such large social taxes. We should not do this, and

we must show that the state agencies are honest with respect to business, that these are really our social expenses, and we, the business, should support them,” he explained.

Kulibayev suggested analysing the costs of social agencies, including some ministries.

“We propose a good way out. Let's analyse the costs of our large social departments this year, first of all, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education,” he suggested, adding that the business community is open to public-private partnerships to lower costs.

“We constantly have scandals. This year a lot of people were charged. You know, these signals say that there is an unhealthy situation. Let's localise our expenses in these ministries and then we will demand this from business,” Kulibayev said.

South Kazakhstan region launches asphalt concrete plant



By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – An aerated concrete production plant, which plans to manufacture 12,000 cubic metres or 336,000 units of aerated concrete block annually, has opened in the Kazyurt district, South Kazakhstan region. The project was implemented as part of the industrial-innovative development programme, according to the akimat

(regional administration) press service.

“The launch of a gas-concrete block production plant is a major event for the district and the region as a whole. The project, worth 120 million tenge (US\$365,760), is important for the construction industry. I fully support this initiative. Ten projects totalling seven billion tenge (US\$21 million) are currently being implemented in the industrial zone of the district. This will boost eco-

nomical growth and create new jobs,” said South Kazakhstan region Akim (Governor) Zhanseit Tuimebayev at the plant's Nov. 20 unveiling.

To increase construction efficiency, the block size will be 30 centimetres wide, 40 centimetres high and 60 centimetres long. They will be used to build multi-storey residential buildings and meet international standards due to advanced innovative technologies and high-quality raw materials.

Tuimebayev also set the task of developing a manufacturing sector in Shymkent in the areas along the Silk Road and the Western Europe – Western China highway.

With the support of Greek-based company Soldatos, a small hydroelectric power station with an annual production capacity of 63.2 million kilowatts has also been implemented in the region. The power plant sells electricity for 16.71 tenge (US\$0.05) per kilowatt to the local electric company, with the 400 million tenge (US\$1.2 million) project covering one-fifth of the district's electricity needs.

An asphalt concrete plant with a capacity of 200 tonnes per hour is expected to open next year in the Maktaaral district industrial zone. That project cost is US\$1 million.

“The region is located at the intersection of roads connecting Central Asia, the Middle East and Europe. As a result, the export and border trade is developing. Eleven industrial zones and one special economic zone operate in the region. There are regional development institutions that provide services to investors according to the single window principle to attract investment. Institutions advise entrepreneurs and provide financial and infrastructure assistance,” Tuimebayev said.

A confectionery plant producing 25-30 tonnes of sweets per year has also been launched. The 80 million tenge (US\$243,840) project was initiated as part of the Ontustik Onimderi regional and Business Roadmap 2020 programmes.

Karaganda region shows growth potential, brings forward modernisation projects

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – The economic development of the Karaganda region is showing growth in all indicators as the region launches the modernisation programmes, said Akim (Governor) Yerlan Koshanov at a Nov. 23 briefing in the capital.

“The region achieved economic growth in the first 10 months of 2017 with an industry growth of 4.1 percent. A total of 258 billion tenge (US\$778 million) in investments was provided with an increase of 3.8 percent,” he said.

Technological modernisation became one of the main development trends.

“The modernisation programmes were implemented in the region and in the whole country. Our four system-forming enterprises invested 140 billion tenge (US\$422 million) in the reinvention of technologies,” said Koshanov.

ArcelorMittal Temirtau Company, the largest mining and metallurgical



Yerlan Koshanov

enterprise, plans to reach a capacity of 4.2 million tonnes of steel with a 9-percent growth by the end of the year.

“This result cannot be reached by the use of old technologies. The company updates production technologies and promotes business process optimisation. Three thousand detectors are used at all production stages from ore extraction to metal release. According to their data, the digital production management system issues optimal solutions,” he said.

Copper miner Kazakhmys has introduced hydrometallurgy technol-

ogy. The company intends to extract 320,000 tonnes of copper this year, representing a 6-percent growth compared to 2016.

ShubarkolKomir, the largest thermal coal producer, launched the Smart Quarry system to deal with mining industry transportation. The company increased production to 11 million tonnes per year and started deep coal processing.

Koshanov also noted that mass layoffs will be prevented.

Industrial production is expected to grow by 4 percent to more than 2 trillion tenge (US\$6 billion) by the end of 2017.

“We plan to launch four more production facilities and create 120 jobs as part of the Business Road Map programme,” he said.

An industrial explosives plant will be constructed in the Saryarka Special Economic Zone (SEZ). The second stage of the car recycling plant will be implemented and a copper SX/EW pilot plant with a capacity of 300 tonnes will begin operation.

Agricultural production reached 210 billion tenge (US\$633 million) with a 7-percent growth.

“This year, we supported 3,000 agricultural producers in the amount of 12 billion tenge (US\$36 million). About 900 feeding stations for 7,800 head of cattle were constructed and 73 agricultural cooperatives with 3,000 participants were created. There are plans to modernise 11 enterprises involved in the processing of milk and meat,” he said.

Koshanov reported 400 social projects worth 13 billion tenge (US\$40 million) will be implemented as part of the Rukhani Janghyru (Modernisation of Kazakhstan's Identity) programme.

Karaganda occupies one of the nation's leading positions in terms of mineral raw material reserves. The region is responsible for approximately 10 percent of the country's economy with more than 9 billion tonnes of coal reserves, 3 billion tonnes of copper ore, 600 million tonnes of manganese and 400 million tonnes of zinc ore.

Astana-Schuchinsk toll road earns more than 1 billion tenge in 10 months

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – The Astana-Schuchinsk toll road earned more than 1 billion tenge (US\$3 million) in the first 10 months of 2017, 4 percent more than 2016's 964 billion tenge (US\$2.9 billion), according to the KazAvtoZhol Company's press service.

Overall, fees amounted to 1.14 billion tenge (US\$3.4 million) in 2016, and reached 1.1 billion tenge (US\$3.3 million) in 2015.

“The expected revenues for this year are 1.3 billion tenge [US\$3.9 million]. The Astana-Schuchinsk toll road collected more than 1 billion tenge [US\$3 million]. The vehicle growth rate amounted to 1 to 1.5 percent per year. The total volume of vehicles was 2.5 million in 2016. The expected figure for this year is 2.6 million,” said KazAvtoZhol Toll Road System Department

head Zhandos Zhunusov at a Nov. 17 briefing.

Construction is underway on the Astana-Temirtau and Almaty-Kapshagai toll roads. Toll testing is planned this year.

“A 50-percent discount is provided for vehicles of up to a 1 tonne carrying capacity registered in the areas adjacent to the Astana-Schuchinsk highway. They can also purchase a monthly fee of 1,000 tenge (US\$3) per year,” he added.

“The early-payment system was introduced to ensure system throughput and to reduce congestion. Advance payment can be made through the Qiwi, Kassa 24 and Cyberplat terminals. Online payment is also available through the Smart pos service, Halyk Bank, Sberbank, Kaspi Bank and ATF Bank,” he said.

A length of 49.3 kilometres of road prone to snow disruptions was identified through the winter road maintenance plan, and measures are planned for snow retention in these

areas as well as road transport emergency preparedness. Round-the-clock work by drivers and machine operators on duty in winter has been approved and 54 mobilised units of necessary equipment provided.

A number of road projects are being implemented as part of the Nurdy Zhol programme in the North Kazakhstan region, said KazAvtoZhol regional office head Bolatbek Aitbayev.

The Kokshetau-Petropavlovsk highway was opened in 2016, and reconstruction work on 60 kilometres of the Petropavlovsk-Kurgan highway has begun. The project is scheduled to be complete in 2019. More than 200 people are involved in these works and 96 percent of road building materials are of domestic production.

“The development of transport infrastructure is of great attention in the region. As a result, the share of the roads in good and satisfactory condition increases,” said Aitbayev.



Photo credit: kazavtozhol.kz

SOCIETY

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 6, 2017

Karaganda plant makes organic mare's milk powder, plans exports

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – Raw mare's milk, the traditional drink of nomads, is gaining popularity with consumers in powdered form. To take advantage of the organic trend, a Karaganda region-based plant is using advanced technologies to revive the saumal (raw mare's milk) obtained through the sublimation process and produce products with the Saumal registered trademark. The facility has 1,300 mares and a production volume of 25 tonnes per year.

"German-made freeze drying equipment helps to preserve all the beneficial properties of milk. A vacuum dryer converts the milk into milk powder and preserves 95-98 percent of the qualities of raw milk. The finished powder is packaged in a multi-layer vacuum package made of aluminium foil. The product can be stored for a long time," said company head Nurlan Nishanov in a Nov. 28 interview.

The product is reconstituted by



stirring three tablespoons of powder into a glass of warm water in a 1:9 ratio. The drink has a pleasant natural flavour. It is sold in 500-gram containers for 30,000 tenge (US\$91) and 10-sachet packages (20 grams each) for 15,000 tenge (US\$45).

Mare's milk prevents digestive system diseases, relieves pain, increases the number of beneficial bacteria, normalises microflora and significantly reduces the symptoms of skin diseases.

"This is a new category of prod-

ucts in Eurasia. People know more about kumys (mare's milk drink). Saumal is a seasonal product, available only in the summer, but our product is available all year round. Now there's a great variety of superfoods and dietary supple-

ments on the market, but our product is much more beneficial. With no advertising campaigns, our product is in demand in China's market," said Nishanov.

"Many customers buy our products and send them abroad to family members. We are currently negotiating for supplies to China, Europe and Russia," he added.

The company was founded with the support of KazAgroFinance. The leasing company provided one billion tenge (US\$3 million) in financing, with 400 million tenge (US\$1.2 million) invested by the owners. The total cost of the project exceeded 1.4 billion tenge (US\$4 million).

The story behind the project is an interesting one. Rudolf Storch, a prisoner in a Soviet camp suffering with tuberculosis, was treated by a local resident with mare's milk. It helped him get on his feet again. Following his recovery, Storch moved to Germany, where he started the first mare's milk production in Europe. His son-in-law, Hans Zollmann, continued his suc-

cessful dairy horse breeding and dry mare's milk business.

The local company cooperates with Zollmann, the producer-technologist and owner of Kurgestüt Hoher Odenwald, the largest German mare farm. The expert who was responsible for installing and adjusting the equipment and training personnel now serves as a consultant.

The product received a declaration of compliance certificate within the Customs Union requirements. The international document provides the right to sell it both in the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) and abroad.

The company also offers tours around its horse farm, acquainting guests with the plant, laboratory and process of making milk powder.

"We expect to launch child nutrition production next year. We have formulas developed by the Russian Academy of Child Nutrition. The process of packaging development and certification is underway," said Nishanov.

Kazakhstan to create conditions for bio products export

By Dmitry Lee

ASTANA – The Kazakh government focused on the importance of creating conditions to export bio products or organic food at the latest government meeting in the capital.

Prime Minister Bakytzhan Sagintayev instructed his cabinet to improve export policies and develop mechanisms to support non-primary exports, according to the prime minister's press service.

First Vice Minister of Agriculture Kairat Aituganov reported on various measures to "improve the

export policy in the agricultural sector," it added.

He noted exports of agricultural products and processed products from January-August totaled \$1.3 billion. Compared with the same period last year, exports of agricultural products increased by 10.6 percent, from \$1.2 billion-\$1.3 billion, including agricultural products by 9.9 percent.

"The work to harmonise veterinary and phytosanitary requirements with China, Middle Eastern countries and European countries is being carried out as part of the roadmap. In nine months of this year, the export of agricultural products to China increased 20

percent. Veterinary requirements for the supply of live sheep and frozen and chilled lamb from Kazakhstan to Iran have been agreed with the Iranian side," he said.

"In general, we should note the growth in exports of agricultural products to Saudi Arabia – 50 times compared with the same period last year. Special focus should be put on the growth in export of agricultural products to European countries. In particular, the export of oilseeds (flax, rapeseed, sunflower seeds), wheat and legume dried vegetables to European countries has increased," he added.

The export of agricultural prod-

ucts to Southeast Asian and Middle Eastern countries has also increased, including a significant hike to Vietnam.

"For the first time, 240 tonnes of flax seeds have been exported to Singapore. The increase in exports to Turkey increased by half compared with the same period last year," noted the press office.

"In total, by the end of 2017 the export corporation plans to sell 120,000 tonnes of grain crops, 2,000 tonnes of sunflower oil and up to 2,000 tonnes of meat for a total of \$31 million," it added.

Minister of Labour and Social Protection Tamara Duissenova re-

ported on the unified information system for Kazakh citizens, which covers employment, pension, social welfare, insurance, migration and other services.

"This system accompanies Kazakh people from birth through the whole life cycle and provides automated services at all stages," she said.

The system has experienced constant growth, she added. More than 19 million services have been provided this year, 17 percent through the eGov web portal.

Duissenova also reported on the newly-established Unified Electronic Labour Exchange (UELE). The exchange, established in Oc-

tober, has employed 15,000 individuals in just six weeks.

"The introduction of UELE will make it possible to double the employment rate of applicants to 20 percent by 2025 from the current 10 percent of the total number of people in need of employment (2.2 million people)," she said.

At the same government meeting, Vice Minister of Agriculture Yerlan Nyssanbayev reviewed issues including tightening the fight against poaching, protection and measures undertaken to increase the number of Saiga antelopes and the main objectives to prevent a decrease in the biological diversity of water bodies.

President, health minister discuss efforts to improve public health

By Frol Leandro

ASTANA – Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev and Minister of Health Yelzhan Birtanov recently discussed state regulation of medicine prices and the fight against corruption in the pharmaceutical industry.

The discussion included the recent arrests of individuals suspected of corruption within the industry.

"After my assignment to deal with the prices, the head of the Pharmacy Committee and the management of the company SK-Pharmacy are brought to justice. The heads of the health depart-

ments of the five regions have been detained. As a result of illegal actions with contracts, the prices for medicines are unjustified," Nazarbayev said.

Nazarbayev also directed the implementation of an effort to procure medicines and noted Birtanov's personal responsibility for the supervised industry.

In addition, the head of state was presented with an interim report on the implementation of the Densaulyk state health development programme and information on the fulfilment of the tasks assigned to the ministry. The President noted the importance of disease prevention and stressed the role of citizens

in the formation of a healthy nation.

"It is necessary to attract citizens to strengthen their own health. Human health depends on medicine by only 10-15 percent. Everything else depends on the person himself," Nazarbayev said.

The President encouraged the population to have healthy lifestyles and focused Kazakhstan's efforts to increase life expectancy to 80 years.

The health minister informed the President on the status of key public health indicators.

"According to all indicators, the situation is stable, life expectancy is increasing, maternal mortality is tending to decrease, and infant

mortality has also been declining for several years," Birtanov said.

The health minister also discussed the ministry's efforts to improve the public's health and identify diseases at early stages.

"Starting in 2012, a free medicines programme has been implemented in Kazakhstan. It has a very good effect, as almost 2.5 million people receive free medicine to treat 50 diseases, including arterial hypertension, diabetes and cancer," Birtanov said.

Birtanov also reported to Nazarbayev about the results of measures to improve the quality of primary health care and the introduction of digital technologies in the healthcare system.

15,000 people recruited through electronic labour exchange since October



Minister for Labour and Social Protection Tamara Duissenova.

By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – Fifteen thousand people have been employed through the electronic labour exchange platform that has been operating in Kazakhstan since October. The pilot project introducing the new mechanism for employment runs in Almaty, Astana, Shymkent and Pavlodar.

Though the labour exchange will be put into operation nationwide starting Jan. 1, the system is already showing positive results, according to Kazakh Minister for Labour and Social Protection Tamara Duissenova.

"Placing labour demand and supply in a digital framework produced certain results. At present, along with the employers, the project also involves four pilot employment centres, two online platforms and 19 private agencies. The system contains 8,000 CVs and nearly 30,000 job positions. More than 15,000 people were recruited," said the minister during a Nov. 21 government meeting.

The mechanism in place requires an employer only to send job details, including required qualification and salary level, to an employment centre, which is then responsible for the

rest – finding potential candidates for the position. The centres also provide a platform for job interviews, among other services.

"Previously, the structure of labour market was fragmented. Employees had to go by each and every employer, while employers were having numerous ineffective interviews. Both suffered financial and time losses," said Duissenova, stressing that the system is expected to save up to 1 billion tenge (US\$3 million) for both sides.

The minister noted by 2025 the labour exchange will also allow doubling the employment rate from the current 10 percent up to 20 percent of the total number of people seeking jobs, currently totalling 2.2 million.

Introduction of the labour exchange is part of the ministry's overall effort to modernise the nation's social and labour system together with several other projects in labour and employment, social security, pensions, social support, special social services and migration.

"This system accompanies all the people in Kazakhstan since their birth and through their entire life providing automated services at all life stages," added Duissenova.

New rules for vehicle registration

By Dana Omirgazy

ASTANA – Amendments to Kazakh vehicle registration procedures were introduced Nov. 27, tengrnews.kz reports. According to the Kazakh Ministry of Internal Affairs, amendments and additions were introduced to the rules of state registration and registration of certain types of vehicles according to identification number approved by the Ministry Dec. 2, 2014.

According to the changes, mandatory requirements for the provision of vehicles for inspection are excluded when a vehicle is purchased from an official dealer (representative) of the manufacturer in Kazakhstan during initial registration, as well as in the case of changing the name, first name and patronymic of the vehicle owner. Vehicle inspection is no longer required while issuing a duplicate certificate of vehicle registration and its replacement after the vehicle conversion.

In addition, according to the latest changes, vehicle owners will now be able to choose a combination of letters, except for a combination of three identical letters, when purchasing state registration number plates of increased demand. State duty will also increase

for such numbers from Jan. 1 next year.

In addition, the ministry is considering the creation of an online service to view the availability of state registration number plates of high demand with the possibility of preliminary booking.

According to regnum.ru, the number of registered cars increased 1.8 percent over past 10 months in the country. At the same time, the number of cars under the age of three years decreased 4.1 percent, as vehicles older than three years increased 13.5 percent in the same period.



Photo credit: Timur Kazanogov

NATION&CAPITAL

TOURISM

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 6, 2017

In Astana, Hilton's VP for operations talks new hotel and industry trends

By Zhazira Dyussebekova

ASTANA – Hilton announced the official opening Nov. 2 of Hilton Astana, the first hotel in Kazakhstan under the brand of Hilton Hotels & Resorts. The new five-star hotel promises to provide excellent service, as well as meeting venues that have very few matches in the capital. Hilton's Senior Vice President for Continental Europe Jochem-Jan Sleiffer shared his outlook on the new hotel, as well as the company's goals and prospects in the city and hospitality industry trends.

A 27-year employee, Sleiffer manages all operations for Double Tree, Curio and Hilton hotels in Continental Europe, from Amsterdam to Astana, Stockholm to Nicosia. The Kazakh capital is currently the eastern-most location in his map.

The more than 4,000-square metre complex offers a unique getaway for residents and guests including 253 rooms, a luxury spa complex and event venue. The hotel has nine meeting rooms, as well as a ballroom with a capacity of 900, according to the company.

"If you look into the market, the main difference of this hotel is the meeting space. We can host big meetings. This is a real meeting hotel. I think this is where we want to make a difference in years to come," said Sleiffer.

He believes the capital needs to focus on attracting more international meetings.



Jochem-Jan Sleiffer

"It will have a lot of regional meetings, but I think we have to attract more international meetings coming out of Russia and Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) countries, but also out of Western Europe. This is going to be a main job for all of us in the tourism industry – to make sure we attract foreign meetings, because they will bring a lot of good business to the city," he said.

An increase in meetings will result in more people employed in secondary jobs, not only in the hotel, but around the city.

"We have to work to attract people from outside together with the Astana Convention Bureau, with the local government and Air Astana," he added.

Sleiffer noted the urban area has done a good job in creating the infrastructure in the last few years, as international meeting organisers would not be lured without it. He added the na-

tion has "a very stable economy, which is growing fast."

"Kazakhstan is one of those countries that is developing right now, so there are a lot of opportunities for us to actually grow here. That is one of the reasons why we are going to be present in this market with three brands – Hilton, Hilton Garden Inn and Hampton by Hilton next year. So, we will have five, four and three-star hotels. We will have everything to give a choice to our travellers," he said.

He thinks Kazakhstan has a good future and is a safe country. "I think there are massive opportunities for international meetings, because the country is in the centre of Central Asia. It can attract people from India, the Middle East, Russia and Europe. I think it can be a great hub going forward," he said.

Hilton Honors, the company's loyalty programme, has 69 million members worldwide.

"These people are travelling around the world and they are looking for places to actually stay," he said.

Sleiffer feels the main issue in the capital and the industry overall is the lack of trained people.

"One of the challenges for us is to make sure we educate people in hospitality industry. That's the biggest thing we have to do. Kazakhstan is not known for its hospitality industry, since Astana is very young as a city," he said.

One in ten jobs in the world is in the hospitality and tourism industry, providing approximate-

ly 12 percent of world's GDP. Sleiffer applauded the attitude of the Kazakh people to join the industry – they are smiling, they want to learn, to understand, he explained.

"There are many Kazakh students in Swiss, Spanish and Dutch hotel schools. One of the things we want to do is to get these people here, educate them, send them abroad to work in Barcelona or London, for example, and come back with knowledge a couple years later," he said.

"Ideally, in the future I want all general managers here to be Kazakh. With the right amount of training, which we do, we will be able to face those challenges going forward," he added.

Like every industry, hospitality has its own trends.

"Today, people are looking for experience if they come to the hotel; it is not only about bed and breakfast. So, we are trying to digitalise most of the standard things, such as check-in. It can be done via phone now. For instance, in hotels in the United States phones can be used as digital keys," he said.

Two months ago, Hilton introduced Connected Room, a personalised experience for guests. The technology is used in some hotels in the U.S., but will take several years to reach the Central Asian region.

"When you walk into the room, it will know, using your phone, that you prefer CNN on the television, for example, or you prefer the room temperature at 22 de-



Hilton Astana.



The main hall at the hotel.

grees. The room will know what kind of music you prefer. That is going to be one of the things in the future. They know who you are by the phone you have," he said.

Another trend is a customised experience not only in the room, but beyond it.

"We want to make sure that our team members will be able to tell customers about the great exhibition in Amsterdam, if they go there, for instance, because they know guests like museums. Or if a guest likes the zoo, the team will have special tickets ready for him," said Sleiffer.

Shymkent to celebrate 2,000-year anniversary

By Frol Leandroer

ASTANA – The year 2020 will offer Shymkent a chance to simultaneously honour its past and look towards its future. The city will celebrate its 2,000-year anniversary while becoming the cultural capital of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).

Shymkent is the capital of the South Kazakhstan region, the only one in the country with medieval towns. Its urban and rural areas must be developed with a unified concept, said Akim (Governor) Zhanset Tuimebayev at the enlarged meeting of the regional planning council.

The region's historical spots will be restored in the next few years. In an effort to develop tourism and popularise local history, work is underway to restore the sites of the last century in accordance with the Rukhani Janghyru programme.

"According to the programme article of the head of state, 'Course towards the future: Modernisation of Kazakhstan's Identity,' the South Kazakhstan region should have its own look in architectural solutions and the concept of tourism development. Visiting the region, a per-



son should smell the medieval Kazakh steppes, Kazakh architecture,

houses and the life of Kazakhs. In this regard, we have enough monu-

ments. Now, in order to succeed, we need to start restoration work

jointly, without destroying the historical value," said Tuimebayev.

Members of the Kazakh Union of Architects, public consultants and well-known architects examined eight projects during the meeting, including Arbat, the Old Town, Ush bi Monument, which will be located near the Ordabasy Memorial, the historical and cultural complex and Kazygurt historical and ethnographic complex.

The council members discussed developing a mock-up of the Ush bi Monument and projects to improve and construct the archaeological park museum in the old city and create an open-air museum, as well as programmes and models for converting Kazygurt Mountain into a historic and cultural centre. They also reviewed the process for advancing their proposals.

Shymkent was nominated to the list of world cultural heritage in the Silk Road category, helping to preserve the values of the old city.

Within the modernisation programme, 104 objects were offered from the South Kazakhstan region to the Sacred Kazakhstan national centre. One hundred items have already been selected, including 23 objects entered from the region. The remaining 81 historical and cultural monuments are included in the list of sacred places of local importance.

Zhetysu project to promote Almaty area tourist attractions

By Dmitry Lee

ASTANA – The Almaty regional communications service has launched a project to create a dozen short promotional videos to showcase regional tourist attractions, such as Kolsai Lake, Singing Dune and Charyn Canyon located at the Zhetysu.

Photographer Mikhrat Tolkunov and INSPIRE CREATIVE GROUP team are leading the project titled Amazing Zhetysu, Kazinform reported.

The videos are accompanied by the narration of poems written by Tolkunov and famous poets in Kazakh.

"The project was organised as part of the programme article by the head of state 'Course towards the future: Modernisation of Kazakhstan's Identity.' This project

was arranged by the Almaty Internal Policy Department and INSPIRE CREATIVE GROUP. We selected heroines at the suggestion of our colleagues to make the videos harmonious. Our main goal was to revive interest in poetry in the minds of young people, which was presented with the help of video footage with the picturesque and sacred places of the Almaty region in the background. This gives an opportunity to acquaint the audience with the riches of our region, and also to spark the interest in literature," said Tolkunov.

Zhetysu is part of the Almaty region and was known as the Semirechye during the Soviet era, translated both from Kazakh and Russian as "Seven Rivers" which flow from the south-east into Lake Balkhash.

The area includes mostly steppe areas south of Lake Balkhash and

parts of the Tian Shan Mountain range.

Zhetysu also boasts the Ili valley, which is considered to be

among the most distinctive parts of Kazakhstan. The area is rich in

history and today is still being explored by scientists and historians.



Charyn Canyon.

SPORTS

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 6, 2017

National short-track team qualifies for 2018 Winter Olympics

By Galiaskar Seitzhan

ASTANA – Five Kazakh short-track speed skaters have qualified for the 2018 Winter Olympics in PyeongChang, South Korea based on the results of the World Cup series, reported zakon.kz. The International Skating Union (ISU) confirmed the quotas Nov. 23 following competitions held Sept. 28-Nov. 19 in Budapest (Hungary), Dordrecht (Holland), Shanghai (China) and Seoul (South Korea), which served as the main qualifying tournaments.

Nurbergen Zhumagazyev will start at 500, 1,000 and 1,500 m, with Abzal Azhgaliyev and Denis Nikisha qualifying in 500 m. The women will be represented by Kim A Jong (500, 1,000 and 1,500 m) and Anastasia Krestova (1,000 and 1,500 m).

Zhumagazyev, 27, who thanked the Kazakh fans for their support, could not hide his emotions as he commented on the news.

“I was very happy because I thought that I won licenses only for 500 and 1,500 m. I was close in 1,000 m, but I did not know exactly [if I would make it]. I tried to run in all the distances at each stage and I put much nerves and strength



Abzal Azhgaliyev

into it. But due to an injury, I had to miss the 1,000 m run at the third stage. At the fourth stage in Seoul, I was only 23rd, so I did not know if I qualified or not. Therefore, it is really great news for me. There is now time to put all my strength into training for PyeongChang,” he said.

Kazakh short track spans more than three decades, but the sport's increasing popularity in the country resulted from its skaters' surprising performance in the 2014 Sochi Games. The national team placed fifth in the finals of the 5,000-metre relay, an unprecedented success. Since

then, Kazakh skaters have been considered one of the few rivalling the sport's trendsetters, including Canada, the Netherlands, Russia, South Korea and the U.S. The country is hopeful its skaters could make an upset and compete for high places in February.

Kazakhstan team takes second place in Arm-wrestling World Cup

Staff Report

ASTANA – Kazakh athletes took second place in the overall team competition at the Arm-wrestling World Cup held in Rumia, Poland.

The Arm-wrestling World Cup, held Nov.16-19, brought together the strongest handlers from 31 countries. The Kazakhstan team included 26 athletes.

Ahmed Aliyev, the honoured coach of Kazakhstan and vice president of the Arm-wrestling Federation, prepared the athletes for the international competitions.

“We returned from the World Cup, one of the most prestigious and popular tournaments in arm-wrestling. The Kazakhstan team was composed of 26 people, including five women, ; sportsmen with disabilities also took part. As a result, our team took the second team place, losing to the Russian national team,” Aliyev said.

As a result of the competitions,

the first places were taken by Tatyana Verina, Alizhan Muratov, Talgat Aktayev and Kydyrgali Ongarbayev. Yerzhan Abild, Nurdaulet Kadir and Magzhan Shamiev won silver. Ilya Ilyin and Oksana Pismennaya became world cup bronze medallists.

The vice-president of the arm-wrestling federation emphasised that this is an excellent result, which once again confirmed the high level of preparation of athletes from Kazakhstan.

“At the World Cup I performed for the first time and in the finals, I met an athlete from Russia in the weight category up to 78 kilogrammes. Despite the fact that the favourites were athletes from Georgia, Latvia, Turkey and Ukraine, it was me who managed to win,” arm-wrestling world champion Alizhan Muratov shared his impressions.

The Georgian team took third place in the Arm-wrestling World Cup.

FC Astana loses 2-3 to Villarreal at home, must win in Prague to progress in Europa League

By Anuar Abdrakhmanov

ASTANA – FC Astana lost 2-3 to Villarreal CF Nov. 24 in the UEFA Europa League group stage match here. It was the first home defeat in the last 17 European cup matches for the reigning Kazakh champions.

Should the team win in Prague next month and Maccabi Tel Aviv prevail over Slavia Prague, Astana could secure an advance from the group.

The Spaniards were the clear favourites ahead of the match at Astana Arena. It was no surprise that from the very first minutes the visitors attempted to dominate the pitch. As early as the 17th minute, Nicola Sansone went one on one with Astana's goalkeeper, but Nenad Eric deflected the first strike and defender Yuri Logvinenko repelled the follow-up.

The Kazakhs gradually managed to cope with the visitor's starting attacks and then implemented its first real scoring chance. Midfielder Patrick Twumasi won a struggle for the ball with the Spanish team's defender and passed it to striker Junior Kabananga. The DR Congo footballer made a brilliant strike and opened the score.

Almost immediately, Villarreal midfielder Pablo Fornals took advantage of the Kazakh defence's mistake and went one on one with Eric, but the goalkeeper saved his team again. After a long ball, Astana midfielder Abzal Beisebekov quickly sent the orb into the opponent's penalty area and passed it to Twumasi. Against all odds, Villarreal goalkeeper Mariano Barbosa managed to repel the shot to the corner with his fingertips.

The visitors equalised the score before halftime, as midfielder Daniel Raba ran away from the defenders and beat the goalkeeper.

Substitute forward Cedric Bakambu, who scored in the first match between the teams, distin-

guished himself again this time, making it into the penalty area and beating Eric. A bit later, his fellow countryman took advantage of the Astana defenders uncoordinated actions and shot from the penalty line to the corner of Eric's net, extending his team's advantage.

Astana did not give up and continued trying to curb the deficit. Three minutes before the end of the match their efforts bore fruits. Midfielder Igor Shitov won the fight for the ball in the opponent's penalty area and passed it to Twumasi, who made an accurate shot, setting the final score at 2-3.

As a result, Villarreal stopped Astana's four-year unbeaten streak in European cup home games.

“It was an interesting match. Our unbeaten series is over. Still, it is a great achievement when the team does not lose 17 home games. As for the match, I would say we lacked some dynamics and speed. We made many mistakes in defence. In some moments we had to be more aggressive. Our main problem, in my opinion, was the right mindset and rhythm for the game. The players [perhaps] did not have enough desire to win,” said Astana coach Stanimir Stoilov.

“I think Villarreal deserved this win. It is a very good team. The stadium was full and I would like to thank our fans. It is a pity we could not make our fans happy today. It is difficult now to find the reasons for what happened. We had a long break, as we did not play for more than 18 days. That is why it was hard... Now, we must prepare well for our next match in Prague,” said Eric.

Slavia, Astana's key rival for the second spot in the group, secured a 2-0 win in Israel and the Czechs now have a clear advantage ahead of their decisive home match Dec. 7 with the Kazakhs. The game is a must-win for Astana to secure its first-ever progress from the European club group stage competition.

Kazakh biathletes make history with World Cup stage bronze

By Anuar Abdrakhmanov

ASTANA – Galina Vishnevskaya and Maxim Braun of Kazakhstan made history when they claimed Kazakhstan's first third place in the single mixed relay at the International Biathlon Union's (IBU) World Cup stage in Ostersund, Sweden on Nov. 26.

First place went to the Austrian national team of Lisa Theresa Hauser and Simon Eder, followed by Germany's Vanessa Hinz and Erik Lesser. Kazakhstan's biathletes beat award-winning French athletes Marie Doren Aber and Martin Fourcade, who came in fourth.

“Before the race, my coach Valery Polkhovsky told me to stay in the crowd and not try to get out of it. But everyone went not too fast in the first round, and I thought I could take the lead. The skiing was very smooth, so I decided I could try to set the pace for my opponents. But I skipped a beat at the shooting stage. It turned out I was not used to coming first to shooting. I was very nervous and struggled to lay down and hold the first shot, to at least calm down a bit,” Vishnevskaya said after their victory.

“It was a fantastic start of the season. Kazakhstan has achieved such great success for the first time in history. We are very happy. We did a great job this summer. I cannot say we were ready to enter the top three, but we did a lot for this and fought until the very end. Luck was on our side. Thanks to everyone who supported and cheered for us,” Braun added. General Secretary of the Kaz-

akhstan Biathlon Union Manas Usenov commented on the historical achievement of the country's athletes.

“This is the first medal in the relay race at the World Cup stages in the history of Kazakhstan's biathlon. Our athletes beat the team of France, which was represented by two-time Olympic champions and medallists. We are very happy

for our biathletes and for the whole team,” he said.

Onstage in Ostersund, the national team of Kazakhstan was represented by Olga Poltoranina, Alina Raikova, Galina Vishnevskaya, Darya Klimina, Anastasiya Kondratyeva, Yelizaveta Belchenko, Vladislav Vitenko, Maxim Braun, Timur Khamitgatin, Anton Pantov, Vasily Podkorytov, Roman Yeregin and Timur Kuts.



Photo credit: Reuters

Barys continue losing streak after close game against Metallurg on home ice

By Dmitry Lee

ASTANA – Astana's Hockey Club (HC) Barys lost to Metallurg Magnitogorsk 3-4, Dec. 3, at the Barys Arena in a desperate attempt

to break the cold streak that now extends to seven games.

A sold out Barys arena hosted nearly 10,000 fans hoping to see Barys stop its losing streak and it seemed the evening started just perfect when Linden Vey scored at the

50th minute with assists from Nigel Dawes and Roman Savchenko.

Dawes is the top scorer in the league with 30 goals after 34 games, four goals ahead of Russia's Ilya Kovalchuk of SKA.

However, Metallurg stayed focused. In the 6th minute, they already managed to tie the game, with Denis Kazionov scoring, and then with a little over three minutes got ahead with a goal by Denis Kokarev.

In the second period, Barys got an early break, as with too many men on ice Metallurg got a minor. However, Kazakhs failed to score and the next minute Metallurg got even on ice they allowed one more goal. Vladislav Kaletnik made it 3-1 and within the same minute Kazionov made it 4-1 with his second of the game.

That was it for Henrik Karlsson, Barys's goalie. It just wasn't his night, not when they couldn't catch up with the wingers.

The fourth goal silenced the arena and only the host of the game in futile attempts desperately tried to awake the crowd.

Going into the second intermission, some fans were leaving in disappointment and only the most loyal fans stayed to support their struggling team only to get another wave of adrenaline.

In the third, Barys had only one thing to do and they did it well – first 22-year-old Artyom Likhonnikov scored to make it 4-2, then local star Talgat Zhailauov scored another 4-3 within a minute and under 10 minutes to go and Barys was back in the game! Only, it was too late.

Metallurg took a time out with two minutes to go, as Barys kept pushing with no result, while the crowd was ecstatic.

With 17 second to go, Barys yanked the goalie but the gong buzzed and the players left the ice with another disappointing loss.



WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 6, 2017

Diplomatic Christmas bazaar raises record funds for charity



By Zhazira Dyussebekova

ASTANA – The 10th Anniversary Diplomatic Christmas Charity Bazaar, organised by Ambassadors' Spouses Astana (ASA), raised almost 42 million tenge (US\$126,400), which is the record amount of money ever collected during these events.

The bazaar took place Dec. 3 in Radisson Hotel, where 53 embassies offered their unique national products, handicrafts, souvenirs and food, specially shipped for the occasion.

The funds raised will support

charity projects chosen by the charity committee.

"Every year, the amount of money raised in this charity bazaar grows. Last year about \$110,000 was collected in one day. Money went to help about 70 different organisations. This help was rendered throughout Kazakhstan," said Kazakh Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Roman Vassilenko at the event.

ASA gets numerous applications each year from organisations and individuals requesting help.

"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 in an earlier interview with the Astana Times.

This year's bazaar was visited by thousands of people, who had

a chance to take part in a raffle for more than 300 prizes, including trips to 12 destinations, electronics and other prizes provided by the Ambassadors and sponsors of the event.

"That was my third visit to Christmas bazaar, which has already become my personal annual tradition. I am very glad that such charity events take place in our city. I have bought great gifts for my family and friends and tried different cuisines. Even though it was very crowded, I had a great time and will definitely come back next year," said Aigul Kenzhebekova, one of the visitors.

Spanish architect to work on unique dome for Astana centre

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – Kazakhstan's capital is a fascinating city, but its severe winters tend to limit its year-round tourism potential. In an effort to attract visitors in every season, President Nursultan Nazarbayev met Nov. 27 with Spanish architect Santiago Calatrava to discuss constructing a downtown dome.

The head of state noted the city is famous not only for its distinctive architecture and comfortable living conditions, but also for its unusual atmosphere. Calatrava thanked him for the chance to visit the country and become acquainted with its urban style.

"More and more people are

striving to live in the capital. Its population is approaching one million people. Next year, we will celebrate Astana's 20th anniversary," said Nazarbayev.

The project will focus on Water Green Boulevard, the closed avenue under construction in the city centre, where residents will be able to leave their homes without outdoor clothing, walk and chat with neighbours. The domed area could also cover shops and possibly schools and serve as the host spot for cultural events, similar to Toronto and other cities.

Calatrava, a sculptor who has designed a number of futuristic-styled buildings in different countries, expressed his desire to participate in the project. The plan is currently under development.

"We are now waiting for proposals from Calatrava. We understand that he is a well-known architect who is known all over the world. Now, he is developing the concept," said capital architecture and urban development department head Baktybai Taitaliyev.

He envisions the boulevard as eventually becoming a three-level roadway.

"Our Water Green Boulevard is not finished yet, by the way. It was supposed to be constructed on three levels and the first one is under construction. The third floor will connect the adjacent objects with glass sleeves and corridors," he added.

The city administration is currently working to reduce administrative barriers for in-

vestors, said investment and development department head Alisher Abdikadirov. He noted the Calatrava project will be coordinated with foreign investors.

The architect, whose aesthetics are sometimes defined as bio-tech, designed String Bridge in Jerusalem, Israel and Auditorio de Tenerife in Santa Cruz, Spain. His firm Calatrava Grace, which may par-

ticipate in the project, has invested nearly \$100 million in global real estate projects. To date, the company's portfolio includes 340 projects in 32 countries with a total area of 1.9 million square metres.

KIA Motors opens largest dealership in Kazakhstan

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – KIA Motors recently opened Kazakhstan's largest dealership in the capital. The 2,800-square metre facility on Turan Avenue, the major highway leading to the airport, is the company's eighth dealership in the nation.

"Since the establishment of diplomatic relations between [South] Korea and Kazakhstan, cooperation between our countries has been steadily growing. The growing popularity of the KIA brand in the state's automobile market is possible thanks to the active and fruitful work of BIPEK AUTO – AZIA AVTO holding, which acts not only as an exclusive dealer but also as a local producer and demonstrates mutual understanding and a high level of trust between business representatives of both countries. This level of cooperation is an example and a guide for other companies just starting joint steps," said South Korean Ambassador to Kazakhstan Kim Dae-sik at the opening ceremony.

KIA Motors is one of the world's five largest automakers, demonstrating the highest growth rates among the leading players in the global automotive industry. The company has 14 plants in five countries, annually producing more than three million cars sold



in 180 nations. KIA vehicles are currently available in 19 Kazakh cities where BIPEK AUTO – AZIA AVTO operates dealerships.

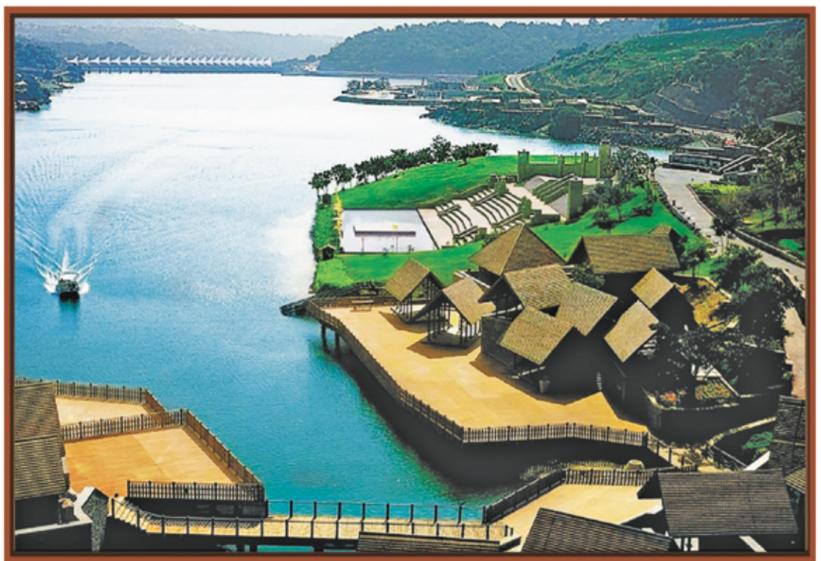
South Korea's largest automaker became Kazakhstan's third technology partner in the domestic car industry after AZIA AVTO began production of a full range of 14 KIA models at its Ust-Kamenogorsk plant. Together with the company, Kazakhstan also made a test step in electric vehicle production, as in late 2014 the KIA Soul EV became the first electric vehicle manufactured in the country. The compact crossover was successfully tested in the severe capital winter.

More than 52,000 Kazakh citizens have become KIA owners in

the last seven years. The auto maker occupies a leading position among the top three locally-assembled brands.

"More than seven years ago, AZIA AVTO launched the production of almost all models of KIA and our company became the exclusive representative of KIA Motors in the state's market. Today, KIA occupies a strong place in the top three brands produced in Kazakhstan and is one of the most popular among Kazakhstan citizens. I am sure that the opening of the capital's auto centre will become an important reason for many residents to choose KIA," said BIPEK AUTO Kazakhstan capital branch director Bakyt Satpayev.

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