



Almost 150,000 graduate from secondary schools



By Meruyert Abugaliyeva

ASTANA – The last bell sounded May 25 in Kazakhstan secondary schools, marking the end of required education and the start of adult life for more than 147,000 students across the country.

The ceremonies, which have become a tradition in post-Soviet countries, included words of gratitude to teachers, good luck wishes and farewell speeches.

Students went out and celebrated the last bell, filling the city streets and parks, singing songs and taking photographs. However, graduating students must still take final exams.

Final exams on five subjects, including the Kazakh and Russian languages, algebra, history of Kazakhstan and an additional fifth subject, will take place May 29 – June 9. Students hoping to continue their studies in

college or university will also sit for the Unified National Testing (UNT).

This year, 102,442 students or 70 percent of all school graduates will answer 120 UNT questions in 167 locations June 20 – July 1. Three quarters of all exam takers will take the exam in the Kazakh language, the other quarter in Russian.

The maximum UNT score is 140, while the passing score is 50

and 65 points are required to enter national universities.

Approximately 7,000 students are expected to win the Alтын Belgi (Golden Badge) award for outstanding academic performance.

In Astana, 5,870 students will graduate from school this year, 90 percent of them plan to take UNT.

The ceremonies awarding school diplomas will take place June 15 in all schools across the country.

Kazakh PM presents International Centre of Green Technologies

By Raushan Shamsharkhan

ASTANA – Kazakhstan's new International Centre for Green Technologies and Investment Projects was presented during the Astana Economic Forum called Global Challenges Summit during a panel discussion by high officials and experts on the project.

Included on the "Green economy: New model of sustainable development" panel were Kazakh Prime Minister Bakytzhan Sagintayev, Kazakh Energy Minister Kanat Bozumbayev, Environmental Organisation Association Presidium Chair Aliya Nazarbayeva, Global Green Growth Institute Chair Ban Ki-moon and other experts.

"Kazakhstan, as a country with huge natural resources, understands its responsibility for ensuring the sustainable development of world energy security. The [UN sustainable development] agenda until 2030 and the Paris Climate Agreement demonstrate that the world community as a whole is ready for the united effort to curb climate change. Today, we are honoured to present the International Centre for Green Technologies and Investment Projects as our contribution to the international community," Sagintayev said to begin the discussion.

The central function of the new endeavour is to build a culture of green societies and address environmental issues through the development of green technologies in Kazakhstan, with the idea that they will then be promoted and replicated in other Central Asian states. The centre is called upon to solve the tasks of transforming the energy sector, supporting the transition to green business, and applying green technology best practices. President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev initiated the project, and it is hoped that it will serve as an ideological continuation of the legacy of EXPO 2017.

One pioneer, the Solar Resources Atlas of Kazakhstan, has begun work and had positive results.

The transition to a green economy in Kazakhstan has enabled more sustainable water policies and helped bring access to the central water supply up to 94 percent in urban areas and 57 percent in rural areas, respectively. Labour productivity in agriculture has doubled due to resource-saving clean technologies, the use of recycling and waste management has reached 31 percent, and through the launch of an advanced energy-saving system, by the end of this year, the volume of renewable energy sources will approach 460 megawatts.

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Political turbulence, role of journalism reviewed at Eurasian Media Forum

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – Some 800 participants from 70 countries gathered at the 15th Eurasian Media Forum in Almaty on May 23-25 to discuss their work in the context of

today's rapidly changing political climate.

Political positions seem to be shifting with the weather with the return of cold war rhetoric between world leaders, economic and political sanctions, obstruction of diplomacy and restrictions on media

– all issues tackled in panel sessions by prominent international politicians, economists, journalists and public and political figures, as well as representatives of political and expert associations.

Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev emphasised the need

for responsibility in reporting international affairs and the important role of the media in providing correct, reliable and objective information, as well as in identifying "fake news."

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Kazakhstan's Samal Yeslyamova wins Cannes Best Actress award

By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – Kazakh actress Samal Yeslyamova won the prestigious Best Female Actress award at the 71st Cannes Film Festival for her role in "Ayka" directed by Sergey Dvortsevoy.

The 34-year-old actress walked on the stage as Cate Blanchett, heading the jury of this year's Cannes, announced the winner. Born in 1984 in Petropavlovsk in northern Kazakhstan, Yeslyamova graduated from the Russian Institute of Theatre Arts (GITIS), a leading theatre arts university in Europe and the largest in Russia, in 2011.

"It is a big history in my career. Ulken rakhmet (Thank you in Kazakh)! Thank you! Merci beaucoup," said Yeslyamova with tears on her face.

"Ayka" is a drama story of a young Kyrgyz woman, living and working illegally in Moscow, forced to abandon her new-born child and suffering moral travails thereafter. The mother's feelings eventually take over and she starts desperately searching for her child.

Yeslyamova said playing a young mother had been a chal-



Samal Yeslyamova

lenge. "I do not have children yet, but I had to know the feeling of what it is like to be a woman that had just given birth to a child, but is forced to go to work," said Yeslyamova, as quoted by Sputniknews.

The migrant life has become a centre of the plot, after Dvortsevoy came across statistics in the media stating that Kyrgyz women abandoned 248 new-borns in 2010 alone.

"It was surprising to me, because I am Russian grown up in Kazakhstan. Though I have been living in Moscow over the last 20

years, I know Central Asia very well. And I know how warmly children are treated there. I was surprised at how people can abandon their children like that," said Dvortsevoy who was born in Shymkent and moved to Moscow in the 1990s.

"I realised how little we know about this kind of life living in Moscow, basic human norms and values," he added.

The work on the film lasted for six years and writing of the plot continued as the shooting went on. "A starting point in the beginning was of primary importance to me

and only then I developed the film and did not know how it will end. The film grows like tree and the end was still unclear. My actors and I had the same feeling, we did not know what we would face," said Dvortsevoy.

"Ayka" becomes the second project for Dvortsevoy and Yeslyamova, as a Kazakh actress starred in Dvortsevoy's film "Tulip" in 2008 that received the Un Certain Regard Award at the Cannes festival.

Dvortsevoy noted Yeslyamova is a "brilliant that he discovered in Petropavlovsk."

"The only thing I had to do is to shape this brilliant, because she is really a great actress. Sometimes I wonder where such people come from in provincial areas. She is from a rural area. She has a strong personality and talent," said the director during his visit to Kazakhstan after the festival.

"I am happy to be here, because firstly my mom lives here and secondly I am entirely from Shymkent. I love Shymkent. Now it is called Shymkent, before it was called Chimkent (different spelling in Soviet times). It does not matter how it is named, most important is that it is our city," said Dvortsevoy.

FIC to discuss accelerated modernisation

By Meruyert Abugaliyeva

ASTANA – Accelerated modernisation will be the topic of the 31st plenary session of the Foreign Investors Council (FIC) under Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev in June 2018. The council, which marks its 20th anniversary this year, serves as a platform for dialogue between the Kazakh government and foreign investors, aiming to address challenges faced by investors and further improve the investment climate.

"The Foreign Investors Council is a unique platform which allows foreign investors to directly refer to President Nursultan Nazarbayev and put forward their suggestions. Investors appreciate such an opportunity to interact with the main decision makers," said Yerlan Khairov, Chairman of the Investment Committee of the

Ministry for Investments and Development, in an exclusive interview for this story.

The investment committee is primarily responsible for supporting the council's activities.

Established in 1998, FIC brings together top executives from 35 transnational companies, financial institutions and major consulting companies including ArcelorMittal, Asian Development Bank (ADB), Chevron, Citibank, Deloitte, Deutsche Bank, Ernst & Young (EY), Eurasian Resource Group (ERG), European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), ExxonMobil, Lukoil, Total, Polpharma among others.

To join the council, companies working in the mining industry must invest at least \$500 million and entities belonging to processing industry at least \$125 million.

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Astana Economic Forum focuses on global challenges

By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – The eleventh Astana Economic Forum kicked off in the Kazakh capital May 17, welcoming 5,000 participants from 111 countries and more than 500 speakers, including former United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, former French President Francois Hollande and Apple co-founder Steve Wozniak. Organised in Astana since 2008, this year's event focuses on global trends and challenges.

Opening the event, Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev said the annual forum has evolved into a "good tradition" and a platform to "discuss acute issues in econo-

my, investment and innovation." He indicated five global trends and reiterated the need to establish G-Global platform under the aegis of the UN.

The five global trends include digitisation of all aspects of human activity, energy revolution, rapid global population growth, change in the pace and nature of urbanisation, and transformation of the global labour market.

"Since last year's forum, we witnessed huge transformations worldwide. New confrontations have emerged, and it has become more difficult for states to find agreement. Distrust and unwillingness to understand the principles of an opponent are growing.

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NATION

WEDNESDAY, MAY 30, 2018

KADEX 2018 results in numerous defence contracts

By Raushan Shamsharkhan

ASTANA – KADEX 2018, the fifth international weapons systems and military equipment exhibition, was held May 23-26 at the military sector of Astana International Airport.

“Our country, as you know, is pursuing a peace-loving policy aimed at strengthening good-neighbourliness with all its neighbours and distant neighbours, but today’s world situation forces everyone to strengthen their defences, and we are doing the same within the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO). At the same time, the defence sector and armed forces development are one of the state priorities and an effective instrument of their implementation is an international exhibition, the only one of its kind in Central Asia,” said Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev at the May 23 opening ceremony.

The head of state stressed KADEX 2018 has become an event of global importance in armament and information security. He noted the large-scale exhibit is one of the most effective sites for strengthening defence potential and developing military-industrial cooperation between countries.

“The exhibition demonstrates advanced products, the best achievements of Kazakh and foreign enterprises. The latest developments of leading design bureaus in the field of information security are presented here,” he added.

KADEX, held biennially since 2010, has evolved into a useful platform to create mutually beneficial contacts between defence industry manufacturers and consumers, as well as an opportunity to exchange experience in technological armed forces development. This year, the exhibition was organised for the



Photo credit: Akorda.kz

first time by the Kazakh Ministry of Defence and Aerospace Industry and the conference session was opened by Deputy Prime Minister Askar Zhumagaliyev and Defence and Aerospace Industry Minister Beibut Atamkulov.

The event attracted official delegations from 40 countries and 108 heads of foreign companies, with approximately 3,000 military-diplomatic corps representatives in attendance. Local and international defence-industrial complex and space industry companies, leading design bureaus and information security research institutes participated in the exhibit, presenting the latest examples of space technology and information security development. Weapons, defence equipment, military and dual-purpose products by leading global manufacturers were presented. Particular emphasis was placed on electronic systems, communication systems and weapons control and the search for modern information security solutions.

Companies presented 124 land equipment items and 18 types of aircraft and drones. The ten pavilions included national displays by

China, Russia and Turkey and exhibits by Kazakhstan Engineering, Kazakhstan Paramount Engineering and Kaztechnology. Means of monitoring, tracking and protecting information took the leading place in the pavilions.

For the first time, one pavilion was dedicated solely to space technology and organisers prepared a separate pavilion devoted to domestic and international cosmonaut achievements. Another innovation was the Days of Space in Kazakhstan international forum.

The extensive scientific and business programme included whole and sectional meetings, conferences and roundtables on defence and security, world cosmonautics development and ensuring cybersecurity. The business schedule included cyber and digital security and advanced defence tech conferences dedicated to information security, communication technologies and critical information and communication infrastructure protection. Individuals from 28 organisations from 14 countries and more than 500 representatives of central state bodies, higher educational institutions,

quasi-governmental organisations and foreign and domestic companies participated in the international cybersecurity conference.

The Ministry of Defence and Aerospace Industry signed memoranda of understanding and cooperation with King Abdullah’s Office (Jordan) and leading Belgian, Russian and Turkish companies. Memoranda on collaboration were also inked between Kazakh companies, Belarusian and Kazakh scientific institutes and TransTelecom (Kazakhstan) and CyberX (Israel), noted the Ministry of Foreign Affairs press office.

“Modernisation will increase the localisation of production from 30 percent to 70 percent and increases the country’s defence capacity through its own production and expands the export of military equipment,” said Kazakh Defence and Aerospace Industry Vice Minister Asset Kurmangaliyev.

The first two days of KADEX 2018 were open only to specialists, with visitors welcomed on the remaining two days. Guests became acquainted with the latest military-industrial and aerospace achievements and advanced devel-

opments, such as Kazakh helicopters and planes, helicopters modernised by Ukrainian companies, a Turkish Air Force Airbus A400 and Kazakh Army CASA C-295 aircraft and Su-30 fighter. Visitors could not only see and touch the exhibits, but also had a chance to sit at the controls of Arlan and Barys armoured cars and certain aircraft.

“Those wishing to see the sub-machine guns, tanks and planes gathered at the exhibition in the morning. None of the visitors remained disappointed. They were happy to share their emotions on social media after the spectacular performance,” said Astana Military Unit No. 68665 serviceperson Daniyar Aitkozhin.

A memorial issue of the Kazcosmos 25th anniversary stamp was presented on opening day at a ceremony attended by the heads of the Ministries of Defence and Aerospace Industry and Information and Communication, KazPost and guests of honour. Commemorative stamps and first-day covers were available for purchase.

KADEX 2018 resulted in contracts, agreements and memoranda which have the potential to promote partnerships in military-technical cooperation, cybersecurity and outer space exploration. Kazakh and leading foreign companies signed a significant package of documents, which Nazarbayev noted would contribute to developing international defence industry cooperation and domestic and foreign partnerships. Kazakhstan Engineering agreed to develop military-technical cooperation with Thales, a French company, and signed a memorandum with Turkish company Otokar to produce vehicles, including armoured cars, according to the Ministry of Defence and Aerospace Industry.

NATIONAL NEWS IN BRIEF

A Community Council responsible for overseeing the implementation of Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev’s Five Social Initiatives was recently established in the Karaganda region. Its members represent political parties, the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan, non-governmental organisations and other civic institutions. It is the first regional community council created in Kazakhstan, Kazinform reports. In the region, preparations for implementing each social initiative are underway. Approximately 5.7 billion tenge (US\$17.5 million) will be allocated for microcredits in the region this year. In 2019, it is planned to begin construction of four student hostels. The Community Council is also focused on a gasification project.

More than 4,800 citizens have suffered tick bites since the beginning of spring, according to a sanitary and epidemiological monitoring centre. Tick attacks were registered in four regions of Kazakhstan with 1,230 cases in Almaty, 2,121 in the Almaty region, 1,389 in the East Kazakhstan and 91 cases in the Akmola region. Six Lyme borreliosis disease cases were recorded in the East Kazakhstan region and Almaty. Tick-borne encephalitis was detected only in the Almaty region.

Head of the Kostanai region Arkhimed Mukhambetov recently gave an update on the Ruhani Janghyru programme in the region. Approximately 178 million tenge (US\$546,000) has been spent building a specialised school. The school specialises in information technologies and will attract gifted children from the region. Also, 21 digital technologies classes worth 172 million tenge (US\$527,000) were opened in the region. More than 100 schools with local history museums have been opened to feature famous people from the Kostanai region.

Costume designer and art director Ezio Frigerio was honoured recently with the prestigious state award in Kazakhstan. Minister of Culture and Sport Arystanbek Mukhamediuly awarded Frigerio the Dostyk Order of the II Degree in Astana for his contribution to developing Kazakhstan and strengthening cooperation between Kazakh and Italian people. Frigerio has collaborated with director Giorgio Strehler on multiple occasions, including “I gigante della montagna” (1966), “Santa Giovanna dei macelli” (1970), “Re Lear” (1972), “Il temporale” (1980), “L’Illusion Comique” (1984), Mozart’s “Le Nozze di Figaro,” “Don Giovanni” and “Così fan tutte.” Frigerio helped develop many outstanding opera and ballet plays at the Astana Opera. Together with his spouse Italian costume designer Franca Squarciapino, they helped develop musical theatre in Kazakhstan. They worked on Zhubanov’s Abai, Prokofyev’s Romeo and Juliet and Sleeping beauty, Tchaikovsky’s Swan Lake and many more operas staged in Astana.

The KazSat satellite system has earned 20 billion tenge (US\$61.3 million) since the start of its operation. Now it is operating normally and supports the needs of 15 communication and broadcasting operators across Kazakhstan. As of today, the archive of satellite images around the world is more than 685 million square kilometres, 35 million square kilometres of which cover the territory of Kazakhstan. This year, it is planned to launch two more satellites created by a joint team of engineers from Kazakhstan and a British company.

Well-known Hollywood will be dubbed in Kazakh, Kazinform reports. Bolashak Association Corporation Fund, Disney Company and Meloman are going to launch a unique project on dubbing Hollywood classics and blockbusters in Kazakh. The project is part of the Ruhani Janghyru programme. Twenty-three Hollywood films have already been dubbed. Children cartoons and animated movies dubbed in Kazakh are popular in the country. This year, cinemas will show four animated movies dubbed in Kazakh.

Kazakhstan launches Latin script translation mobile app

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – The State Language Development Foundation has created the Qazaq Latin Keyboard, a Kazakh keyboard with Latin letters for smartphones and tablets. The app can translate Kazakh text written in Cyrillic script to Latin script.

“Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev is paying great attention to the development of the Kazakh language. He defined a phased transition of Kazakh to the Latin alphabet in the Ruhani Janghyru (Modernisation of Kazakhstan’s Identity) programme. Today, 70 percent of the world’s information is in Latin. We must enter this modern information space, be competitive. Our application Qazaq Latin Keyboard will help young people study the new alphabet. The language in the Latin alphabet will be available for everybody,” said Executive Deputy Director Sultan Aitkhanov at a Central Communication Centre press conference.

The project was developed with the support of the Foundation of the First President of Kazakhstan and the Samruk Kazyna Trust Fund for developing social projects, reported Kazinform. The Qazaq Latin Keyboard can be used as the standard in all applications.

“For the convenience of users, a transliteration of the keyboard has been created. With this function, you can enter Kazakh words in Cyrillic, after which the programme will automatically translate them into text in Latin,” he said.

Aitkhanov noted the keyboard is easily installed and provides a choice of interface language and theme, feedback with its developers, user ratings and links to the foundation’s projects and social media pages.

The app is available for download in the App Store and Android’s Play Market. Developers plan future upgrades based on user feedback and suggestions.

Nazarbayev signed a decree in October on the phased transition of the Kazakh alphabet from Cyrillic into Latin script by 2025. At that point, the Latin alphabet will be used in all official documents, books, newspapers and media. Experts believe the transformation is a crucial pillar of Kazakhstan’s modernisation process and greater openness to the world.

The first phase of the transition covers 2018-2020, when preparatory work and corresponding measures will be completed and legislation changed. During the second phase, from 2021-2023, passports, citizens’ identity cards and other documents will begin to be issued in Latin script. The final segment in 2024-2025 will involve a phased-in transfer for office work in local and central state bodies and state media and printed publications will be produced with Latin graphics.

Switching alphabets is not new to Kazakhstan. The Kazakh language used Arabic script from the 11th century up to 1929. It used the Latin alphabet from 1929-1940, then changed to a Cyrillic-based alphabet with 42 letters. The population may need decades to adapt to the transition.

Citizens can protect data through egov.kz

Staff Report

ASTANA – Blocking personal data on egov.kz, the e-government website, will soon be available to Kazakh citizens, reported Government for Citizens State Corporation head Abylaikhan Ospanov at a Central Communications Service press conference.

“In order to exclude the risk of unauthorised personal data transfer, we have developed a project according to which citizens will have full control over access to their data,” he said.

The project will be executed in two stages. In the first phase, the data lock function will appear in users’ personal offices.

“Each website user will be able to activate it and block any access to their data,” he added.

The second stage involves creating an SMS service to disable blocking access to personal data. When implementing this function, Population Service Centre (so called TsON) operators will be able to access citizens’ data only by their permission through SMS confirmation.

Ospanov noted in order to use the data blocking, residents must register in the appropriate section of the e-government website or at any service centre.

He added personal data obtained through the latter will be properly protected. A service centre employee can access information only after a citizen appears before him personally, which must be confirmed by the applicant’s photo. TsON staff will be obliged to provide a receipt confirming re-

ceipt of personal data and certify their actions with a personal electronic digital signature. In addition, law enforcement bodies will conduct various inspections of employee activities.

“There is a human factor after all when an employee can neglect all the rules and agreements that he signs with the employer about the protection of personal data and for such cases we will create a technical opportunity for a citizen to close access to his data,” said Ospanov.

He also urged citizens to issue a mobile number link to the personal egov office in the TsON. This will enable them to open and close access via SMS passwords and fully manage and protect their personal data.

“From June-August, half a million people will be trained in digital literacy. To date, 880 certified trainers have been trained throughout the country. Residents of cities, districts and villages are also eligible,” said Ospanov.

More than 200,000 e-declarations issued

By Amir Khaidar

ASTANA – Together with the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the Kazakh Ministry of Finance has been successful in implementing the ASTANA-1 electronic customs system. It systematises customs procedures by issuing digital declarations for transited, exported and imported goods.

ASTANA-1 was launched in stages, starting from transit subsystem that came into effect October 2017. To date 200,000 transit declarations have been issued, 92 percent of them were processed in less than one minute. On Jan. 1, the launch of export subsystem followed, resulting in 23,000 declarations issued.

“Starting on April 1, ASTANA-1 is functioning on import and the remaining customs procedures. To date more than 16,000 declarations on imported goods were issued, 90 percent of them were processed

automatically through Green Corridor,” said Kazakh Finance Minister Bakhyt Sultanov.

Sultanov noted that money saved with the launch of the system can be re-invested into trade with foreign partners and result in additional revenue for the state budget totalling 12 billion tenge (US\$37 million) in 2018 or 20.3 billion tenge (US\$62 million) by 2025.

Another project realised with the support of UNCTAD is the Single Window procedure. It seeks to streamline customs procedures by processing incoming documentation in one place. Preparatory work in terms of business processes and regulatory documents was completed. The data was sent to technical developers and the pilot launch of the system is expected in May.

An important step towards advancing customs procedures is the modernisation of existing infrastructure on the ground. Improvement of all vehicle checkpoints

along the entire border of Kazakhstan is planned.

“The construction of new checkpoints along the Kazakh-Chinese border will be completed in June 2018. Reconstruction of eight remaining vehicle checkpoints will be realised with the involvement of concessional loans from Chinese government,” added Sultanov.

Minister of Information and Communication Dauren Abayev added that the amount of paper documents will be decreased and the waiting period shortened from 26 to eight days under ASTANA-1 programme. He added that at present, 63 customs checkpoints are connected to the system through the landline transmission links and eight are connected through satellite.

ASTANA-1 electronic customs system seeks to eliminate direct contact between customs officers and customs clearance experts as well as simplify and speed up the customs clearance process along the Kazakh border.

EURASIA&WORLD

WEDNESDAY, MAY 30, 2018

EXTERNAL NEWS IN BRIEF

The National Museum of Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan National History Museum launched the Legacy of the Great Steppe: Jewellery Art Masterpieces exhibition in Baku as part of the Golden Man world tour run by the Kazakh museum. The exhibition, which will last until July 1, features the Golden Man statue of a noble Saka (ancient tribe inhabiting the territory of today's Kazakhstan) warrior. The statue, with more than 4,000 gold items, and dating to the fourth-third centuries BC, was discovered in 1969 by eminent Kazakh archaeologist Kemal Akishev in the Issyk burial mound approximately 54 kilometres from Almaty. The exhibition also includes a collection of women's silver jewellery of the 19th-20th centuries. Kazakh Ambassador in Baku Beibit Issabayev noted visitors have a chance to enjoy a "unique historic legacy of the great steppes of Eurasia." The Golden Man world tour will continue to China, Poland and Korea and is set to visit more than 12 countries worldwide until 2021.

For the first time, Brazil imported uranium from Kazakhstan, the world's top uranium producer possessing 12 percent of the world's resources. Kazatomprom, the country's major uranium producer, announced expansion of its export destinations. The Kazakh company won the tender to supply natural uranium concentrates to Brazilian company Industrias Nucleares do Brasil (INB), regulating production of uranium and reactor fuel in the country with its activities licensed and controlled by the National Nuclear Energy Commission (CNEN) and Brazil Environment and Renewable Natural Resources Institute (IBAMA) as well as the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). The agreement is important for the "development of Kazakhstan-Brazil cooperation in peaceful use of nuclear energy and search of new markets for the company," noted a Kazatomprom press statement.

A Kazakh delegation led by the country's Healthcare Minister Yelzhan Birtanov participated in the 71st World Health Assembly May 21-26 in the United Nations Office in Geneva, joining more than 2,000 representatives of the World Health Organisation (WHO) member states and international agencies. This year's agenda focused on acute issues in the global health system, including the WHO's legally-binding International Health Regulations, non-communicable diseases such as cholera and tuberculosis, digital health and assistive technology. The delegates also endorsed the 13th General Programme of Work, the organisation's five-year strategic plan designed to facilitate achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In his remarks, Birtanov noted the WHO Global Conference on Primary Health Care scheduled for October 25-26 in Astana, coinciding with the 40th anniversary of the Alma-Ata Declaration, is designed to bring attention to strengthening primary health care to ensure universal access to healthcare and achieving the SDGs.

Kazakh Ambassador to Japan Yelran Baudarbek-Kozhatayev met in Tokyo with Japanese astronaut and Japanese Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA) astronaut group head Kimiya Yui. Yui visited Kazakhstan as part of the Japanese delegation led by JAXA chair Hiroshi Yamakawa to participate in KADEX 2018, the fifth international biennial exhibition of weapons systems and military equipment held May 23-26 in Astana. During the meeting, Yui recalled his expedition to the International Space Station aboard Soyuz TMA-17M in 2015 with eight other astronauts, including Aidyn Aimbetov of the Kazakh Space Agency. Kazakhstan is a big and beautiful country, he said, which is very visible from outer space.

Croatia is set to open its embassy in Astana this autumn, as confirmed May 18 by Croatian Ambassador to Russia Tonci Stanicic.

Eurasian Media Forum...

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"Against the changes taking place in the world, the escalation of geopolitical tensions and new technological capabilities, the media can become both a trigger for the escalation of conflicts and a factor for global containment and prevention of international tensions. Hence the high responsibility of journalism," Nazarbayev said in a message delivered at the forum by Minister for Information and Communications Dauren Abayev. The field "should remain the embodiment of service to society, based on high ethical and moral qualities."

"Only correct and reliable information and verification of fake news can attract an audience, strengthening the authority of the media as a source of objective information," the Kazakh President added in his message.

The list of forum participants included well-known politicians and representatives of international organisations, research centres and mass media. The event focused on master classes for journalists and students, while local and foreign media experts discussed current



Photo credit: EAMF-website
EAMF Organising Committee Chair Dariga Nazarbayeva.

topics in their industry.

"The responsibilities of journalists are even greater than they've always been. They are greater because there is more opportunity for getting news wrong either deliberately or by accident and then it's disseminated around the world very fast – instantaneously – before it can be checked and possibly changed. That's why there's a huge responsibility on journalists of all ages but, particularly, the young ones," said Reuters Society Chair Steven Somerville.

Kazakh Foreign Minister Kairat Abdrakhmanov said global citizens are witnessing turbulence and instability in the world order, including rising fear and rivalry as well

as proxy wars and a general confidence crisis in international relations. "But it is not as gloomy as I have described," he assured. "It is not as bad as the dark times of the Cold War, when Kazakhstan was the border between the Soviet Union and China. Now it is a border of friendship, trade and investment."

He said that the world had also gotten rid of much poverty since then, mostly because of the successes of Brazil and China, and highlighted that Kazakhstan had done its best to contribute to world peace



Astana Economic Forum focuses on global challenges

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This is a very difficult time for the world," said Nazarbayev, addressing the forum's opening plenary session.

Speaking about digitisation, the Kazakh leader noted a new economic model entails the digitisation not only of business, but people's lives.

"Self-taught intellectual systems managing and improving production became common. The artificial intellect will spur a \$16 billion growth of world economy by 2030," noted Nazarbayev, highlighting the country's Digital Kazakhstan programme leading its efforts in this area.

Digitisation, however, can also facilitate cyber crime, he said, which last year became the "most serious threat to businesses."

New mechanisms, including crypto currencies and blockchain technologies, will bring fundamental changes to financial markets.

The transition to clean energy is another global trend, according to Nazarbayev, with energy generated by renewable energy sources growing 13 times in 30 years.

"Despite continuing demand for natural resources, their presence ceased to be an advantage. All big players in traditional energy markets turned to investments in green energy. Kazakhstan is not standing still. The share of alternative energy in our energy balance will reach 30

percent by 2030," said Nazarbayev.

Increasing global population and longer life expectancy achieved with science and technology progress bring other challenges, including increasing demand for food. The current global population is estimated at 7.6 billion people and forecast to grow to 10 billion by 2050, according to the UN.

Another global trend encompasses the transformation of the labour market, where experts expect robots to replace 80 percent of labour.

"Highly qualified workers became more important for companies than cheap labour. This is a challenge for national economies and social systems," he said.

Education is a key to this end and Kazakhstan's Bolashak programme launched in 1993 and meant to educate young talents abroad as well

as the establishment of universities such as Nazarbayev University, Kazakh British Technical University, international IT University, foster the nation's efforts producing high-quality labour.

With these global trends becoming increasingly evident, additional vehicles to address global challenges beyond current international platforms, such as G20 and G7, have become necessary.

"We therefore put forward G-Global that will take into account interests of all countries, including sustainable development, fighting poverty, famine, reducing economic inequality, ensuring fair access to social goods," he noted.

Former UN Secretary General and current chair of the Boao Forum for Asia (BFA) Ban Ki-moon stressed the need to address sustain-

able development and expressed concern over the recent withdrawal of the U.S. from the Paris climate agreement.

Though the climate convention is not fully ready and needs to be strengthened, according to the Korean diplomat, achieving agreement among 197 members of the organisation allowed "at least forming minimal boundaries to fight rising temperatures."

"I sincerely hope that the U.S. will as soon as possible join this global agreement again and at the same time I am thrilled by the great support of other people, civil society. They are doing great job. We cooperate closely with governments, civil society and NGOs. And only by this means could we ensure the change in the situation," he said.

In an effort to preserve peace for future generations, more countries worldwide seek to switch to a green economy, he noted, and the cost of energy solutions is becoming competitive to traditional, yet non-ecological energy sources.

"Kazakhstan is one of the leading countries in this area," said Ban Ki-moon. "I would like to note Kazakhstan's achievements that 50 percent of all energy will be generated by alternative sources by 2050."

He expressed confidence the International Green Technologies Centre presented by Kazakh Prime Minister Bakyrtan Sagintayev later the same day will be "good instru-

Founder of the Eurasian Media Forum and chair of the forum's organising committee Dariga Nazarbayeva noted the ways in which technological change had affected younger generations, especially through their access to new methods of communication, including social media, smartphones and free internet access, as well as their impact on the media.

"We, the journalists, are becoming hostages of circumstance, and more often mass media are turning from a source of necessary, truthful, neutral information into propaganda tools with a full set of sometimes dishonest instruments," she said.

"On the other side, there are other trends, limited exchange, increasing protectionism, questioning of international agreements and multilateralism. All these processes can negatively affect economic process and now the situation is sad in terms of conflicts in the Middle East and Africa that spur migration, terrorism, which urges us to take security measures," said Hollande.

The financial crisis in 2008 and its consequences should be kept in mind, he added.

"Perhaps, the situation was not solved properly, including the fall of prices for natural resources like oil. Economic crisis affected all regions around the world leading to the creation of more rigid rules in trade and finance and consequences are sad," he noted, highlighting objectives, including a focus on stability, security and a strategy for the future.

Concluding his remarks, Hollande supported the idea of G-Global at the level of the UN, which "needs to create own mechanisms and instruments allowing to achieve these objectives."



Apple co-founder Steve Wozniak delivers remarks at the forum in Astana on May 17.

Ninth round of Astana Process Syrian peace talks reaffirm previous agreements

By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – The ninth Astana Process talks on Syria ended May 15 in the Kazakh capital with three guarantor states – Iran, Turkey and Russia – reaffirming their commitment to maintaining a ceasefire regime and four de-escalation zones established in the war-torn country based on the agreement the three states signed in May 2017.

A joint resolution issued by the three states said the next meeting will be in Sochi in July. The statement stressed the effectiveness of de-escalation zones in "maintaining the ceasefire regime, reducing the level of violence and stabilising the overall situation in Syria."

In their resolution, Iran, Russia and Turkey emphasised the need to create conditions for the Syrian people to "restore normal and peaceful life and to this end ensure rapid, safe and unhindered humanitarian access and safe and voluntary return of refugees and

internally displaced persons to their original places of residence as well as free movement of local population."

The ongoing conflict that entered its eighth year in March has killed an estimated 465,000 Syrians with more than one million injured and more than 12 million Syrians, half of its initial population, displaced.

Though the latest round showed little progress in seeking a political solution to the conflict, the Syrian government delegation headed by Syrian Ambassador to the United Nations Bashar al-Jaafari expressed satisfaction with the two-day, closed-door negotiations and said they would "continue the fight against terrorism and colonial regimes that wanted to divide Syria."

"We would like to highlight that we confirm commitment to the integrity and sovereignty of the Syrian Arab republic," he told a press briefing wrapping up the outcomes of the talks.

He noted the Syrian army's achievements in liberating the eastern Ghouta

and Damascus that create a "safe place for the southern part of Syria and also southern part of Aleppo."

"It is the result of the work of our armed forces done in cooperation with our friends and brothers. The Syrian Arab Republic will continue its fight to liberate the whole country and against those countries aggressors against the sovereignty of Syria," said the Syrian diplomat.

Head of the Syrian opposition group Ahmed Toma raised the issue of detainees that remains of paramount importance to the armed groups.

"There is another positive step in terms of detainees and abductees. We would like to ensure the ongoing mechanism which would regulate the issue of detainees on the basis of previous round held in September. We agreed on the creation of mechanism responsible for regulating the process of detainees. We want to develop this issue more clearly," said Toma at a briefing.

Constitutional reforms, he not-

ed, should be held in parallel with other processes and favourable conditions should be created for the constitutional committee.

The issue was also present on the agenda of the April tripartite meeting of presidents Vladimir Putin, Recep Erdogan and Hassan Rouhani in Ankara, with the three guarantor states reiterating the need for constitutional reforms and a new constitution.

"The regime does not want to promote this issue and does not want to make big step towards that goal," added Toma.

Syrian opposition representative Yasser Abdul Raheem criticised Russia's actions in Syria and said the delegation would not be present in Sochi.

"We will not go to Sochi, because we should respect our people. The ongoing killing of Syrian people by the Russian forces should be put to an end," he said.

"Russia must reconsider its position and what they want," he added.

Head of the Russian delegation Alexander Lavrentiev said he hopes the opposition groups will be present at the Sochi meeting that will focus on humanitarian and political aspects.

"The Astana Process and previous meetings are helpful in facilitating the Syrian dialogue in Sochi. It is time to open a new chapter of the Astana Process making focus on humanitarian and political aspects," he said.

"We assess the outcomes (on the ninth round) as positive which allows us to move the Astana Process forward and all the talks about the end of the Astana Process are overestimated," he asserted.

The agreement on de-escalation zones adopted in May 2017 was "historical," according to him, though hostilities did not cease there, including the recent events in the Eastern Ghouta.

The Sochi meeting will have the Astana Process format, he noted. "The Astana Process is alive and it will be continued," he added.

ECONOMY

WEDNESDAY, MAY 30, 2018

GDP grew 3.8 percent in January-April 2018

By Dana Omirgazy

ASTANA – Kazakh economic activity continues to maintain positive dynamics, though with some slowdown. GDP growth from January-April fell slightly to 3.8 percent, compared to the growth of 4 percent year on year last year, noted Minister of National Economy Timur Suleimenov during the May 15 government meeting.

"In the meantime, the labour

market remains stable. Since the beginning of this year, 134,800 people have been employed. The real wage rate grew 1.2 percent. In January-April, the average monthly salary was 152,300 tenge (US\$462.20)," he said.

National Bank gold and foreign currency reserves grew 3 percent to \$30.6 billion against the corresponding period last year, according first deputy chair Oleg Smolyakov. At the same time, the bank's assets decreased 5.6 percent to \$59.3 billion.

The foreign trade turnover for January-March reached \$21 billion, with \$13.8 billion in exports and \$7.2 billion in imports.

Minister of Finance Bakhyt Sultanov noted the national budget received 1.78 trillion tenge (US\$5.4 billion), 16 billion tenge (US\$48.5 million) more than scheduled. The 110.7-percent growth rate was achieved mainly through tax contributions. The excess profit tax provided 8.5 billion tenge (US\$25.8 million), as the export

customs duty on crude oil generated 32.1 billion tenge (US\$97.4 million).

Reporting on the January-April preliminary results of the energy sector's main economic indicators, Energy Minister Kanat Bozumbaev noted the volume of oil and condensate production stood at 105.9 percent compared to the same period last year.

"Approximately 24.1 million tonnes of oil were exported over four months. The volume of oil

refining was 5.1 million tonnes," he said.

The demand for diesel fuel was fully covered in accordance with the Agriculture Ministry request. The recommended price of diesel fuel in March to complete spring field work was 130 tenge (US\$0.40) per litre.

Following the meeting, Prime Minister Bakytzhan Sagintayev instructed the relevant ministers to take adequate measures to ensure further economic growth.

ECONOMY NEWS IN BRIEF

Trade turnover of agricultural products and processed goods between Kazakhstan and China totalled \$345 million in 2017, reported kazakh-tv.kz, a 32-percent increase compared to 2016. Kazakh exports to China include frozen fish, sunflower seeds and oilseeds, rapeseed oil, cottonseed oil, soybean oil, vegetable oil and honey. In the next few years, Kazakh wheat and flour will also be shipped to the Chinese market. "Last year, we shipped 40,000 tonnes of vegetable oil and over 30,000 tonnes of grain and flour to Xi'an. We sell them with the Made in Kazakhstan label. Local consumers are pleased with the quality of the products," said Chinese company staff member Jia Junqi.

Foreign investments in the Kazakh manufacturing industry have increased, reported 24.kz, reaching 25 percent of foreign investment last year. In comparison with 2009, the figure has tripled, according to the Ministry for Investments and Development committee for investment. The agency presented a new strategy for attracting foreign capital. "Last year, we established Kazakh Invest, which became a single operator to attract foreign investors. Now, they have approximately 200 projects in their plans, including ones with transnational companies. This year, Kazakh Invest is supposed to implement major projects involving transnational companies. These projects will really make a significant contribution to the development of the country's economy," said committee chairperson Yerlan Khairov.

Kazakhstan and Turkey are strengthening economic cooperation, reported kazakh-tv.kz. As part of a so-called investment week, a Kazakh delegation met in Istanbul and Ankara with the 35 largest Turkish companies. The parties discussed cooperation prospects in mining, metallurgy, construction, energy, telecommunication, agriculture and textile and pharmaceutical industries. Factors such as the favourable investment environment and conditions for doing business in Kazakhstan have sparked interest among Turkish entrepreneurs as they plan to implement several projects in Kazakhstan, including constructing a solar electric station with a 50-megawatt capacity as well as a joint enterprise on geological exploration.

The volume of loans to individuals increased 13.3 percent through March, reaching 4.6 trillion tenge (US\$14 billion), according to ranking.kz. The volume of consumer loans to individuals increased 18 percent over the past year to three trillion tenge (US\$9.2 billion), which is 65 percent of retail loans. In March, the volume of consumer loans grew 16.9 percent to 331,000 tenge (US\$1,014) per economically active resident, or 2.2 average monthly wages. The number of economically active individuals grew only 0.9 percent during the year to nearly nine million people, of which 5.2 million reside in cities and 3.8 million in villages.

Kazakhstan's economy will accelerate based on diversification, modernisation and integration, said International Monetary Fund (IMF) Deputy Managing Director Tao Zhang in an interview with kazakh-tv.kz. Today, the country is already following this path. He noted Kazakhstan and other Central Asian nations should become part of the global logistics chain to achieve sustainable economic development. The countries need to increase their transit capacity and export volumes in world markets. Global and regional integration programmes help Central Asian countries significantly increase trade turnover and attract investments. "In the past, Kazakhstan pretty much relied on the commodity economies. Now it is time to move forward with the reforms and promote private sector development, which will be the support of stronger growth in other sectors such as services, agriculture, etc. It is time to move and we have to move quickly," he said.

Kazakh PM presents International Centre of Green Technologies

Continued from Page A1

Also, modern gold-mining devices are being commissioned at coal-fired power plants.

The World Bank, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the government of Kazakhstan are cooperating to increase the use of renewable energy sources in the country. The EBRD and Baikonur Solar agreed to cooperate with the support of Kyzylorda region's 50 MW Baikonur Solar Power Station construction. The Ministry of Energy, the Astana city administration, Shell Kazakhstan and Nazarbayev Intellectual Schools have signed a memorandum to develop green economy.

According to officials, cooperation with the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) is a strategic priority for Kazakhstan, and adherence to international treaties and legal in-



Prime Minister
Bakytzhan Sagintayev

struments imposes certain obligations. To this end, environmental legislation on the OECD principles is being improved. This will enable Kazakhstan to create an effective system of environmental impact assessment. Mechanisms will be introduced to encourage users to reduce emissions with the support of new technologies and will update the principles based on the use of standardisation emissions.

Kazakhstan's Ministry of Energy

reports that on May 23, the first auctions on the selection of best renewable energy construction projects will take place. The winners of these auctions will get a 15-year guaranteed off-take contract for the purchase of electricity with a single buyer, renewable energy finance centre. During the two auction sessions scheduled in spring and autumn, one-gigawatt renewable energy projects will be demonstrated.

"Today, the world is rapidly changing under the impact of the technological revolution, and this global transition requires a new type of action from all governments and countries – namely, outstripping international cooperation on the most complex and sensitive issues of world development. Of course, one such complex challenge is to ensure economic growth, social stability and ecological balance in the long run. This is one of the cornerstone issues in global security," Sagintayev noted.

FIC to discuss accelerated modernisation

Continued from Page A1

Kazakhstan is represented by the President, the Prime Minister and his deputies, Ministers of National Economy, Finance, Investments and Development and Foreign Affairs and chairpersons of the National Bank and Baiterek National Holding.

"Each year, the council's plenary sessions are dedicated to a specific theme which reflects relevant global challenges. Participants share their opinions, discuss issues and propose recommendations, which later tend to become tasks set for the government to execute," noted Khairov.

In 2017, investors discussed future energy, which coincided with the focus of EXPO 2017, whereas the 2016 plenary session was devoted to developing the Astana International Financial Centre (AIFC). Previous sessions centred on agribusiness development, industrialisation, qualified labour force and economic diversification.

"This year, the topic will be accelerated modernisation. We will discuss what modernisation is and which tasks need to be executed

"This year, the topic will be accelerated modernisation. We will discuss what modernisation is and which tasks need to be executed for Kazakhstan to modernise and keep the same pace as world leading countries."

for Kazakhstan to modernise and keep the same pace as world leading countries," said Khairov.

"We expect experts and major business leaders to share their vision of modernisation and propose recommendations regarding Kazakhstan. Modernisation also involves digitisation in all spheres, be it mining, education, healthcare or government service. Most probably, the issue of a competent labour force will also be raised, since modernisation not only requires people being able to click the buttons, but also specialists capable of creating such technologies," he added.

Preparation for the event is done throughout the year. Representatives of foreign companies and international organisations, as well as government institutions, meet regularly to discuss issues related to investment climate and policies.

"There are four working groups, each chaired by an appropriate Kazakh minister, on investment policy, social protection and labour force, as well as energy and ecology. The fourth group changes its scope of work each year, focusing on the specific topic of the plenary session. For example, this year there is a group working on the modernisation topic led by Minister of National Economy Timur Suleimenov," noted Khairov.

EAEU, China sign trade, economic co-op agreement

By Aigerim Seiseimbayeva

ASTANA – Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) member states and China signed May 17 a trade and economic cooperation agreement, the first major arrangement between them.

"The general provisions of the agreement are consistent with the World Trade Organisation principles," said Eurasian Economic Commission (EEC) Board Chair Tigran Sargsyan, one of the signatories of the agreement. Sargsyan added that the document's main feature is transparency.

The document was signed on the sidelines of the Astana Economic Forum – the Global Challenges Summit and creates a ministerial level joint

committee and information centres for businesses. It also facilitates cooperation between customs authorities and requires customs officials to provide explanations for delays of goods at the border.

The agreement also expands the use of electronic documents and the mutual recognition of electronic authentication methods as well as introduces measures to combat counterfeit products.

The parties outlined areas of cooperation such as agriculture, energy, transportation, industrial cooperation, technology and innovation, information and communications, finance and environmental issues.

"For instance, in the transportation sphere, we have already offered our Chinese colleagues to consider about 40 projects," Sargsyan added.

He also said trade between the EAEU and China has reached \$100 billion, with exports from the EAEU increasing 40 percent compared to the previous year.

Negotiations on the agreement were held based on the decision of the Supreme Eurasian Economic Council of May 8, 2015. Representatives of the Eurasian Economic Commission, national governments of the EAEU member states, experts and official representatives of Chinese departments took part in the negotiations.

In addition to Sargsyan, the agreement was signed by Kazakh First Deputy Prime Minister Askar Mamin, Chinese Vice-Minister of Commerce Fu Ziyang and EAEU representatives, Kazinform reports.

EAEU, Iran sign interim agreement on free trade zone

By Raushan Shamsharkhan

ASTANA – The Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) and Iran signed an interim agreement on a free trade zone May 17 during the Astana Economic Forum. Two years of negotiations resulted in a three-year arrangement to reduce import customs duties on approved goods.

"Signing the agreement between EAEU and Iran will create new ways for development and the first step to ensuring further integration of the country," said Armenian Deputy Prime Minister Tigran Avinyan.

The agreement is based on World Trade Organisation (WTO) and international law rules that outline and facilitate trade procedures. It will primarily regulate applying sanitary and phyto-sanitary measures and technical barriers to trade, customs procedures and regulations for determining a product's country of origin. As a result of the negotiations,

Iran will provide tariff concessions on 246 goods and the EAEU on 175 products.

Kazakhstan and Iran have favourable mutual trade. Statistics show trade between the two states increased \$170 million in the first three months of this year, a 70-percent hike compared to the same period in 2017.

Eurasian Economic Commission Board Chairperson Tigran Sargsyan noted on average custom duties on industrial goods for Iran are expected to decrease 7 percent, while a 3.3-percent decrease is anticipated for EAEU countries. For agricultural commodities, the average level of import duty rates for Iran will drop 19 percent; for EAEU states, 5 percent.

Kazakhstan exports beef, lamb, butter, chickpeas, lentils, peas, barley, corn, vegetable oils, pasta, confectionery, steel rolled products, rails, batteries, fittings, pipes and other goods to the Iranian market,

and Iran will reduce import customs duties on the main items. First Deputy Prime Minister Askar Mamin, who represented Kazakhstan at the signing, noted Iran is a promising market for increasing Kazakh exports.

Customs duties will be reduced on Iranian goods including pistachios, dates, figs, raisins, shrimp, melons, oranges, lemons, limes, confectionery, some types of juices, paints and varnishes, dishes, detergents, carpets and plastic products. The EAEU provides only seasonal concessions on Iran's leading export interest products, including apples, tomatoes and cucumbers, due to the absence of production from November-March.

Single custom tariff rates are low or close to zero within the EAEU. Iran's exported goods, in addition to those of other developing countries, will receive preferential treatment, translating to a 25-percent import tax reduction.

BUSINESS

WEDNESDAY, MAY 30, 2018

BUSINESS NEWS IN BRIEF

Kazakhstan's first liquid fertiliser plant, worth 50 million tenge (US\$153,150), was launched in the North Kazakhstan region, reports inform.kz. The plant, capable of producing 140 tonnes of liquid fertiliser per day, uses granular carbamide and ammonium nitrate as input materials. The materials are quickly absorbed by crops and the liquid form allows the fertiliser to be dispersed evenly. Fertiliser use can help increase the yield of any crops by three to five centners per hectare, said North Kazakhstan First Deputy Akim (Governor) Aidarbek Saparov. Similar facilities will be launched in several districts in the region next year.

Italy's Cremonini Group has begun construction of its Kazakh Beef meat plant, according to kapital.kz. The plant will have a daily production capacity of 700 heads of cattle and 25,000 tonnes of beef per year and will include a full cycle of butchering, meat processing and manufacturing of prepared meat products as well as processing horns, hooves and hides. The Almaty regional administration has provided 60 hectares for the construction of the plant worth more than 15 billion tenge (US\$46 million). The location was chosen based on Almaty's favourable climate conditions as well as the concentration of meat cattle. About 70 percent of the plant's production will be exported to China and Russia.

CITIC Kazyna Investment Fund, an investment fund owned by Kazakhstan's Kazyna Capital Management and China's CITIC Capital with market capitalisation of \$200 million, sold its share in the Arctic Green Energy (AGE) project for \$30 million. This deal allowed the fund to almost double its initial investment and keep an 11 percent share of the company. Given that AGE is planning an initial public offering, there are prospects for the fund's share to increase in value. AGE is a global project established to implement Iceland's experience of using geothermal and other renewable energy in foreign countries, including in Asia. Kazyna Capital Management pays special attention to initiatives related to renewable energy sources and plans to participate in a variety of projects based on green technologies, said the company chairman, Askar Dostiyarov.

A plant producing mineral water in the Aktope region has restarted after sitting idle since the 1990s. Mineral Water Kazakhstan invested more than 780 million tenge (US\$2.4 million) to launch the plant again. The water, taken from underground reserves in the Shalkar district, was popular during Soviet times and was sold in pharmacies. Now, its mineral water will be sold again, under the Shalqar brand. Modern Italian equipment will allow the production of 45,000 litres of mineral water and 75,000 litres of still water in plastic and glass bottles per day, as well as help maintain the water's structure and special qualities. The re-launch has also provided jobs for 40 people.

The management of China's Qifeng New Material company met with the chair of Kazakh Invest in Astana to discuss a project to produce pulp and paper from reeds, reports inform.kz. The Qifeng plans to spend \$320 million to produce more than 200,000 tonnes of products and employ 2,000 workers. The production process will use eco-friendly technology without chlorine to bleach the paper. The Chinese company was briefed on deals for foreign investors during their visit and agreed to tour several regions with Kazakh Invest to find a venue for the project. Qifeng New Material is the world's leading manufacturer of decorative paper and wallpaper, exporting products to more than 30 countries.

New Air Astana facility to cut maintenance costs

By Amir Khaidar

ASTANA – A new \$19 million hangar will allow Air Astana to perform routine line maintenance and subsequent heavy checks at its hub in the capital.

"This year the capital of Kazakhstan, in honour of which the company was named Air Astana, marks its 20th anniversary. The flag carrier marks its 16th year of operations. In honour of these two events we are glad to present a new aviation and technical centre in Astana, which will contribute to the development of the capital as the largest aviation and transit hub in the region. The centre will provide technical maintenance to the fleet of our company and to airlines flying to Kazakhstan," Air Astana President and CEO Peter Foster said recently.

The hangar was designed and built in Canada and was financed by the European Bank for Re-



construction and Development (EBRD). The facility will include state-of-the-art energy efficient technology allowing maintenance

to be performed when outside temperatures drop below freezing. The hangar is 5,556 square metres and can accommodate wide-body

planes, such as the Boeing 787, as well as single aisle aircraft, such as the latest Airbus A320neo.

In addition to hangar, the centre

houses the airlines' offices, warehouses for spare parts and repair and the garage building. An auxiliary building provides space for the existing Air Astana engineering centre to train engineering and maintenance staff to international standards.

"This is something new for Air Astana and for Astana itself. We built this facility to enable us to expand our capability for aircraft maintenance, to enable us in the future to do heavy maintenance checks on our own airplanes and if we have capability to do foreign operators' airplanes as well, all under the scope of our EASA-145 approval," said John Wainwright, senior vice-president for maintenance and operations at the Astana hub.

Currently, Kazakh airlines perform their heavy checks abroad. The opening of new aviation technical centre in Astana will allow them to perform heavy checks domestically, significantly cutting maintenance costs.

Second Competitiveness Forum focuses on Kazakh-US cooperation

By Aigerim Seisembayeva

ASTANA – Kazakh and U.S. government officials and business executives discussed May 16 the implementation of commercial agreements reached during President Nursultan Nazarbayev's January 2018 official visit to the United States and increasing trade and investment cooperation during the Second Kazakhstan Competitiveness Forum.

Kazakh First Deputy Prime Minister Askar Mamin briefed the gathering on the implementation of agreements reached during President Nazarbayev's U.S. visit and Kazakh government measures to improve the country's business environment. He also spoke about Kazakhstan's modernisation, diversification and digitisation programmes.

"This year has been very productive for both Kazakhstan and the United States. The successful visit of President Nazarbayev to the U.S. earlier this year marked a new stage in the relationship between our countries. It resulted in trade and investment agreements worth \$7 billion... This success would not be possible without continuous efforts by the Government of Kazakhstan to improve our business climate," he said.

He said Kazakhstan accounts for 80 percent of all foreign direct investment in the region and is Cen-

tral Asia's most market-oriented economy.

The deputy prime minister noted the success of last year's EXPO 2017 exhibition and spoke about the new Astana International Financial Centre (AIFC), which will officially launch in July on the premises of the expo.

"It's one of the most advanced tools of protecting investors we have at our disposal. It embodies best practices of financial centres in New York, Singapore, London and Dubai," he said, noting it operates on the principles of English common law, has its own independent financial court, arbitration mechanism and an independent regulator. He invited American counterparts to participate in the project.

Mamin also focused on efforts to facilitate public-private partnerships (PPPs), improve transport infrastructure and promote openness, transparency and business focus.

President and Chief Executive Officer of the Business Council for International Understanding Peter Tichansky said the forum is meant to facilitate dialogue.

"Our goal today is to try to strengthen existing relationships with investors, as well as to facilitate new dialogue resulting in tangible projects and additional contribution to the wonderful story of Kazakhstan's diversification and growth," he said.

Kazakh Ambassador to the U.S. Erzhan Kazykhanov said he hopes

the event will help develop business links to expand Kazakhstan's capacity across sectors.

"This forum truly became an integral part of successful and enduring trade and investment cooperation story between Kazakhstan and the United States," he said.

U.S. Ambassador to Kazakhstan George Krol said since President Nazarbayev's visit to Washington, DC, he "witnessed a steady stream of American companies interested in doing business and in investing in Kazakhstan."

"It's a very impressive and diverse group of American companies who are present today. And it's a strong indication of the opportunities that American companies see in Kazakhstan in such key sectors as energy, finance, health, infra-

structure, information technology and agriculture," said Krol.

The forum included bilateral discussions between companies and governmental agencies. Valmont Industries, AGCO-GSI, Global Beef and Animart met with the representatives of Kazakhstan's Ministry of Agriculture and agrarian businesses. American pharmaceutical leaders – Pfizer, Medtronic, Ecolab – showed interest in developing business and training Kazakh specialists. High-tech companies MasterCard, Autodesk and Microsoft expressed readiness to participate in digitisation projects.

Comcast NBC Universal visited Kazakhstan for the first time to discuss film industry and entertainment cooperation.

The event was also attended by

AIFC Governor Kairat Kelimbetov, Kazakhstan's Minister of Culture and Sports Arystanbek Mukhammediy, Minister of Healthcare Yelzhan Birtanov, the leadership of ministries of agriculture, justice, information and communications, representatives of more than 50 Kazakh and American companies, including the U.S. Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC), as well as the World Bank and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD).

The next Kazakhstan Competitiveness Forum will be in 2019 in Astana.

The forum participants are also to attend the 11th Astana Economic Forum, which this year has transformed into the Global Challenges Summit.

EBRD to finance reconstruction of water supply system

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) is contributing \$13.5 million for water supply improvements in Shymkent. The loan will help the city upgrade its water supply network, which is used by more than 800,000 residents.

The privately owned Kazakh Vodnye Resursy Marketing is responsible for the water supply of more than 800,000 inhabitants of Shymkent and will use the loan to upgrade wastewater networks and facilities. The EBRD is providing a 13-year loan of up to \$13.5 million to the utility in the bank's eighth project under its Water and Wastewater Modernisation Framework for Kazakhstan.

The bank will be supporting the rehabilitation of 46.0 kilometres of

water supply network and 13.7 kilometres of wastewater sewers; the expansion of water intake facilities up to 5.5 million cubic metres; the construction of 5.5 kilometres of new wastewater networks and additional facilities, including sludge tanks; and the reduction of water loss by 450,000 cubic metres per year. The EBRD's programme also includes the increase of treated wastewater by 380,000 cubic metres per year and the procurement of specialised equipment and vehicles.

Shymkent is the country's fourth largest municipality and the centre of the South Kazakhstan region. The investment will improve the quality of the city's water service, which is especially important because of the area's rapid growth. Its population is expected to increase to 1.4 million people from the current 0.8 million by 2030.



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EDITORIAL & OPINION

WEDNESDAY, MAY 30, 2018

Day of Remembrance heals and strengthens

An appreciation of a nation's history by its citizens is critical to its strength and success. It builds and maintains the shared sense of identity and common purpose, which helps a country and its people respond to both challenges and opportunities.

It is a history which in Kazakhstan's case was, of course, deliberately ignored for many decades. Indeed, given how little attention was given to this unique story, what is remarkable was how such a strong sense of national pride survived.

In recent years, these failures have been put right. There has been a concerted effort since we became a modern independent country on telling the story of the Kazakh people and the roots of the nation. Whether through an improved curriculum in schools, a new effort to protect national monuments, or powerful TV dramas, there is now a much better understanding, for example, of the remarkable achievements of the Kazakh Khanates and their impact on the wider region.

But a nation is not, of course, just shaped by its past glories nor by events centuries-old. Kazakhstan's history – particularly over the last 100 years – has also contained a great deal of pain and tragedy. These terrible times during the Soviet era also had a profound impact on our country, which must not be forgotten. This is why the annual Day of Remembrance of Victims of Political Repression on May 31 is so important.

The numbers of those who suffered were immense. The gulag network extended over a large area of our huge country. It has been estimated that over one million people passed through the Karlag labour camp, outside Karaganda, in the thirty years it was open. It is now the site of a sombre and moving memorial and museum of this brutal period in our country's history.

Those who lost their freedom were overwhelmingly innocent of any crime. They included many hundreds of thousands of political prisoners who were the victims of nothing more than paranoia. In many cases, their families suffered the same fate. Entire ethnic groups, including well over half a million of Polish, German and Korean origin, also found them-

selves rounded up, up-rooted from their homes and sent to Kazakhstan. Prisoners were forced to work in terrible conditions in factories, mines and farms.

But it was by no means only those from outside Kazakhstan who suffered. Millions of Kazakhs also fell victim. Many of the country's brightest and best were arrested. These numbers were dwarfed by those who died through hunger as a result of what President Nursultan Nazarbayev called last year the "cruel experiment" of collectivisation of the country's agriculture.

Historians believe that the great famine between 1931 and 1933 alone may have led to the death of around one and half million people in Kazakhstan – approximately one in four of the entire local population. Hundreds of thousands more were forced to flee the country or face starvation. It was a brutal policy, which was, in some ways, as much about eliminating Kazakh identity as the economic development and industrialisation of the country.

It was, as we can see in modern Kazakhstan, an ambition which failed. In fact, while the suffering was immense, the legacy has helped make our country stronger. There is, for example, a resilience about the Kazakh people, which outside commentators have noted along with a genuine national pride. There is, too, a strong commitment to the rule of law, enshrined in the constitution, to prevent the terrible abuses, which cost millions their freedom and lives.

Many of the descendants of those deported here, who themselves were welcomed by the local people, have also played a significant role in our country's progress. They have been helped by a determination that everyone, no matter what their background, has the opportunity to contribute. The diversity of our population has proved a strength not a weakness.

Kazakhstan's eyes remain firmly focused on the future. But a full understanding of history, of how a nation and its culture have developed, provides the essential platform for future success. It is why the Day of Remembrance, no matter how painful the memories it marks, remains so important to our country.

India and Kazakhstan have excellent relations, says Indian ambassador

By Dana Omirgazy



Ambassador of India to Kazakhstan Prabhakar Kumar

ASTANA – Relations between Kazakhstan and India have a long history. At the beginning of the first millennium, the Sakas went from Central Asia to India and Buddhism from India was introduced in Kazakhstan. The Great Silk and Spice Routes united India and Kazakhstan in the Middle Ages. There was a constant exchange of goods, ideas and thoughts between the countries. The year 2017 marked the 25th anniversary of diplomatic relations between India and Kazakhstan. Since 1991, when Kazakhstan gained independence, both countries have strengthened their relations, Ambassador of India to Kazakhstan Prabhakar Kumar told The Astana Times.

"India and Kazakhstan have excellent relations. In 2009, India and Kazakhstan became strategic partners following President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev's visit to India. Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi visited Kazakhstan in 2015 and 2017. Politically, we have excellent relations and economic and commercial ties are improving every day," he said.

Both countries are partners in areas such as healthcare, education, space, IT technology and energy. In the course of his tenure, Kumar intends to strengthen the existing relationship, including through better economic partnership.

"We feel that there are a lot of opportunities, especially in the area of energy, where Kazakhstan is strong. We would like to increase our cooperation in this area and invest more in the oil and gas sector," he noted.

flights to Delhi from both Astana and Almaty. However, land connectivity is challenging. Kazakhstan is connected to Turkmenistan and from Turkmenistan to Bandar Abbas in Iran. This port and the port in Chabahar, Iran can be used to bring goods from India to Kazakhstan and from Kazakhstan to India. This is the area which I would like to work on," he added.

Direct flights have had a positive effect on tourism. Approximately 20,000 people came from India to Kazakhstan last year and approximately 15,000 Kazakhs visited India. The figure is increasing every year and the embassy has simplified the procedure for issuing visas.

"We have introduced an electronic visa. This means that a person applies for a visa online and in two days, it will come back. It is cheaper. It costs \$50 and it is valid for two months," he said.

Medical tourism is one of the fastest growing segments of Indian tourism, as the country annually attracts a number of individuals for medical treatment. India's Ayurveda therapy is known worldwide for its holistic healing methods to promote good health. Approximately 200 Kazakhs went to India for medical treatment last year.

Culture is another area of co-operation for both countries. The Indian Cultural Centre in the capital has been engaged in various activities for many years, offering yoga and musical instrument and Kathak Indian classical dance lessons. Every year, the centre celebrates the June 21 International Day of Yoga, which is attended by a large number of local yoga lovers.

India is also well positioned in renewable energy, especially in wind and solar, and Modi initiated establishing the International Solar Alliance (ISA) composed of more than 121 countries. The primary objective of the alliance is to work towards efficiently exploiting solar energy to reduce dependence on fossil fuels, which will also help countries meet the climate change goals.

"We would like to invite Kazakhstan to become member of that alliance. India also can help in promoting renewable energy here by bringing our expertise in solar and wind. Therefore, energy is a good field to work on," said Kumar.

Kazakhstan is India's largest trade partner in Central Asia, with last year's trade turnover between the countries reaching \$1 billion. India is interested in Kazakhstan's oil, uranium and ferroalloys; Kazakhstan imports mainly Indian medicines and tea. The sides can increase this figure by improving transport connection between the countries.

"Now, there is a good flight connection. Air Astana has direct

AIFC governor says global finance is shifting to Asia

By Amir Khaidar

ASTANA – Leading global economic experts and Astana International Financial Centre (AIFC) executives outlined important changes in the global financial system and the role of financial centres in the rapidly changing financial environment of the 21st century at a May 18 panel session of the Astana Economic Forum dedicated to the new geography of finance.

"Nowadays, we see two main trends in the global economy. According to the McKinsey report, economic gravity is shifting from well-established regions to Asia, and if you look at it on the map you can see the new gravity of economic development is shifting towards Central Asia in particular. In this regard, it is important that global financial instruments penetrate Central Asia," said Kairat Kelimbetov, governor of the AIFC.

The foundation of the AIFC is itself a step in this direction, he noted.

"On the other hand, I am confident that the existing system of financial centres does not change significantly. I think that leaders, for example, like the big four, work with each other and communicate with different countries. We have discussed many times whether there will be any changes after Brexit or whether there will be any movement toward new European cities. You know, I do not see any changes in this regard."

International experts also



Photo credit: itm.e.kz.

weighed in on the investment potential of the Central Asian region.

"Investors are looking at a number of factors when thinking about prospective investment opportunities. More countries are engaged in reforms in their economies and legislation to make favourable investment climates – and there are also some governments working in the opposite direction, which worsens the investment climate in their countries. It's interesting to see all of that in the single region of Central Asia," said Francis Maude, former British minister of state for trade and investment.

He added that investors are looking for profitable companies. They want to invest efficiently, and in

a country that is stable and safe, which means that it ensures the rule of law.

"Unfortunately, Central Asia is not covered by global or regional business hubs. Therefore, we are trying to create a business hub and financial centre here. In the previous 20 years, we were covered by London, Istanbul, Dubai or Moscow. But now it's time that we start competing and begin to embrace Central Asia from this part of the world. Astana has great potential for this," affirmed Kelimbetov.

To date, 13 companies have registered with the AIFC and 150 have made inquiries. The official presentation of Astana's new financial hub is scheduled for July 5.



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OPINIONS

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Scholars argue for long-term U.S. and European approaches to Central Asia

By Altair Nurbekov

ASTANA – The Central Asia-Caucasus Institute (CACI) at American Foreign Policy Council (AFPC) in Washington, DC, held a book launch May 1 for the most recent work by S. Frederick Starr and Svante E. Cornell, “The Long Game on the Silk Road.”

In the book, the authors, who serve as CACI chairman and director respectively, take stock of both American and European policies toward Central Asia and the Caucasus. Drawing on CACI’s twenty years of interaction with the region, the book acknowledges the many achievements, but argues that Western policies suffer from serious and unacknowledged conceptual and structural flaws. The authors propose concrete ways to address these issues and render U.S. and European policies more effective.

In an exclusive interview with The Astana Times, the two authors explain their reasoning in detail and argue for “a long-term and steady approach, not subject to constant maneuvering,” in formulating and pursuing Western policy towards the region that “is not against anyone, but for the region.”

What are the main challenges awaiting Central Asian states?

After a quarter century of successfully focusing on building their sovereignty, Central Asian states



are now seeking to define the forms of cooperation that will turn their countries into a true region.

Defining a model of cooperation that will accommodate the interests of all of the regional states, including Afghanistan, and also the outer powers, is a key challenge.

Defining a model of cooperation that will accommodate the interests

of all of the regional states, including Afghanistan, and also the outer powers, is a key challenge.

Persisting tasks include overcoming landlockedness, which has profound impact on the economic competitiveness of the region, and maintaining and refining the models of secular statehood in the face of challenges both from extremist ideologies and Western criticism.

A third task is to balance relations with great powers near and far while securing their own independence.

What do you see as the main flaws or shortcomings of previous European and American policies towards Central Asia?

There have been shortcomings of both a conceptual and structural nature.

At the outset, Europeans and

Americans saw Central Asia and the Caucasus in regional terms. Increasingly, however, they defaulted to the bilateral level, and do not think regionally. For bureaucratic reasons both America and Europe have failed to keep in mind the vital link across the Caspian connecting the Caucasus and Central Asia. Also, Western powers have too often taken sovereignty for granted, and failed to take seriously the existential security threats facing regional states. They have also taken for granted the secular nature of the region’s states, one of their most important assets.

As for structural elements, the main failure has been in the realm of coordination. Western powers – the U.S. in particular – have often advanced different interests in the

fields of security, trade, or democracy promotion, but failed to coordinate among their own government bureaucracies. As a result, they have not been in a position to conduct negotiations across the range of relations with the region’s states.

In the 1990s, there was some balance between the various areas of Western interests. But increasingly, in the past decade, the advocates of democracy promotion captured agenda-setting power at the expense of those focusing on security and trade. As a result, Western policy lost balance.

It has often focused excessively on an antagonist approach to governments in the region, working on or against them, very often through NGOs, and not with governments. We argue this approach has failed. Instead, we support the notion of working with governments to promote state efficiency and accountability – in other words, to build good governance as a prerequisite for long-term building of representative and democratic government. This will require persistence and patience.

Does the title of your book “The Long Game on the Silk Road” suggest there is an ongoing New Great Game?

Certainly not. We chose Long Game, in fact, as an antithesis to Great Game – Long Game being a term that implies a long-term and steady approach, not subject to constant maneuvering. We argue the West should take a long-term approach to the region, seeing its interests in the long term and taking a patient approach to its relations there and the goals it seeks to achieve. This policy is not against anyone, but for the region.

How much does Afghanistan feature in your book and what are your recommendations to U.S./EU about engaging with Central Asians regarding Afghanistan?

The book is mostly about the post-Soviet states of the region. However, we have long advocated that, in the present day, Afghanistan is returning to what it once was: part and parcel of Central Asia. As such, it should henceforth be included in all Western consultative mechanisms with Central Asia.

We note that the five former Soviet states of Central Asia all support the re-inclusion of Afghanistan as a core component of their region

With patience and constructive engagement, the West can help Central Asia become a model for the Muslim world as a whole.

and are taking important measures to achieve this. We believe strongly that the West should welcome and support this, not as a step against anyone, but as a natural and inevitable historical development.

If you were to give only one piece of advice to European and American policy makers regarding Central Asia, what would that be?

That change does not come overnight, and that with patience and constructive engagement, the West can help Central Asia become a model for the Muslim world as a whole.

Kazakhstan’s nuclear legacy and importance of CTBTO

By Marzhan Nurzhan

I am coming from Kazakhstan, the country which inherited around 1,500 nuclear weapons from the Soviet Union making it the 4th biggest nuclear arsenal in the world at the time. For almost half a century, from 1949 until 1989, the Soviet Union conducted 456 nuclear tests above and underground at the Semipalatinsk Nuclear Test Site, known also as Semey polygon, in the eastern part of Kazakhstan. The energy of the tests released in turn was roughly equal to the capacity of 2,500 Hiroshima atomic bombs.

The radioactive fallout from the nuclear explosions has resulted in widespread contamination of the Semey area causing catastrophic humanitarian and environmental consequences. Almost 2 million people have been already affected suffering from severe health problems, cancer, birth deformities and death which will continue for many generations to come.

Therefore, I believe that role of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO) is vital and instrumental in banning nuclear tests everywhere in this world forever, in

order to prevent further damage to human health and the environment.



Kazakhstan: From nuclear victim to disarmament champion

The horrific experience of being victim of the Soviet nuclear tests stimulated strong public opposition to nuclear weapons in Kazakhstan, supported by Kazakh leaders. A civil society movement “Nevada-Semipalatinsk” (Nevada-Semey) guided by Olzhas Suleimenov led to the closure of nuclear test site on August 29, 1991 – preventing any further nuclear tests in Kazakhstan.

Following independence in December 1991, the new government of Kazakhstan, led by the President, made the historic decision to relinquish nearly 1,500 nuclear weapons they had inherited when the Soviet Union dissolved, and join the Non-Proliferation Treaty as a non-nuclear-weapon state.

Since then, Kazakhstan has continued to play a key role for global nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. In addition to supporting and promoting the CTBT, Kazakhstan played a leading role in establishing the Central Asian Nuclear Weapon Free Zone. The CANWFZ treaty includes an obligation of all five member states to adhere to the CTBT.

Other key initiatives of Kazakhstan include proposing a Universal Declaration for a Nuclear-Weapons-Free World which was adopted by the UN General Assembly, launching the ATOM Project which highlights the humanitarian impact of nuclear tests through the voices of victims and survivors such as Karipbek Kuyukov, and organizing a special session in January 2018 of the UN Security Council focused on confidence building and nuclear disarmament.

International Day against Nuclear Tests

Given its experience as the most affected country in the world by nuclear test explosions, Kazakhstan successfully moved the United Nations General Assembly to establish the International Day against Nuclear Tests on August 29, which has a special significance due to the symbolic date that coincides with the first nuclear test conducted in Kazakhstan and also the date of the closure of the Semey polygon in 1991.

The experience of Kazakhstan and other countries that have suffered from nuclear tests can be used to encourage CTBT Annex 2 states of the humanitarian and security benefits of joining the CTBT. The International Day against Nuclear Tests on August 29 is a good opportunity to publicise this.

Kazakhstan commemorates the day annually, often through international conferences hosted in Astana and field trips to ground zero in Semey. In 2016, I had the opportunity to help organize the conference “Building a nuclear-weapon-free world” in Astana, co-hosted by Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and

Disarmament (PNND). Our visit to ground zero was particularly poignant for me and for other conference participants.

Second CYG Astana Conference. Trip to ground zero

This year CTBTO Youth Group (CYG) will hold its second international conference in Kazakhstan. This will provide a great opportunity for CTBTO youth to build a deeper understanding of the impact of nuclear tests and the imperative for nuclear disarmament.

The role of young people in peace and security is important, particularly participation and involvement in the area of nuclear issues. Youth and future generations are impacted by the legacy of nuclear tests and the threat from nuclear weapons policies, and so their voice must be included. This is rightly highlighted by the CTBTO Youth Group. Thus, I was honoured to participate in the First CYG Moscow conference in 2017, where I had an opportunity to contribute to the initiative of youth diplomacy pledge.

However, youth also need to learn from our elders who have

experience, knowledge and skills that can be transferred. There currently appears to be an intergenerational gap, a lack of communication between youth and seniors, which must be filled and bridged with a common ground, interest and interaction. Therefore, we as youth must use the platform provided by the upcoming conference in Astana on August 28-30.

This international meeting between the CTBTO Group of Eminent Persons (GEM) and CYG members will be a place to collaborate and learn from each other, especially drawing from the experience, expertise and knowledge of seniors with regards to nuclear-related issues. The conference will include a unique opportunity for participants to visit the former Semipalatinsk test site in order to witness first-hand the risks of nuclear testing and reflect upon it.

These efforts of Kazakhstan will have a positive impact on present generation to work on building a world free of nuclear weapons and contribute to the entry into force of the CTBT in the nearest future.

The author is a CYG member from Kazakhstan, a convener of Abolition 2000 Youth Network and a PNND Coordinator for CIS countries.

Anticorruption measures keep pace with international standards

By Zhandos Sarsenov

Over the past several years, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) has been holding conferences on ethics and corruption within the framework of the Global Anti-Corruption and Integrity Forum. This year, I had the opportunity to attend this event and get acquainted in detail with the global experience of countering corruption.

This year, the topic was how corruption undermined confidence in the government and helped advance what the OECD Secretary-General Jose Angel Gurría described in his opening remarks as the three destructive “isms” that haunt the whole of today’s world: populism, nationalism and protectionism.

The main focus of the forum



was globalisation, which represents a growing integration of the economy in terms of flows of goods, services, capital, people and ideas. Although this brought huge benefits in financial terms, unfortunately, it did not bring sufficient benefits to people. As part of this topic, the forum discussed issues of creating equal conditions for doing business, eliminating

economic inequalities, and creating more effective state policies, thus increasing the level of globalisation.

Discussions also focused on the need to manage globalisation and its role in combating corruption and unethical practices in areas such as trade, competition, infrastructure, development cooperation and revenue collection.

The forum was attended by international anti-corruption experts, government officials, including Iceland’s Prime Minister, Norwegian Prime Minister, Argentina’s Vice-President, Munich City Prosecutor, First Vice-President of the European Commission and OECD Secretary General Jose Angel Gurría.

It was interesting to learn about the international practices of combating corruption, comparing and

analysing the extent to which the policy pursued by our state in combating corruption meets international standards.

During the forum, speeches were given by leading international experts and public figures, who spoke about the destructive consequences of corruption. Some of them gave illustrative examples of various corruption schemes and described ways and mechanisms to combat them. There was an example of a corruption scandal around a world-famous company in Germany. It was particularly noted that analytical instruments played the main role in identifying this crime. Namely, tax auditors noticed unusual money transfers to the accounts of third parties, which turned out to be intended for payment to top officials and state figures. According to the new

anti-corruption policy, this work has been carried out in our country for several years already. It is notable that the same analytical instruments make it possible to identify and timely eliminate zones most prone to corruption offenses.

In addition, the issues of instilling a sense of non-acceptance of corruption to the younger generation were also discussed. The speakers came to a conclusion that this measure is urgent not only for developing countries, but for the whole world. They gave an example of anti-corruption education for children and adolescents, which, incidentally, is already being implemented by our agency. Creating “Adal Urpak” voluntary clubs in schools is a timely and effective tool for anti-corruption education of the younger generation. The “Sanaly Urpak” project office

was also created with the aim of forming an effective and transparent education system.

Based on the reports of the speakers, we can say that the policy pursued by our state in combating corruption fully meets international standards. Moreover, the preventive tools used by OECD countries are known and actively used in our country.

The forum was quite interesting and informative. In the end, we can confidently say that in the area of combating corruption, our country is keeping pace with most of the developed countries and is implementing effective mechanisms to prevent corruption in all spheres.

The author is Head of the Department for Civil Service Affairs and Anticorruption of the Karaganda region.

EURASIA&WORLD

WEDNESDAY, MAY 30, 2018

Georgian FM visits Kazakhstan, meets top government officials

By Aigerim Seisembayeva

ASTANA – Georgian Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mikheil Janelidze discussed bilateral cooperation May 16 in Astana with top Kazakh government officials.

Janelidze met with Kazakh Mazhilis (lower house of Parliament) Speaker Nurlan Nigmatulin to discuss bilateral cooperation, parlam.kz reports. Nigmatulin said recent bilateral contacts demonstrate mutual interest in trade, economic, cultural and international cooperation.

The Mazhilis speaker also highlighted President Nursultan Nazarbayev's initiative to establish a single global network under the United Nations to counter international terrorism and extremism.

Janelidze praised Kazakhstan's regional and global role.

"Kazakhstan's dynamic development, the stability that you demonstrate thanks to the policy of your President, is an example for other countries. We commend the role your country plays in the sta-



Georgian Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mikheil Janelidze (L) and Kazakh Foreign Minister Kairat Abdrakhmanov in Astana on May 16.

bility of the region and the world. Your successful work in the UN Security Council is another example of your approach and the foreign policy direction we highly respect," he said.

Nigmatulin said inter-parliamentary cooperation is important to bilateral relations, adding the Kazakh Parliament members would like to exchange experience with their Georgian counterparts on introducing legislative reforms in the

traffic police system and in providing incentives for businesses.

Janelidze also met with Kazakh Prime Minister Bakytzhan Sagintayev, primeminister.kz reports. The sides discussed deepening trade and economic cooperation in energy, transportation, logistics, tourism, culture, health, education, expansion of mutual trade in new directions, exports of processed and raw materials in the chemical industry, machinery, con-

struction and agriculture, among other topics.

The Kazakh and Georgian officials also discussed bilateral interaction between governmental bodies, regions and businesses, as well as Georgian companies' participation in the Astana International Financial Centre (AIFC). According to the report from the Prime Minister's press service, Kazakh companies are ready to supply electric locomotives for Georgian Railways and Kazakh buses to renew Tbilisi's bus fleet. The Kazakh Export national company offers the Georgian side long-term trade financing, according to its export-insurance programme and joint implementation of projects.

Janelidze also discussed bilateral and multilateral cooperation with Kazakh Foreign Minister Kairat Abdrakhmanov. The sides praised Kazakh-Georgian cooperation in organisations, such as the United Nations and the Organisation for Cooperation and Security in Europe (OSCE).

Abdrakhmanov and Janelidze said their countries will make efforts to deepen relations.

"We have excellent relations at all levels, and we appreciate those relations. And today's meeting is another example of our intention to develop them further," Janelidze said.

Abdrakhmanov also said Kazakhstan attaches "great importance to improving the existing and creating new trade and transport routes and economic corridors that connect the countries of Central Asia, South Caucasus, Europe and the Persian Gulf, as well as maximising the use of the Trans-Caspian International Transport Route."

The two countries also reaffirmed their intention to cooperate on the implementation of China's Belt and Road Initiative.

Following the talks, the ministers signed a cooperation programme between the foreign ministries of Kazakhstan and Georgia for 2018-2019. The document plans a series of bilateral consultations on Kazakh-Georgian relations and international issues. The sides also agreed to improve the legal framework of bilateral relations. The programme also calls

for the creation of working groups to address specific issues of bilateral interaction.

As part of his visit, Janelidze will also participate in the 11th Astana Economic Forum on May 17-18 which this year has been transformed into the Global Challenges Summit.

In 2017, Kazakh-Georgian trade grew 56.4 percent compared to 2016 and amounted to \$64.3 million. Kazakh exports to Georgia in 2017 doubled and amounted to \$38.4 million. Imports from Georgia in the past year totaled \$25.9 million, which is 19 percent higher than in 2016. January-February 2018 trade reached \$8.7 million, which is 80.2 percent higher than in the same period last year.

Kazakhstan has invested more than \$406 million over the last 12 years in the Georgian economy. Direct investments from Georgia into Kazakhstan over that same period have totaled \$45.9 million.

Today, there are approximately 120 joint Kazakh-Georgian companies operating in Kazakhstan in energy, transport, innovation and healthcare, among other sectors.

LLDC ministers call for enhanced transportation, economic opportunities

By Amir Khaidar

ASTANA – Ministers and senior government officials from landlocked developing countries (LLDCs) and development partners recently gathered in Astana for a two-day meeting to determine ways in which trade, economic transformation and the development of transport infrastructure can benefit LLDCs.

"I am delighted that ministers from landlocked developing countries have come together in Astana to address vital issues affecting their countries. I wish to thank our generous hosts, the Government of Kazakhstan, and I hope that over these next two days recommendations and opportunities can be identified to improved trade, transport and economic opportunities which can help to transform the lives of communities living in LLDCs," said Fekita 'Utoikamanu, UN high-representative and under-secretary-general Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing Countries.

More than 80 participants from 32 LLDCs, international and regional organisations, business sector representatives shared knowledge and experience of improvement of transport infrastructure and the creation of new economic opportunities.

"We understand that sustainable transport is a key factor for the progress and future of the developing countries. The recommendation of this meeting will allow us to broaden the forms of the co-operation in the field of transport, infrastructure and overcome the barriers of remoteness and costs," said Kazakh Minister for Investment and Development Zhenis Kassymbek.

He also added that more than 80 percent of international trade fall on maritime shipping routes and despite lacking direct access to the sea, Kazakhstan's trade turnover is increasing, which corresponds to the improvement of transport infrastructure.

According to the office of 'Utoikamanu, LLDCs continue to be marginalised in international trade, accounting for less than

1 percent of global merchandise exports.

Goods from landlocked developing countries often travel long distances before reaching maritime shipping routes. Transport systems of LLDCs rely on neighbouring countries for transit access resulting in high trade costs.

To address these challenges, the Government of Kazakhstan in August 2003 hosted the first international ministerial conference of landlocked and transit developing countries and development partners during which the *Almaty Programme of Action* was adopted. Programme addressed special needs and challenges faced by the LLDCs in achieving their development goals.

In November 2014, a new programme was adopted, the *Vienna Programme of Action for LLDCs until 2024*. This programme of action identifies fundamental transit policy issues, infrastructure development, international trade and trade facilitation, regional integration, structural economic transformation and means of implementation as its key priorities.

Expanding women's leadership in business, government discussed at AEF

By Meruyert Abugaliyeva

ASTANA – Challenges and prospects for women's leadership were discussed by female leaders at a May 18 round table during the 11th Astana Economic Forum in the Kazakh capital.

"To date, most developed countries have recognised the importance of an inclusive economy in terms of female capital development. However, according to a UN report, legal obstacles for female empowerment have been eradicated only in 18 countries. Barriers, gradually taking root in socio-economic and political relations, hamper democratic processes worldwide," noted Secretary of State of Kazakhstan Gulshara Abdykalikova.

One of the public policy priorities in Kazakhstan is women's rights and the expansion of economic opportunities for women. To date, Kazakhstan has passed the 30 percent threshold of women represented in leading positions in the financial sector. Moreover, Kazakh women run more than 500,000 or 43 percent of small and medium-sized entities (SMEs). Female entrepreneurs have also contributed to nearly a third of all workplaces provided by SMEs.

In 2018, Kazakhstan ranks 52nd in terms of gender equality and 30th in terms of female economic participation, according to a World Economic Forum report.

Elaine Conkievich, head of UN Women in Kazakhstan, believes that female representation is crucial for the realisation of sustainable development goals (SDGs) set by the United Nations in 2015.

"Women's political participation, particularly in decision making, is extremely critical for fulfilling the potential of democracy.

Women make essential contributions to achieving and maintaining peaceful and secure communities, for realising human rights, eradicating hunger and poverty and promoting sustainable development," Conkievich noted.

She also said women are significantly underrepresented in politics and governance, missing in particular from senior decision-making positions, and proposed four strategies for more gender-inclusive governments.

"We need to support the development of legal frameworks to facilitate women's representation; expand the pool of qualified and capable women to run for elections; we need to transform gender roles so that women are accepted as legitimate and effective leaders, and lastly, we need to support women and gender sensitive political institutions," she advised.

Conkievich also suggested the next Astana Economic Forum follow the example of the Davos Economic Forum, which this year was chaired entirely by women.

Kazakh Minister of Labour and Social Protection Madina Ablykassymova briefed the round table on economic opportunities available for Kazakh women and where their representation stands.

"In Kazakhstan, female participation in the labour market is rather high, as 70 percent are in the labour market; however, there are still several problems. First of all, there is a wage gap between men and women. The reason is that women are mostly employed in sectors of low pay; for example, 70 percent of employers in medicine and education are women. A lot of women also work in informal sectors not well covered by social programmes. Another challenge is gender inequality in the corporate sector," she noted.

In Kazakhstan, there is good female representation in SMEs, as women lead 43 percent of such entities. However, leadership positions in business and government need to have more women, since only around 15 percent of large companies are run by women and 47 percent of the boards of directors include women.

"The third challenge involves cultural norms limiting the role of women to family and child care. We are actively trying to overcome all three challenges to reach 50/50 gender parity across the public and government sector," added Ablykassymova.

Kseniya Sobchak, journalist and Russian 2018 presidential candidate, stressed the importance of combating traditional gender stereotypes and changing the psychology of women. She believes women are ready to play the roles set by their societies and gender equality will not be ensured unless women take action to change the status quo. She also stressed the importance of education and self-development for Kazakh women.

The discussion was continued by Mars One programme finalist Adriana Marais, Director for Gender and Economic Inclusion at the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) Barbara Rambousek, Canadian Ambassador to Kazakhstan Nicholas Brousseau, Deputy Foreign Minister of Kazakhstan Yerzhan Ashikbayev, Consul of the United Arab Emirates in Kazakhstan Najla Al Kaabi and Senior Vice President of the Centre for Creative Leadership Jennifer Martineau.

The Astana Economic Forum this year was transformed into the Global Challenges Summit, dedicated to 11 global trends, including urbanisation, digitisation, financial revolution and global security.

KTZ Express to operate Chinese container fleet in Central Asia

By Meruyert Abugaliyeva

ASTANA – KTZ Express, a subsidiary of Kazakhstan Temir Zholy (KTZ), Kazakhstan's state-owned railway operator and logistics company, will manage the container fleet of Chinese COSCO Shipping in Kazakhstan, Central Asia and along the Trans-Caspian International Transport Route.

The agreement between KTZ and COSCO, a leading international container fleet operator, was signed during KTZ president Kanat Alpysbayev's recent meetings in Shanghai with COSCO and other logistic companies of Chinese provinces.

"We are open for cooperation and ready to increase transportation volume through Kazakhstan," noted Alpysbayev.

"As a result of the meetings, further opportunities for cooperation were discussed, as well as agreements to increase the volume of container shipment from China to Europe, Central Asia, Turkey and Persian Gulf states

were reached," said the company's press release.

During the past 10 years, Kazakhstan has invested approximately \$30 billion in transportation infrastructure.

"We have plans to invest an additional \$8.4 billion by 2020. This will complement the already dynamic development of our trade routes in concert with China's Belt and Road Initiative, in which our country plays a vital role. It will also breathe new life into transcontinental shipping routes between Asia, Europe and among Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) countries," said Kazakh Deputy Foreign Minister Roman Vassilenko at a recent OSCE conference in Vienna.

According to the official, transporting goods by land has distinct advantages over other transport means. For instance, transportation by rail from China to Europe across Kazakhstan is three times faster than by sea and almost ten times cheaper than by air.

"Joint plans and projects worth

more than \$10 billion are currently being implemented. These are focused on developing infrastructure towards the Caspian Sea and the ports of Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan, as well as the Georgian and Turkish ports on the Black Sea. Once complete, they will contribute to delivering the speed and technological interlinkages that are required to meet the growing demand for goods and products," he added.

In 2010, such transcontinental container shipments via Kazakhstan did not exist and in 2011 there were only 1,200 twenty-foot equivalent units (TEUs) transported. However, in 2017, Kazakh railways transported more than 200,000 containers to Europe and back in cooperation with 17 Chinese provinces, Vietnam, and South Korea.

"Rail transportation across Kazakhstan in all directions will reach 550,000 TEUs this year, and we expect these volumes to grow rapidly over the next few years reaching two million containers by 2020," noted Vassilenko.



Photo credit: Sultana Rakhimbekova's Facebook page.

Nation&Capital

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Astana Arlans beat British Lionhearts, advance to fifth WSB final

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Astana holds festival showcasing talents of special needs children

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – Astana recently hosted its first festival showcasing the creative talents of children with special needs. The Meirim festival attracted more than 400 children with special educational needs.

“This year, we have participated in such a festival for the first time. My daughter Aziza dances. I wish that there were more such festivals because we were preparing with enthusiasm for the performance for several months,” said the mother of one of the participants Gulbanu Ibragimova, according to the Astana city government website.

Ibragimova is a strong supporter of such events, saying, “thanks to such events our children with a diagnosis of cerebral palsy are looking at their lives positively. Such events give them confidence, they find themselves, they adapt themselves.”

The main goal of the festival is to create an inclusive creative space that helps to reveal the talents of children. During the event, a fashionable and stylish collection of clothes adapted for the physical characteristics of children



Photo credit: astana.gov.kz

with disabilities was shown. Also, an exhibition of the best children’s works of fine art was opened. In addition, the children sang, read poetry and danced.

Special master classes for children on felting, jewellery, drawing and wood carving were organised as well. The event was held at the National Museum under “Astana – the City of People Strong in Spirit” programme. The festival was dedicated to the 20th anniversary of the Kazakh capital.

Nur Otan Astana branch, Assyl Bala Public Foundation, sponsors and organizers, KazCargoCustoms, Astana School No. 83, Velada international model agency, SaBelle fashion House and Gulmira Barlubaeva beauty studio sponsored and organised the festival.

The Society of Parents of Children with Disabilities, the World of Equal Opportunities, Solnechniy Mir (Sunny World) Public Fund, Heritage Public Association,

Social Services Centre of Astana administration and Spinabifida Public Association were co-organizers of the festival.

By 2020, 70 percent of schools in Kazakhstan will provide inclusive education. Such education will accommodate the needs of all children regardless of their disability, health, socio-economic status, gender or race. In general, it responds to whatever potential barrier to learning exists in the classroom.

Capital celebrates Africa Day

By Raushan Shamsharkhan

ASTANA – The capital marked Africa Day at QSI International School of Astana May 25 as part of the eighth annual International Day.

“This is an amazing event where each community that is involved in the school, whether a parent, teacher or students, have an opportunity of displaying the pride of their country through quizzes, through food, through games. It is one of the most amazing events in the school year. I think this kind of affair will continue evolving. Many years ago there were approximately 20 nationalities in the school; now we have just below 40. We see more and more ambassadors involved, which is a case to promote a country. I am happy to promote my country, France. It is an opportunity to meet friends, meet a family and also meet clients. I hope this event will continue growing,” said Astana Marriott Hotel General Manager Philippe Mahuas.

QSI Dutch teacher Patrick Peters said the school has many nationalities and the event is a way for every country to excel and promote its good happenings in a happy and safe environment.

“You see that if all nations can join together, we can have a fantastic thing like this,” he said. Representatives of different

countries, embassies and cultures attended the event. The day began with an international flag parade, continuing with culture table demonstrations, tours and a concert. Each state had its own corner where art and crafts, national cuisine, books, posters, slideshows, music, traditional clothes and other aspects of culture, including African nations, were presented. The main speakers were the African ambassadors in Kazakhstan.

“I think it is very important and a great education for Kazakh children who are at the school to learn about all the different cultures and different traditions of other people, not only about themselves. We live in a globalised world; no nation on Earth can survive without mixing with other people because there are things that you have that you can offer the world and there are things that the world can offer to you. So, it is a multi-polar world where everybody is relevant because everyone has been gifted with something special that they can offer elsewhere. I think that it is a very important message to convey, especially to children,” said Keitumetsi Seipelo Thandeka Matthews, South African Ambassador to Kazakhstan, as well as to Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan.

This year, International Day coincided with Africa Day. In 1963, African leaders gathered in Addis

Ababa to create an organisation that would later become home to all Africans and on May 25, their discussions led to the birth of the African Union. The organisation was initially created to promote and support African liberation struggles against colonialism, said Matthews, as very few countries were independent. The name change came after the liberation of the last state, South Africa, as the task had been completed.

The purpose of the union is to promote African development, ensure economic and infrastructure development and improve the quality of people’s lives. Matthews believes this is its mandate for the continent’s 54 member countries and all the heads of state meet regularly.

Africans celebrate this day every year with hope and faith that the continent will continue to build its destiny, rid itself of poverty, diseases and military conflicts, escape the severe economic situation it is now experiencing and oppose all difficulties more strongly than in the past. Commentators agree the next substantial economic revival and boom will occur in Africa and citizens are preparing for the awakening of the sleeping giant.

Kazakhstan and South Africa have excellent relations, noted Matthews. She added both countries are focused on expanding cultural exchange among youth,

economic ties and issues of peace and reconciliation.

“I think the beauty of the relationship between Kazakhstan and South Africa is the many things they have in common. We have very, very similar traditions. We have a very similar outlook on life, very hospitable, open and kind people. For us, respecting the elders is very important like for the Kazakhs. I think these grounded similarities ease the relationship between the countries,” she said.

“This is a very big platform that President Nazarbayev has been promoting. Prevention of conflict, how to mediate dispute, how to put people who have previously fought on the path of development, growth and infrastructure. I think the future in terms of South Africa and Kazakhstan is to help to build and maintain peace so that the world can be more stable and have more sustainable economic development,” she added.

Notably, Kazakhstan seeks to build friendly and mutually beneficial relations with African countries. In the Foreign Policy Concept until 2020, the African direction is defined as one of the priorities.

“I think Kazakhstan is very fortunate to have had a President like Nursultan Nazarbayev with a great vision for how he wants this country to be. And equally, we were very fortunate to have Mr. (Nelson) Mandela, who changed the world with his vision of how he wants the world to be, not just South Africa,” she said.

This year marks the 100th anniversary of Mandela’s birth, one of the most respected world leaders.

“He has been a very seminal person and a significant icon in the development of thinking in the world, especially around forgiveness, reconciliation and respect for humankind. The person we honour today came from virtually nothing. I think it a fundamental lesson to inspire children and to give children hope and determination to succeed. That is the message, that is the legacy Mandela left for all of us,” she said.

The entire world is celebrating the event, such as the United Nations General Assembly special debate about Mandela and his legacy in September. In her speech to school children, Matthews talked about his deeds, principles and passion.

“If you want to be something, you want to make an impression to the world; it is up to you. You can do it,” she said.

First comic artist breaks into country’s online society

By Raushan Shamsharkhan

ASTANA – Le Shapalaque, web comics that offer fresh perspectives on daily Kazakh matters, has received a lot of love on social media from local readers. The first non-commercial, humorous online comics about the Kazakh mentality mostly depict scenes of everyday life.

In an interview with The Astana Times, founder Adil Zakenov talked about how the art resonates with Kazakh realities, the work culture, how the ideas are generated and the future of the Kazakh comics industry.

“Le Shapalaque was created for a reason. The goal of the project is to encourage a person to realise that he/she is not alone, that their situation is not unique. We invite the reader to look at circumstances at hand through the prism of humour, because it is sometimes the only thing that helps to live in this harsh reality,” he said.

The quirky yet straightforward project launched on Instagram on March 1, 2017. Since then, the Le Shapalaque team has shared sketches of various current events and issues related to the country with a slice-of-life appeal. To date, topics have included a light-hearted look at the recent decision to effect the transition of the Kazakh language into the Latin-based alphabet, stereotypes, traditions,

climate, cultural differences and public policies.

“In all issues and spheres, we try to be as objective as possible. We carefully study the problem; only then do we publish them. I think that topics that affect everyday life situations will always be relevant in Kazakhstan. Politics, show business are a temporary phenomenon, but food, friendship, love and family worry us every day. These topics will always come up,” he said.

Zakenov graduated from Nazarbayev University in 2015, majoring in computer science. He has been involved with cartoons and animation since his student years. He managed a student club and, after graduation, restored its activities as an official organisation.

“I told my friend Daniyar Akhmetzhanov about this. He not only supported and co-initiated drawing comic books, but even dropped out of his master’s degree to fully merge into the sphere,” he said.

They founded Black Rainbow Studio, making promotional image ads for small and medium-sized businesses and national companies.

Le Shapalaque is translated from the Kazakh language as “a slap in the face” and the creators wanted the name to have a national slant while focusing on the local information market.

Continued on Page B3

Israeli artist opens charity exhibition in Astana

By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – Israeli artist Regina Shafir unveiled a charity exhibition called Sweets May 23 at the Has Sanat Art Gallery in the Kazakh capital.

Organised with the help of the Dara Charity Foundation, all proceeds will go to orphanages and children with physical challenges. Established in 2005, the foundation has been implementing projects to assist children’s medical institutions, orphanages and boarding schools for children with disabilities.

The exhibit, to remain open until June 13, includes 32 paintings. Thirty of them were sold on the opening day, Shafir told The Astana Times.

“I wanted to convey that good mood and state of mind that I had in Astana thanks to people who live here – hospitable, warm, open minded and attentive, wonderful, sweet and cheerful children, hospitable homes,” said Shafir.

The paintings presented at the exhibition reflect the artist’s vision of local culture and traditions, nature landscapes and city, include portraits of her close friends as well as depict Israeli culture. It took almost a year to complete them.

The paintings were meant to pass on an “impression of warm Kazakhstan and the brightest side of Astana,” she said.

“The theme is Astana and the way I see it,” she added.

Continued on Page B3



Keitumetsi Seipelo Thandeka Matthews.

THINGS TO WATCH & PLACES TO GO

ASTANA OPERA

June 1 at 4 p.m.	Children’s theatre studio presents..., concert
June 2 at 6 p.m.	The charm of opera and art song, concert
June 7 at 7 p.m.	Musical dialogues, concert
June 10 at 6 p.m.	When your heart sings with love, concert
June 13 at 7 p.m.	Exquisite classics, concert

ASTANA ARENA

June 5 at 8 p.m.	Kazakhstan – Azerbaijan, friendly football match
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WYNDHAM GARDEN ASTANA

June 7 at 7 p.m.	Spina Bifida charity event
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BARYS ARENA

June 9 at 6 p.m.	Denis Ten and friends, ice show
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PEOPLE

WEDNESDAY, MAY 30, 2018

Non-native Kazakh language teacher serves as inspiration

By Dana Omirgazy

ASTANA – Natalya Dementyeva, of Kokshetau, who teaches Kazakh language and literature, motivates and interests students to learn the national language. The ethnic Russian and director of the Kokshetau Humanitarian Technical Lyceum is among the country's 100 New Faces.

"I always remember the words of the great historical figure Genghis Khan. He said: 'If you're afraid – don't do it; if you're doing it – don't be afraid!' I am sure that the participants of the project have the same life principles. We do not seem to know them, but they are doing their own great work in their own way; they are contributing to the development of our country and I am happy to know such wonderful people," she said.

Thanks to her mother's insistence, Dementyeva focused on learning the Kazakh language during her studies at school. In her inaugural year of mastering the language, she earned first place in the national contest and has subsequently won numerous



Natalya Dementyeva

language proficiency competitions. Her students follow her example, demonstrating excellent results in similar contests among non-native speakers.

"My vocation is to teach children and I am happy to have such a profession," she said.

Dementyeva hosted television

language courses from 2009-2016 and her lessons encouraged many people to learn and speak Kazakh. She developed her own projects to promote the popularity of the language among non-native speakers and improve literacy. During her years in mass media, she worked with the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan to initiate a programme about the country's famous figures. Thanks to her pedagogical skills and progressive vision, the lyceum where she works was included in the list of the best educational institutions among cities and regions.

She is a member of the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan and regional Association of Business Women.

"The 100 New Faces project gave a chance for ordinary Kazakhstan citizens to show themselves. Now each of us faces a goal, a great responsibility and an opportunity to reveal our capabilities in a new way. The society voted for us and welcomed us to the project. Now, we cannot and should not stop. We need to work even harder for the prosperity of Kazakhstan," she added.

Math teacher and methodologist among 100 New Faces

By Meruyert Abugaliyeva

ASTANA – Tatyana Kucher, one of Kazakhstan's 100 New Faces, has devoted more than 45 years to teaching mathematics, nurturing future teachers and developing methodology. She believes a good teacher should be a friend, helping students discover knowledge on their own in order to succeed.

"I believe a teacher must be a second mother for children, a friend and an advisor to parents. A teacher should also take responsibility for the knowledge he or she gives students, which will be later used throughout one's whole life," she said.

Kucher developed a passion for mathematics early in school when she gathered her little sibling's friends for a teacher-students role-play. Later, she chose a career in education without hesitation, according to inform.kz.

Upon graduation from Petropavlovsk Pedagogical Institute, she started her career as a math teacher in Timiryazev, a town in one of the North Kazakhstan regional dis-

tricts. She subsequently taught at a school in Petropavlovsk.

"In 1981, I moved from school to university when a department of pedagogy and methodology of primary and pre-school education was established here. A year later, I was sent to Moscow to upgrade my qualification," she added.



Tatyana Kucher

In 1987, after finishing her studies at Moscow Institute of Teaching Methodology (now Russian Academy of Education) and defending her dissertation, Kucher returned to head the department

of pedagogy. She has worked on developing math textbooks, as she was invited to join authors designing revised versions for the 12-year education system.

"We update not only the contents of the books, but teaching methods and learning objectives as well. We want to show teachers how to organise the teaching process so that a teacher does not give students the ready answer straight away, allowing students to discover new material by themselves and remember it better," she said.

"Currently I work on three directions, namely on improving teaching methodology, preparing primary school math teachers and developing textbooks for secondary school mathematics," she added.

Kucher has published a series of lectures on the basics of mathematics and methodology, which she plans to revise in several years in accordance with changes in school curriculum.

In 2016, Kucher was named an honorary education worker of Kazakhstan. She believes the best award for a teacher, however, is the success of her students.

Knitting school stitches together learning, entrepreneurship, social connection

By Aigerim Bulambayeva

ASTANA – Aspiring young social entrepreneur Rakhima Mukusheva holds knitting classes in Astana, with the goal of helping her students master new skills, socialise and take baby steps into entrepreneurship upon the completion of the classes.

Although Mukusheva has established knitting classes and launched a promising social project, she sees herself above all as a mother of three sons and a wife. Family is not only a key element of Mukusheva's self-identity, but also what brought her to the path she is on.

Born in Shalkar village of Tselinograd region, she grew up seeing and learning knitting skills from her grandparents, who were involved in sheep breeding. She also grew up witnessing people using such household skills to improve their lives, not just for fun.

"Knitting was my hobby for years, starting as early as my childhood. I assume that this path was laid out due to the 1990s, when our moms and grandparents used to knit to meet their own needs," said Mukusheva.

"My first teacher was my mother. She taught me not only knitting, but also the craft of making yarn," she noted.

Despite having all the premises and skills to become a professional knitter right away, she took a longer path.

"Upon completing high school, I, as most people do, continued my studies at the university. I received my bachelor's degree in economics and finance from Akmola Agrarian University. However, I was not able to find a vacancy directly related to my educational background. I used to work as a salesperson, a company director's assistant, et cetera. All those positions were not even remotely related to knitting. Once I lost my job, knitting helped me not only in making ends meet, but also in coping with the depression that followed my job loss," Mukusheva recalled.

What started as a last-resort solution turned into a quite successful business.

"I started knitting at home just for my children. Then our guests, having noticed the items I knitted for the children, became interested in my products and made orders. At first, there was no profit in terms of money whatsoever. The transactions were based on barter: I would knit for them and they would supply me other goods in exchange," she explained.

As her transition from hobby knitting to professional work was gradual and ambiguous, so was the establishment of her school.

"To be honest, I cannot tell when exactly and how our knitting school was established. At some point, peo-



Rakhima Mukusheva

ple just started approaching me and asking to teach them knitting. What I can say for sure is that I have been in this sphere for at least three years," said Mukusheva.

Once a month, Mukusheva recruits people who are willing to learn in beginner groups. A group consists of five to six people.

"We start from the very basics – students are taught the proper ways of reading a knitting chart and knitting specific patterns. Apart from those study groups, we often conduct specialised master classes," she said.

"The main goal of our knitting school is bringing people together, enabling them to socialise. Another goal is cutting corners in a family budget at almost no cost," Mukusheva said. She also hopes that the knitting school will contribute to increasing the share of domestically manufactured products in Kazakhstan.

Today, five individuals who went through her knitting programme are currently employed by Mukusheva in the framework of her social entrepreneurship programme. The total number of her former and current students exceeds 100.

At Mukusheva's knitting school, classes for beginners cost 20,000 tenge (about US\$60) per month, though individuals from socially vulnerable groups can take the classes for free. The only requirement is having a will to learn and to apply the acquired skills at work. Some graduates of the course may end up employed at the knitting school itself.

"I do follow my former students after they graduate from the knitting school. We have a chat that we use for networking, where we exchange information on available vacancies and other interesting opportunities," said Mukusheva.

Her journey to becoming a social entrepreneur, as Mukusheva notes, was a rather long one. When she first started as a traditional entrepreneur, she was not aware of such a concept as 'social entrepreneurship.' A turning point on her path towards social entrepreneurship, according to Mukusheva, was a year ago, when her father had a stroke. She had to drop her regular schedule and take care of him. This resulted in her business going downhill, and her knitting school ended up on the edge of closure.

But then she met Emin Askerov, founder and executive of the Green Tal social workshop, and got acquainted with social entrepreneurship.

"I thought that, apparently, what happened to my father was fate," Mukusheva recalled.

What distinguishes social entrepreneurship from the traditional type, according to Mukusheva, is that the former incorporates the ideas of personality and humanity in its definition.

Mukusheva shared her concerns as well as obstacles she faces as a knitting school director. One of the issues is that even though students are taught all aspects of knitting, they still find it hard to compete with large-scale producers.

As for her plans for the coming years, Mukusheva wants to further develop as a social entrepreneur, set up a production line and broaden her existing network.

She genuinely believes that the social entrepreneurship has great potential in Kazakhstan. "Do not be afraid of trying, do not be shy to ask for help, be ambitious, believe in people, and love people!" she said. "Genuinely loving people is the key, all the other things will follow."

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CULTURE

WEDNESDAY, MAY 30, 2018

Israeli artist opens charity exhibition in Astana

Continued from Page A1

Shafir has been living in Astana with her family for the last two years. The exhibit wraps up her stay in the Kazakh capital and in Kazakhstan, as the artist and her family will soon leave the country.

"I wanted to show that Astana is a modern city, yet the spirit of national traditions prevails, (this is the case) in any city and country, regardless of how modern it is. Astana is such a young city, only 20 years," said Shafir.

"I had wonderful time here in Astana and worked very productively," said Shafir, who lived in Moscow and London before moving to Astana.

The attitude towards family, strong ties between generations, love to children and respect to elderly people, she noted, are common for Kazakhstan and Israel.

"Portraying Astana is happiness. I put everything what happened to me within these two years in my paintings. Gigantic skyscrapers rising from the steppe lands right into the sky, the way these skyscrapers are reflected in each other and in the river. Hospitable warm people that serve the richest and sweetest dastarkhan in Astana. Bright colours of Kazakh ornaments in carpets, costumes and tablecloth. Sparkling winter with sun and snow, unforgettable expo, heavenly summer apples with distinct flavour. I am happy that Astana gets to see my paintings on the eve of its 20th birthday. I sincerely congratulate it and wish happiness," said Shafir.

While in Kazakhstan, Shafir founded an urban sketchers community, part of a global community practicing and promoting on-location drawing.

"When we lived in London, I joined the Urban Sketchers movement. When I came to Astana, I



Regina Shafir

was doing urban sketching at first and then it embraced more decorative forms. I decided to try still life, portraits and genre scenes," said Shafir.

"We organised two workshops: one at the expo and second on the Valentine's Day at Mega Silk Way. I founded the (urban sketchers) community. I hope that it will stay active," she noted.

She expressed gratitude to the Has Sanat art gallery for helping organise the exhibit. "Most importantly, I would never be able to do it myself all alone. Zhanna Yesenbayeva, owner of the gallery, provided such a beautiful space. She helped to sell paintings and searched a buyer for each and every painting," said Shafir.

"Dara Foundation Chair Gulnara Dossayeva also helped organise the event and provided significant assistance. All money will not only be allocated (to children), but also used to stage theatre plays with real decorations and costumes for children with hearing and speech challenges," noted Shafir.



"Dastarkhan"

First comic artist breaks into country's online society

Continued from Page B1

"We invented almost ten names and left the most suitable one. Le Shapalaque reflects the idea of our comics. The audience accepts and reacts positively. Almost half of our audience are students of my alma mater; the rest are people who have critical thinking and a sense of humour," said Zakenov.

The team is composed of seven people – the founder, four content managers and two artists. Each content manager monitors a particular category – politics, traditions, show business or everyday life. The members are Nazarbayev University graduates and students who have experience in blogging and long, interesting posts. The admins work on enthusiasm; the artists, on salary. Some members are in Almaty, while others are continuing their education abroad, and they communicate by Skype. Once a week the team meets, brainstorm, generates and discusses ideas. From abstract concepts they form final production posts, then send the file with painted views of static drawings to the artists. If the plan is better conveyed through animation, the process is completed with Adobe Photoshop and Adobe After Effects.

"We have examples to follow. The number one animated comic for me is Shen Comix; he describes life situations with bits of humour in a funny manner. After

reading each comic book, a pleasant aftertaste always remains," said Zakenov.

Even though there have been plenty of proposals to monetise the project, the creators do not want to clog up the profile with advertising.

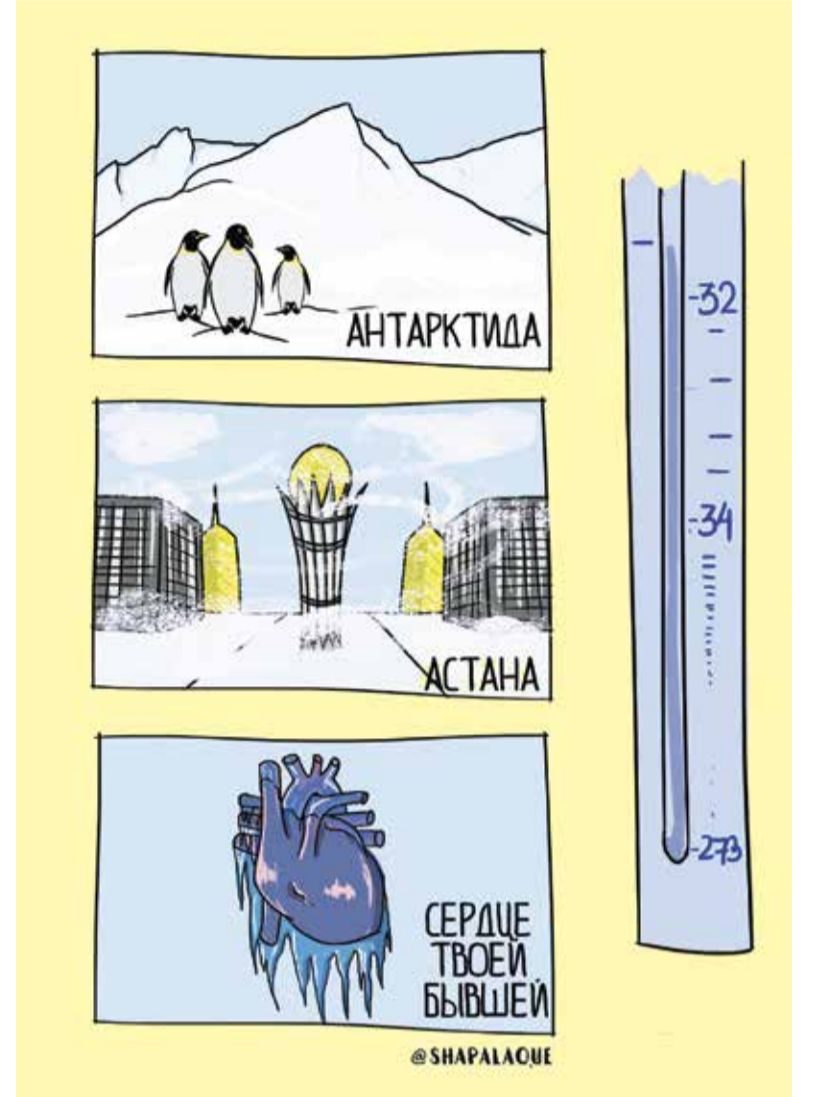
"We make commercial orders in the form of video clips and animations to Le Shapalaque. Perhaps in six months we will begin to introduce advertising, but we are thinking about other sources of income, for example, measuring or cooperation with print media," he added.

In addition to comics, the team creates commercials for companies and plans to shoot a short cartoon.

"The Le Shapalaque project is slowly beginning to bring results. Different conference organisers reach out to us and want to disseminate more information about the project. Recently, the Astana akimat (city administration) proposed jointly conducting an anti-corruption campaign to come up with ideas for billboards," he noted.

Even though Kazakh comic artists have always been under-the-radar, they have a niche and loyal social following. The country has no shortage of talent like Zakenov, such as the founders of Hancomic.

"Kazakhstan comics are now at the stage of the very beginning, but I am very pleased with the successes of our compatriots. For



example, the Hancomic team that produce printed comics about Yermek Batyr consequently entered the Amazon market. This can serve

as an example of how quality content, no matter what, can also enter the international market," said Zakenov.

Kazakh artists participate in Cannes Film Festival

By Raushan Shamsharkhan

ASTANA – The Kazakh national pavilion presented the country's films May 8-19 at the 71st annual Cannes Film Festival, reported the Culture and Sports Ministry press service.

The national pavilion was the location of the Eurasian International Film Festival presentation, it noted. Besides, the Eurasian Film Festival Directorate appeared with the Eurasian projects.

Such events as the jury announcement, the unveiling of the programmes, a series of press briefings with the Kazakh filmmakers' delegation and a meeting with distributors was held in the pavilion.

The national pavilion was created as part of the Ruhani Janghyru

(Modernisation of Kazakhstan's Identity) programme and with the collaborative assistance of the Ministry of Culture and Sports and the Kazakh Embassy in France.

"I wish the worldwide glory to our Kazakh film industry! Any of our successes, whether small or big ones, make me happy. When I receive such good news, I sleep well on this night knowing that our country has talents, that our film industry has a future. The brilliant example of recognising our film industry's achievements and its prospects is the interest of producers from all over the world. They visit our pavilion and make contacts with Kazakhstan counterparts for further cooperation," Kazakh theatre and cinema director Assanali Ashimov told bnews.kz.

The Cannes Film Festival is

viewed as an excellent venue for Kazakh filmmakers to increase audiences, funding, co-production, distribution and talent pool development. Adilkhan Yerzhanov, with the 100-minute feature "The Gentle Indifference of the World," represented the nation in the Un Certain Regard programme.

In addition, director Zhannat Alshanova's "The End of the Season" was entered in the Cinefondation programme, while "Bad, Bad Winter," a film by Olga Korotko, was featured in the Association for the Distribution of Independent Cinema (ACID). A range of short films such as "Hide and Seek" by Venera Kairzhanova and "Asam" by Berik Zhakhanov were shown in the short film corner within the Marche du Film.

Kazakh films have previously won the Un Certain Regard award.

Darezhan Omirbayev's "The Killer," filmed in 1998, and Sergey Dvortsevoi's "The Tulip" shot in 2008 were showcased.

The Kazakhstan pavilion at the prestigious film forum opened for the second year in a row, the press release said.

The delegation included state body representatives, intelligentsia and prominent cinema and TV industry figures, as well as Kazakh National University of Arts students. The official reception "The Kazakh Evening in Cannes" was held May 9 in the Hôtel Barrière Le Majestic Cannes. People's Artist of Kazakhstan and Kazakh National University of Arts Rector Aiman Mussakhadzayeva, Kazakh singer Dimash Kudaibergen, the state orchestra's soloists academy and many others participated in the event.

Deutsches Theatre: in sync with times

By Dana Omirgazy

ASTANA – Deutsches Theatre (Republican German Drama

Theatre), the first German diaspora theatre in the Soviet Union, opened in December 1980 in the city of Temirtau. As the troupe celebrates its 38th birthday this year,

it remains the only German theatre in the post-Soviet space. The initial and continuing feature of the troupe is youth and audacity, and the theatre constantly expands its

network of international contacts, inviting directors from Germany, the U.K. and other countries.

In an interview for this story, Deutsches Theatre Stage Director and Acting Manager Natasha Dubs talked about its repertoire and the factors that determine the choice of plays.

"It is probably a habit to listen to your inner impulse. Perhaps it is the long-standing actor's habit of always listening to yourself, reacting instantly and then proceeding according to the circumstances. Any performance is tested by a spectator, and to some extent the spectator himself creates the play. Of course, while choosing the repertoire for the German theatre, I place great emphasis on authors whose works have never been performed in Kazakhstan or have never been translated into Russian. I would very much like to acquaint the Kazakh spectator with what he has not seen or read before," she said.

As a German theatre, one of its missions is preserving the language as the cultural heritage of the German ethnos in Kazakhstan, said Dubs. Therefore, the director

focuses primarily on classical German authors.

"This is important for actors, as it is the formation of intelligence, the development and hone of good taste. This is a kind of challenge that the actor overcomes, because serious material always implies serious work. In addition, the beauty of the language can be manifested as much as possible in classical works," she added.

Although the theatre appears as a custodian of German national and folk culture, the troupe consists of people of different nationalities. They are united by art and the spiritual values of the people living in Kazakhstan, an example of consent, fraternity and tolerance. The theatre performs works featuring the German, Kazakh and Russian languages.

"We perform some works of modern German authors in Russian and, of course, we are interested in Kazakh drama. Our repertoire has works of two great authors. They are the classics of Kazakh literature by Mukhtar Auevov and modern novice writer Annas Bagdat, who was noted by President Nursultan Nazarbayev

as the best playwright of Kazakhstan," she said.

In early December, the Kazakh Ministry of Culture and Sport entrusted the theatre with presenting Auevov's "Qaragoz" in the German language in major cultural cities such as Berlin, Brussels, Moscow, Paris and Vienna as part of the Ruhani Janghyru (Modernisation of Kazakhstan's Identity) programme. The actors were excited to meet the European audience and the performances yielded full houses and long applause.

"At present, the world, particularly Kazakhstan, witnesses the disappearing of language boundaries. The German theatre has always been characterised by multilingualism, starting from the 1990s. Modern theatre is about a dialogue with the audience and a special language needs to be formed so that you can be heard in this dialogue, I think. The world and Kazakhstan are full of young directors who are actively looking for their own special language forms. Verbalism goes to the background and some other ways of mutual understanding are left," said Dubs.



A scene from "Qaragoz" play.

photo credit: dkk.kz

COUNTRY

WEDNESDAY, MAY 30, 2018

Shymkent hosts first Kazakh-Uzbek business forum

By Dana Omirgazy

ASTANA – Approximately 400 business persons participated May 22 in the first Kazakh-Uzbek business forum in Shymkent, the press service of the South Kazakhstan region's akimat (administration) reports.

Forum participants discussed trade and economic cooperation. Uzbekistan is Kazakhstan's largest trade partner in Central Asia. Bilateral trade increased almost 50 percent in the first quarter this year and is expected to reach \$3 billion by the end of the year, from around \$2 billion last year.

Akim (Governor) of the South Kazakhstan region Zhanset Tuimebayev said the forum would expand trade between the two countries.

"Uzbekistan is one of Kazakhstan's key strategic partners in Central Asia and relations between our countries are very friendly and reliable. As you know, this year was declared the Year of Uzbekistan in Kazakhstan. This once again confirms the fraternal character of relations between our peoples.

This forum would ensure a solid foundation for further economic and business cooperation between our countries," Tuimebayev said.

During the forum organised by the regional Chamber of Entrepreneurs, the parties discussed creating joint projects and investment opportunities and deepening trade cooperation.

Bilateral trade between the countries increased 31.2 percent in 2017 year-on-year, and trade between the South Kazakhstan region and Uzbekistan already reached \$125.7 million in the first quarter of this year. The volume of exports of goods from the region increased 143.6 percent to \$73.1 million, as the volume of imports grew 108 percent to \$52.5 million.

"Over the past five years, small and medium-sized businesses ensured the growth of the gross regional product (GRP) by two times, as the share of industry in the economy increased to 27 percent. More than 1,000 enterprises cooperate with entrepreneurs of Uzbekistan in trade, industry, agriculture and construction," Tuimebayev noted.

Officials consider tax breaks to grow film industry

By Dana Omirgazy

ASTANA – The Kazakh Ministry of Culture and Sports is proposing to reduce the tax burden on the domestic film industry, including exempting cinemas from the corporate income tax (CIT) while releasing locally shot films, according to inform.kz.

"Thus, local films will get priority over foreign movies," Director of Legal Services Department of the Ministry of Culture and Sports Kumis Seitova said during a May 10 press conference.

The production of films in Kazakhstan by foreign companies will be simplified as the country's officials consider excluding them from paying value-added tax (VAT).

"At the moment, we witness a huge industry of shooting foreign movies in the territories of different countries. Kazakhstan enjoys the interest of many foreign studios. We need to provide tax incentives, benefits for them so that they are

able to come and shoot projects like 'Marco Polo', which was filmed in Kazakhstan four years ago. This measure will work in the case that at least 50 percent of the film crew consists of Kazakh citizens," Akhat Ibrayev, Kazakh producer and director said.

According to him, there are about 10 private studios in Kazakhstan, which attract investments. In total, approximately 450 films are released annually in Kazakhstan, of those 10 percent are made domestically. More than 290 cinemas offer at least 500 screenings a day.

"A movie needs to have 500 screenings per day to cover all expenditures. Domestic movie is screened 200-300 times a day amid 2,000 screenings. The remaining 1,700 shows are left for foreign films," Ibrayev added.

According to film distributors, the Kazakh audience wants more domestic movies. In 2016, films produced in Kazakhstan made up 6 percent of box office sales. Last year, the figure increased to 13 percent with the annual receipt of \$44.5 million.

Pavlodar to spend \$3 million to expand Irtysh River embankment

Staff Report

ASTANA – The expansion of the Irtysh River embankment in Pavlodar will cost more than a billion tenge (US\$3 million), Pavlodar city Akim (Mayor) Nurzhan Ashimbetov said at a recent maslikhat (city council) session.

"The project of the embankment from KazTransOil [building] to the railway bridge is ready. It turned out to be expensive, while at the first stage it is almost \$3 million," the official said.

According to him, the construction of a new section of the embankment began in the middle of May and will be done in two stages. The first involves the construction of sewage and storm drainage, as well as strengthening the embankment. The second stage will be landscaping.

Ashimbetov said three dilapidated houses will need to be moved.

"We have been carrying out the procedure for the seizure of these plots since last year, and only one



of the owners has given consent to buy the house at that time," said Ashimbetov.

The embankment will pass

through the Goose Passage natural memorial, that will not be affected, the official said. Construction on this UNESCO

World Heritage Site is prohibited. Therefore, it is supposed to create an open-air museum at this location.

Ruhani Janghyru programme drives new projects in Kyzylorda

Staff Report

ASTANA – Kyzylorda regional Akim (Governor) Krymbek Kusherbayev announced projects related to the Ruhani Janghyru (Modernisation of Kazakhstan's Identity) programme during a recent press conference.

This year, 81 projects were planned under the Tarbie Zhane Bilim ("Upbringing and Knowledge"), Atameken ("Fatherland"), Akparat Tokyny ("Information Flow") and Ruhani Janghyru programmes and around 600 million tenge (US\$1.9 million)

were earmarked for the projects from the national budget.

Constructions such as the Centre for Spiritual Revival, a museum and youth resource centre, have been erected on the left bank of the Syr Darya River in Kyzylorda. There is also a plan to establish a school with a special emphasis on physics and mathematics.

An academy of traditional arts will be opened to popularise zhyrau (folk singing) and an international festival of kui (traditional musical composition) and the Korkyt and Music of the Great Steppe folk art festival will also take place.

"Sacred Kazakhstan Geography" includes 12 national objects and 35 historical and cultural monuments of the region. Nine monuments were included in the preliminary UNESCO Heritage List, namely the Korkyt Ata memorial; the medieval towns of Zhent, Syganak, Zhankent and Keskenkuik; the ancient settlements of Chirik-Rabat and Babish Molla; the Zhetiasar cultural monument; and the petroglyphs of Sauskandyk.

A 3D interactive map of 150 monuments of national and local significance is being developed.

The Korkyt Ata memorial complex and ethnic auyil (village) in the

Karmakshy district attract tourists to the region.

"The Korkyt Ata complex is located along Western Europe-Western China international highway, which contributes to the increased flow of tourists," noted Kusherbayev.

A "Sacred Kazakhstan and archaeology" hall was opened in the regional history museum and exhibitions in 12 museums were completely renewed. For the first time in the region, a forum of local historians was held.

In 2017, within the Tughan Zher ("Small Homeland") project, memoranda of cooperation between local business entities and akimats (regional administrations) were reached. This helped draw more than 6 billion tenge (US\$18.2 million) for the reconstruction of educational and cultural objects and the construction of playgrounds, squares and avenues.

Kazakh businesses, Eastern European technology company to cooperate

By Amir Khaidar

ASTANA – Kazakh businesses and regional executive bodies signed agreements with Belarus-Russian Galaktika, a leading Eastern European technological company, on the fringes of the Astana Economic Forum. The memoranda, inked by Transtelecom, Zerde, the national info-communications company, Astana Innovations and the West Kazakhstan region akimat (administration), will serve as a

starting point for the country's intensive digitisation.

The agreement with Transtelecom provides both companies with long-term and mutually beneficial cooperation. The main task is to increase locally developed IT solutions within Transtelecom's informational resources, with Galaktika's systems serving as the developmental base for new products.

Zerde will partner with Galaktika to actively work within the Astana Hub of IT startups to create and implement joint projects to develop municipal infrastructure. Astana

Innovations seeks to adapt and execute the company's most advanced solutions into capital infrastructure projects.

The West Kazakhstan region akimat will develop, introduce and promote Galaktika-based IT solutions to digitise industrial enterprises, service companies, universities and regional and municipal infrastructure.

Galaktika's principal products correspond to Industry 4.0 requirements and introducing them can help solve complex goals for local enterprises.

Galaktika has been actively work-

ing in Kazakhstan since 1995 and plans to establish a new office in the city in addition to the main one in Almaty. In the past 20 years, the corporation has worked with leading Kazakh mining, oil and gas and energy production companies.

Under the fourth industrial revolution, Kazakhstan seeks to develop and test new instruments aimed at modernising and digitising local industrial enterprises. The plan also includes adapting innovation centres and improving legislation, education, communication and standardisation systems to their needs.

IT park in Kyzylorda aims to be centre for creativity, collaboration

By Raushan Shamsharkhan

ASTANA – The Kyzylorda region's first IT park was presented April 20 in Abdilda Tazhibayev regional universal scientific library. There, it is hoped talented youth will be able to develop start-up projects and attract investors, the official Kyzylorda region Akimat (administration) website reports.

"The purpose of this park is the consolidation of IT specialists in Kyzylorda and their connection to real-life projects on digitisation. Demand for the IT specialty is growing, so they must be collected in one place," Anton Bayev, the IT park developer, told kyzylordatv.kz.

Kyzylorda region Akim (Governor) Krymbek Kusherbayev got acquainted with the preparations



for the IT park opening, noting the importance of the IT park's work to the national programme for digitisation (at the day of presentation). The park will support the overall plan announced by

President of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev, in his January 10 message on Kazakhstan's fourth industrial revolution. It will also complement Kazakhstan's national digitisation programme and

plans to expand its technology sector. According to the Kyzylorda region budget, 121.8 million tenge (US\$371,375) has been pledged for information technologies development in the region.

The IT park serves to support the region's young digital talents as they grow their businesses, test new ideas and create new solutions. It will bring together young digital entrepreneurs from the area to an environment of work, life, rest and creativity. To date, the IT park consists of an information registration department; zones for work, study, rest, presentation and business negotiations; a tech laboratory workshop; a 3D studio; and a server room.

Conceptually, programmers, managers, designers, marketers, public relations specialists and other digital visionaries were invited to co-create new solutions.

According to Indira Akzhigitova, deputy head of the technology department of the regional akimat, the creation of an IT park will promote the development of talented youth and innovative projects. Different laboratory simulators will be tested and their development, along with new software products and graphics projects in 2D and 3D, will help automate the work of the region's various social and economic development areas.

"This is a new form of integrating science and production and a place where people turn their ideas into real things," added Akzhigitova.

In January, a delegation from Kyzylorda region visited an IT park in Russia's Republic of Tatarstan, active since 2009, and decided to implement such a project in Kyzylorda. The decision to create a Kyzylorda IT park was

announced at the HackDay 2017 regional festival on 18 December 2017, where 500 participants presented their ideas, projects and developments on digitisation of the region's various spheres of life. Kusherbayev said that another IT park would soon be created.

"On the left bank of the Syr Darya, in the new quarter of Kyzylorda, another youth IT park will be created. It will be a place for people obsessed with technology, where they can realise their boldest ideas. It is also a unique experience of communicating with like-minded people and specialists who create and develop their own products. Thus, everyone can release their creative potential and start moving in the right direction with an idea already worked out, with secure research and development facilities," said Kusherbayev at Hackday 2017.

SOCIETY

WEDNESDAY, MAY 30, 2018



Hazret Sultan mosque.

Hazret Sultan Mosque presents updated website

Staff Report

ASTANA – The capital's Hazret Sultan Mosque presented a new version of muslim.kz, the spiritual and educational portal, May 16, the eve of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan.

"Several sections, such as illustrated namaz (prayer) and Qur'an, were added to the new muslim.kz. Website visitors can also use a recently added section providing a test on iman (faith) to assess their level of Islamic knowledge. In a section dedicated to the Qur'an, users can read and listen to the holy script on computer or using a mobile phone," said website editor Aidis Imantay. The new version preserved orig-

inal sections, such as prayer times, the Islamic calendar, question and answer portions, news about the mosque and educational articles and stories on religious and social issues.

Muslim.kz contains a virtual tour of the mosque, books, educational videos and audio files and recordings of its Friday sermons.

The new website, developed by Astana Creative, presents information in Kazakh and Russian. It offers an option allowing users to access information in Kazakh language in Latin script.

Hazret Sultan, the largest mosque in Central Asia, opened July 6, 2012. It was named after Khoja Ahmed Yassawi, the 12th-century poet and sufi. Located on

the right bank of the Yessil River, the mosque was built in classic Islamic style with traditional Kazakh ornaments.

The mosque occupies more than 11 hectares, with a total building area of 17,700 square metres. It can provide space for more than 5,000 visitors, increasing to 10,000 during religious holidays. There are special rooms for marriage ceremonies, a place for ritual washing before prayers, halls for reciting the Qur'an and lecture rooms.

Special nightly prayers are conducted at Hazret Sultan throughout Ramadan. For the convenience of visitors, the city administration has launched free bus shuttles carrying mosque guests along three routes.

Qazaqstan TV channel to launch MMA reality and competition show

Staff Report

ASTANA – The new sports and entertainment reality show Qazaqstan FIGHTER on the Qazaqstan television channel will give Kazakh mixed martial arts (MMA) fighters a chance to show their skills to a national audience.

"FIGHTER is a new unique sports and entertainment reality show that aims to ensure that every young athlete has a chance to show their skills on the air of our TV channels. We have a lot of talented guys in the regions who want to reach great

success in sports. Thanks to the victories of Kazakh athletes, people all over the world get to know about our country. We are always ready to support our fighters and this project will open new names. Well known boxer Beibut Shumenov will be involved in this project," said QAZSPORT TV channel Director Pavel Tsybulin at a press conference devoted to the premiere of the show.

The TV channel plans to launch the show in the fall on the QAZSPORT and Qazaqstan TV channels.

Young fighters will compete for the title of the best MMA fighter in Kazakhstan in the project.

The jury will include well-known Olympic champions and athletes such as Zhaksylyk Ushkempirov, Yermakhan Ibraimov, Ardak Nazarov, Yuri Melnichenko, Beibit Shumenov, Daniyar Kaskarauov and Sagyndyk Mekeev.

The show's producers say they hope the show will help develop a competitive spirit and sporting lifestyle among Kazakhs, popularise MMA as a trendy professional sport, identify new sports talents and develop patriotism based on the sporting achievements of fellow Kazakhs.

MMA is a full-contact combat sport gaining popularity over the



Photo credit: zakon.kz

world. It allows fighters to strike and grapple while standing and on the ground, using techniques from combat sports and martial arts.

Originally, MMA pitted fight-

ers from different fighting styles against each other with relatively few rules. But later, individual fighters incorporated multiple martial arts into their style. MMA

organisers adopted additional rules to increase competitors' safety, to comply with sports regulations and to broaden mainstream acceptance of the sport.

Bolashak programme expands list of international university options

Staff Report

ASTANA – Kazakh Ministry of Education and Science recently expanded its list of leading foreign educational institutions, foreign organisations for training and language schools recommended to the recipients of the Bolashak international scholarship for 2018.

Prospective students can apply to leading North American, European and Asian research institutions and receive funding from the government. Harvard, Princeton, Stanford, Yale, Cambridge and Oxford universities are among the most prestigious in the list. A full list of universities is available on the official website of the Centre for International Programmes that adminis-



ters the Bolashak scholarship on behalf of the ministry.

Recipients who choose Japan, the Republic of Korea, the People's Republic of China and the Republic of Singapore as a country of education are to receive

language training in the language schools of Great Britain.

Earlier this year, the ministry made changes in the awarding procedure of the scholarship. According to new rules, applicants who were awarded scholarships but

did not start their education can re-apply for the scholarship once again. The requirement for an average grade of a bachelor's degree diploma for individuals who are applying to universities and then submitting their applications for scholarship was reduced to 3.0 degree. Changes were also made to the contractual obligations of the graduates of the programme.

Bolashak international scholarship was established by the decree by Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev Nov. 5, 1993 and to this date more than 12,000 scholarships were awarded. The purpose of the programme is to train specialists for the priority sectors of the country's economy. The programme includes both the academic studies and scientific internships in leading international companies and universities.

Pet owners to be required to microchip pets

By Meruyert Abugaliyeva

ASTANA – Microchipping domestic pets will soon be mandatory in the capital. Medical records as well as information about the owners will be combined into a database linked to similar catalogues globally.

"As instructed by city Akim (Mayor) Asset Issekeshov, digitisation should embrace all the aspects of life in the capital. The akimat (city administration) also pays special attention to domestic pet care and Astana's Chief Digital Officer, deputy akim Malika Bektureva, announced this initiative. To date, we have carried out work to develop requirements for veterinary clinics to use," said Astana Innovations Chairperson Olzhas Sartayev.

Microchipping will allow systematising and monitoring all pets and ease the search process in case an animal is lost. The medical records database will also increase the efficiency of medical activities.

"It can be said with certainty that

once a pet is included in the system, it cannot get lost since the owner is held responsible for it. The technology will make pet monitoring transparent and thus create new opportunities for legislative regulation of domestic animals," he added.

A special government entity will purchase the microchips to become the sole supplier and the price will be determined. In some places, a microchip is priced at 1,500 tenge (US\$4.50) and the installation procedure is 2,000 tenge (US\$6), whereas the cost of producing a microchip is approximately 300 tenge (US\$0.90), according to Sartayev.

All veterinary clinics will also be equipped with the medical information system.

"Taking into account the social aspects of such an initiative and importance of taking care of pets, we encourage local specialists and professionals to join and contribute to the project. We need a wide range of experts, including lawyers, IT specialists and experts on infrastructure projects," he noted.

Government extends microfinancing opportunities for rural residents

Staff Report

ASTANA – Kazakh Vice Minister of Labour and Social Protection Nurzhan Altayev held an open lecture at Nur Otan Party headquarters dedicated to the country's nationwide mass entrepreneurship programme.

Altayev reviewed the development of the programme, how to participate in it, how to get a microloan and how to open a new business. More than 60 people attended the lecture, including aspiring entrepreneurs, former students and working youth.

As noted by Altayev, when opening a business, young people often lack financial resources and

knowledge about running the business. This is particularly noticeable in rural areas. The vice minister discussed the basic allocation mechanisms of preferential microloans to beginning entrepreneurs.

The unemployed, self-employed, small business entities and members of agricultural cooperatives are eligible to apply for the programme. To receive a loan, individuals can contact local employment centres, branches of the Atameken National Chamber of Entrepreneurs or the akimats (administrations) of their rural districts.

Before a loan is distributed, a potential businessman is tested for entrepreneurial skills and must take part in a month-long training course on the basics of entrepreneurship

under the Bastau business project. Training is carried out by staff from the National Chamber of Entrepreneurs face-to-face or online.

Last year, 15,000 people studied the basics of entrepreneurship and 7,000 of them received loans and opened businesses. According to the vice minister, successful business projects have been launched in the field of honey production, crop management and livestock production. This year, training will be offered to 30,000 people.

After the training, participants of the programme receive certificates that allow them to apply for a loan at a 6 percent annual percentage rate with real estate or land plots pledged as security.

Adobe houses and land plots that

commercial banks will not accept as collateral can be pledged for microloans, and a good business plan will receive a guaranteed microloan. In addition to ideas, however, a clear financial plan is required, said Altayev, as he urged young people to risk and try their hand at business.

To microfinance business, the national government has adopted a programme for the development of productive employment and mass entrepreneurship for 2017 to 2021. Last year, 42 billion tenge (US\$129 million) was allocated for microloans to beginning entrepreneurs. In the current year, an additional 20 billion tenge (US\$61 million) was allocated. Most will be directed toward entrepreneurs in rural areas.



Photo credit: inform.kz

NATION&CAPITAL

TOURISM

WEDNESDAY, MAY 30, 2018

SCAT Airlines launches Astana-Vilnius route



A SCAT Boeing-737 is seen on the tarmac of the Vilnius airport shortly after landing on May 27.

By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – Kazakhstan's SCAT airlines based in Shymkent launched May 27 a new Astana-Vilnius, Lithuania service.

The four-hour-and-40-minute Boeing-737 flights depart Thursdays and Sundays with economy

return fares starting from \$233.

"A new route is first and foremost good news for our business community. Economic ties between Lithuania and Kazakhstan are getting stronger year by year and we have been working hard over the past years to put this important and necessary route on

our map. Besides, exotic Central Asia is not just a business, but a very attractive destination entailing the search for undiscovered places for vacation," said Lithuanian Airports Director Marius Gelžinis at a May 27 press briefing in Vilnius.

Airline representatives said the

route will facilitate inbound and outbound tourism, provide more opportunities for tour agencies, guides and the entire tourism infrastructure.

Lithuanian Ambassador to Kazakhstan Vytautas Nauduzas, also present at the press briefing, said the launch of the new route, a result of three years of negotiations, will bring the countries closer to increasing their trade from the current \$1.7 billion to \$2 billion.

"We have good news today. The new route makes a journey from Vilnius to Astana and other cities in the Central Asian region and China more comfortable and less tiring. The Lithuanian businesses are interested in entering the Kazakh market, yet the potential remains unfulfilled," said the Lithuanian ambassador.

Nauduzas noted Vilnius also offers a convenient link to other European cities.

"For instance, you can get to Paris, Barcelona, Milan and many other capitals and cities in Europe," said the ambassador.

Head of SCAT Public Relations Department Viktorija Starozhilova said the ticket prices start from \$233.

"There is a flexible system of tariffs. There are minimal tariffs and higher. The minimal fare for an economy return ticket will be approximately 200 euros (US\$233). Special offers are also frequent," said Starozhilova.

The new routes are part of the company's fleet and route



network expansion plan. Last year, the company announced it ordered six Boeing 737 MAX 8 aircrafts at the Dubai Air Show and in March Boeing delivered the first of six such aircraft to SCAT.

The airline plans to launch 14 more new routes, including to Milan, Vienna and Prague.

Another milestone for SCAT came in March as well, when

it joined the International Air Transport Association (IATA) and passed the IATA Operational Safety Audit programme (IOSA).

Two years ago, the company passed an audit that examined more than 1,000 elements of its operational activity.

As of today, only two Kazakh airlines – SCAT and Air Astana – hold the IOSA certificate enabling them to fly to Europe.

Visit Burabay community unites Astana's adventurers

By Meruyert Abugaliyeva

ASTANA – The Visit Burabay community group offers Astana residents the opportunity to visit Kazakhstan's tourism attractions and natural beauty.

"Our project was initiated by my friend, Ulan Alimbek. For the first time, we set out on a journey October 31, 2015 and at that time, there were 15 people not acquainted with each other. Our main idea was to explore the nature as we were looking for adventure," said Visit Burabay leader Abdusamat Mukhammed.

The community hopes to nurture a love of Kazakh nature and help develop tourism.

"Usually we go on one-day trips, setting out on a journey early in the morning. We take food with ourselves so that we can have a snack later while walking around and climbing mountains. Sometimes we travel for a couple of days sleeping in tents. We also prefer discovering the world around us by ourselves so we do not use guides. We organise trips all year round and manage to enjoy nature in its full beauty," he added.

The community goes on regular trips to Burabay, however, it does not limit itself to one destination and has also visited Zerendy, Imantau, Bayanaul, Karkaraly and places around Almaty.

"Our trips are always fun since

each of them is different from the previous ones. Moreover, company is the most important aspect; you can make new friends while travelling. For example, I met the love of my life during one such trip, we are now married and raising a daughter," said community member Assan Toleu.

Since the establishment, almost 500 people have gone on the community's trips and the group now has approximately 121 active members. The average age of members is 25.

"People learn about Visit Burabay mostly from their friends and relatives. Our Instagram account also attracts new members. We have certain team members, who are active all the times; still, new members join us almost every week," added Mukhammed.

The community does not only go on trips, Visit Burabay members also meet in Astana and attend social, cultural and sporting events.

"Boys usually gather to play bowling or football, and girls read and discuss books together," added Toleu.

"This year we plan to expand, attract more members and discover new places to visit," said Mukhammed.

The community plans to go to Burabay June 2 and travel to Bayanaul July 6-8. A schedule of the community's trips and announcements are posted on its @visitburabay Instagram account.



Kazakhstan examines Singapore's tourism success

Staff Report

ASTANA – In developing tourism in Astana, Kazakhstan is studying the experience of Singapore, said Kazakhstan President Nursultan Nazarbayev during a recent meeting with the founder and Managing Director of Hotel Properties Ong Beng Sen in Astana.

Hotel Properties is a Singapore-based corporation that owns hotels, resorts and shopping centres in 13 countries, including shares in Hilton International, Four Sea-

sons, InterContinental Hotels Group and Six Senses Hotels.

The Kazakh President and his guest discussed tourism cooperation and investment in joint projects.

Nazarbayev said Kazakhstan seeks to develop its tourism sector and briefed the Singaporean businessman on efforts to boost tourism in Astana.

"You are a well-known person in hospitality sector, working in many countries around the world. Astana is a new capital and we intend to make it a tourist destination. We are studying the experience of Singapore in this area," said Nazarbayev, noting the friendly rela-

tions between Kazakhstan and Singapore generally.

"Our relations with Singapore are time-tested and good. I have been a good friend to Lee Kuan Yew, and we maintain close cooperation with the current prime minister. We always meet at all international meetings and discuss how we can further strengthen our relations," said Nazarbayev.

Ong said Lee Kuan Yew insisted the company "to open something here," but then the company was suffering losses.

"You know, I think we are 25 years late, because when Mr Leek

Kuan Yew asked me to look at two-three designer projects of hotels in Almaty, we considered the opportunities to turn hotels into modern hotels. Of course, there were certain difficulties, because we did not know the country as we know it now. Mr Lee Kuan Yew asked me to open something here, but then we were making hardly any profit. You understand the difference between my experience then and now. During these 25 years, he has been constantly telling me about Kazakhstan and its bigger potential compared to other countries," said Ong.

Germany holds kumys festival

By Amir Khaidar

ASTANA – Germany's annual mare's milk week was held on the largest mare milk farm in the town of Waldbrunn-Mülben. The festivities culminated in the Kumys (fermented mare's milk) Spring Festival with traditional Kazakh food and music.

The event has attracted residents from local villages and Kazakhs residing in Germany. This year's festival included bird song walks, guided tours of the stud farm, health and nutrition lectures and film screenings.

Kumys lovers gathered at the oldest running mare's milk farm in Germany, founded in 1959 by Rudolf Storch. A prisoner of war after World War II, he was sent to Kazakhstan where he contracted tuberculosis and was thought to be terminally ill. Local shepherds treated Storch with mare's milk and he fully recovered. After returning to Germany and completing his research, he established a dairy plant and introduced mare's milk to Europeans.

"It was hard for my grandfather to start a business. Before him, no one in Germany knew about mare's milk. He himself at first had no idea of where to start; there was the need to master the technology of production. Now, Germans are gradually learning about kumys; our production is not so big, but in the long term we want to expand



our presence in the European market," said Storch's granddaughter, Jett Zollmann.

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

The farm is currently run by

Storch's son-in-law. Through the years, it has created a unique production technology and in addition to dairy products manufactures mare's milk-based organic cosmetics.

In partnership with a German company, a plant opened in the Karaganda region in 2015 focusing on producing powdered mare's

milk. The company employs German expertise and produces 20 tonnes of product per year.

The kumys festival in the small European town has turned into a tradition for Kazakh diaspora in Germany to come together and celebrate the national food and cultural heritage of their ancestors.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 30, 2018

Astana Arlans beat British Lionhearts, advance to fifth WSB final

By Meruyert Abugaliyeva

ASTANA – Kazakhstan's Astana Arlans defeated the British Lionhearts May 26 in the World Series of Boxing (WSB) semi-final. It will be the Arlans' fifth appearance in the final.

The match in Atyrau was the second meeting of the Kazakh team and British Lionhearts after the first leg of the semi-final in Sheffield, when the Arlans secured a 3:2 victory over the British boxers.

The team contest began with a

bout in the 52 kg category, where Kazakh Saken Baibossynov lost to Lionhearts' Will Cawley. Despite the win, the British boxers had difficulty fighting the Astana Arlans and lost the next four bouts.

Lightweight Serik Temirzhanov, replacing Zakir Safullin, defeated Calum French.

In the next bout, Kazakh champion Aslanbek Shymbergenov did not give his opponent Carl Fail any chance in the category up to 69 kg, earning another score for the Arlans who were already leading by a total score of 5:3.

The outcome of the match was determined in the 81 kg bout, when Bek Nurmaganbet overwhelmed Liridon Nuha, giving the Arlans an ahead-of-time win.

The last score was earned by Kamshybek Kunkabayev defeating Solomon Dacres in the 91 kg category.

As a result of the two matches, the Arlans beat the Lionhearts 7:3.

In the final, the Astana Arlans will fight the Cuba Domadores. The teams have already met twice during WSB finals, with the Arlans beating the Cuban boxers in 2015 and 2017.



The final will be the fifth in the history of the Kazakh team. The Astana Arlans are the current tournament champions

and the most titled in the history of the WSB with three titles. The team was the runner-up in 2011, and then became WSB

champions in 2013, 2015 and 2017.

The Domadores won the title in 2014 and 2016.

Promising boxer to fight in Golovkin's division

By Amir Khaidar

ASTANA – Kazakh boxer and 2013 world amateur boxing champion Zhanibek Alimkhanuly has signed up with well-known manager Egis Klimas and will fight professionally in the same division as world champion Kazakh middleweight Gennady Golovkin. He hopes to fight a championship bout in approximately two years.

Alimkhanuly has earned a well-deserved reputation in amateur boxing, quickly rising to the top of the middleweight division in 2013. The fast puncher with power shots, Alimkhanuly turned pro after the Olympics in Rio-de-Janeiro. In his first professional fight he knocked-out Columbian Milton Nunez in the first round. In his second bout, he beat Brazilian Gilberto Pereira dos Santos by decision.

Before the official end of his amateur career in April, Alimkhanuly fought amateur and professional



Zhanibek Alimkhanuly

boxing. After signing with Klimas, Alimkhanuly will concentrate on his professional career and his next fight will be in the middleweight division where Golovkin (GGG) is the champion in the WBC, WBA, IBO and IBF divisions. In the meantime, Alimkhanuly will travel to the United States and sign with a new promoter.

According to Ring Magazine, Klimas was named the best boxing manager of 2017. His clientele includes Ukrainian boxers WBA lightweight champion Vasyi Lomachenko and Oleksandr Usyk and Russian Sergey Kovalev.

Earlier this year, another prominent Kazakh pro boxer, Kanat Islam, signed with Klimas. The

Lithuanian-American manager already works with four Kazakh boxers Madiyar Ashkeev, Meirim Nursultanov, Askhat Ualikhanov and Sagadat Rakhmankulov.

Klimas welcomed Alimkhanuly by posting a picture of the boxer on his Instagram account with a caption that reads "Another greatest one. Welcome to family."

The middleweight category that Alimkhanuly chose is full of aggressive and strong athletes. The division's top boxers Golovkin and Saul Alvarez have proposed a rematch for fall 2018. British Billy Joe Saunders, Americans Daniel Jacobs and Jermall Charlo are among the top contenders for the championship belts.

Currently, more than 50 Kazakh boxers are active on the professional boxing scene. Alimkhanuly, together with the Olympic champion Daniyar Yeleussinov, now joins well-established boxers Kanat Islam, Ali Akhmedov, Ruslan Madiyev and world famous GGG.

Beibut Shumenov to fight for WBA belt

By Anuar Abdrakhmanov

ASTANA – Beibut Shumenov (17-2, 11KOs), Kazakhstan's first and only light heavyweight and cruiserweight world champion, will face Turkish boxer Hizni Altunkaya (30-1, 17KOs) for the WBA (Regular) cruiserweight world champion belt. The bout will be held in the capital.

Shumenov, 34, a 2004 Olympian who now lives in Las Vegas, has not fought since a 10th-round knockout of Junior Wright to win the same vacant secondary cruiserweight title in May 2016 in his adopted city.

He vacated the title because of a severe right eye injury sustained in training for a mandatory defence against Yunier Dorticos that caused blurred vision and required surgery. At the time of his retirement in June 2017, Shumenov said he needed another operation and his doctor said he would risk blindness if he fought again.

Shumenov announced plans in January to resume his professional career. The fight, which will be promoted by his KZ Event Productions, will be part of the 20th anniversary celebration of the city being named the Kazakh capital.

"I'm happy to fight for my belt," he said. "My eye is 100 percent and I'm excited about fighting again. I'm honored to fight on the 20th anniversary celebration of Astana as my country's capital. After this fight, I want interim cruiserweight champion Arsen Goulamirian."

The 30-year-old Altunkaya, who fights from Germany, suffered his only defeat to former cruiserweight world titlist Krzysztof Glowacki when he was stopped in the fifth round in June. He won his next fight, a six-round decision over Niko Lohmann.

"I'm thankful for the chance to fight Beibut Shumenov," he said. "He's a great fighter, but I will give him my best. We have optimum time to be fully prepared for the fight. It's going to be a good fight. I'm coming to Kazakhstan to win."

Kazakhstan's Sadridin Akhmetov, Ualikhan Bisenkulov, Bobirzhan Mominov, Mirzhan Rakhimzhanov, Nurzat Sabirov, Aidyn Yelzhanov and Aidos Yerbosynuly will fight on the undercard. A bout with Sheikh Fahad Bin Khalid Al Thani, a member of the Qatar royal family, is also planned.



Beibut Shumenov

Astana to host 2019 IIHF Ice Hockey World Championship group competition

By Raushan Shamsharkhan

ASTANA – For the first time in its history, next year Kazakhstan will host the first division Group A Men's World Hockey Championship, the Kazakhstan Ice Hockey Federation announced on its website.

Kazakhstan won the chance to hold the championship in a decisive vote by the International Ice Hockey Federation (IIHF) Congress May 18 in Copenhagen over the other contender for host, Slovenia.

"It will be the strongest international ice hockey tournament to be held in Kazakhstan for many years. Astana is known as the youngest modern capital city in the world

and became Kazakhstan's capital in 1997," stated the IIHF announcement of the venue.

The competition in Kazakhstan will also serve as qualification for the 2020 championship. Two national teams, Kyrgyzstan and Thailand, will play in the World Championships for the first time in 2019. The tournament in Kazakhstan will last from April 29 to May 5, 2019. Six teams representing Belarus, Hungary, Lithuania, Kazakhstan, South Korea and Slovenia will face off to determine the top two teams that will play in the 2020 IIHF Ice Hockey World Championship games in Switzerland.

Estonia's capital, Tallinn, was chosen last week as the venue for Division I Group B, where Estonia, Japan, the Netherlands, Poland,

Ukraine and Romania will battle from April 28 to May 4, 2019.

Barys Arena, a multi-purpose indoor stadium in Astana with a seating capacity of 12,000, will be the venue for the annual hockey tournament played amongst second-tier teams and a six-day hockey game. The arena is home to the Kazakh hockey team which bears the same name.

This year's IIHF Ice Hockey World Championship Division I Group A ended on April 28. The Kazakh team was not able to return to the elite division, being passed by the UK and Italy, which ended up ranked first and second. Kazakhstan's squad failed to qualify for the 2019 IIHF Ice Hockey World Championship for the second consecutive year. The team last played in the elite division in 2015.

Kazakhstan embraces capoeira

By Dana Omirgazy

ASTANA – The combination of Brazilian dance, music and fighting known as capoeira has found a foothold in Kazakhstan.

"I train children and teenagers, promote capoeira and cultural exchange. I think that children and their parents are attracted by the acrobatic elements and communication in the capoeira group. In no other martial art, I have not seen such a relationship between children," Capoeira Instructor Anton Kuzmin told The Astana Times. Kuzmin represents the Kazakhstan Capoeira Federation in Astana.

Capoeira was developed in Brazil at the beginning of the 16th century. It is known for its quick and complex manoeuvres, pre-

dominantly using power, speed, and agility across a wide variety of



Capoeira Federation Rustam Balabayev said capoeira began to spread in Kazakhstan after the popular 1995 movie "Only the Strong." After being inspired by that movie, he began mastering this martial art and promoting capoeira around Kazakhstan. Now, Balabayev is considered an example to follow for all capoeira fighters in the country. He travels and trains in different countries inviting foreign capoeira fighters for competitions in Kazakhstan.

The Kazakhstan Capoeira Federation is located in Almaty with branches in Astana and Aktope. It is the only organisation in the country qualified to teach capoeira and develop Afro-Brazilian culture in Kazakhstan and Central Asia.

The fight in capoeira is usually accompanied by songs and music. The most characteristic instrument in capoeira music is the berimbau (single-string per-

cussion instrument), combined with agogo bells, atabaque (hand drum) and pandeiro (hand frame drum). Being fun and eye-catching, capoeira is considered an efficient tool in children's physical, social and emotional development.

"In my opinion, the advantage of this martial art is that there are no uncomfortable positions for the attack. You can kick even sitting on the ground," Kuzmin said.

Kuzmin started training in 2006. Like many other capoeira fighters, he was inspired by the "Only the Strong" film, which is considered an iconic capoeira film.

Rooted in the rich cultures brought to Brazil by enslaved Africans, capoeira's history is a subject of much debate. Capoeira's history and its legends were passed down from former slaves who preserved the art. It is the

teachings of these old masters and a few surviving documents that tell the story of this unique art.

Capoeira's origin dates back approximately 500 years to the beginnings of Brazil's slave trade period. Throughout the 488 years of slave trade in Brazil, various tribes from West and Central Africa met and intermingled in the senzalas (slave quarters) and in the quilombos (escape slave nations). From this mix of African cultures came a melding of traditions, rituals, rites of passage, food, dance, language and religion. Slowly, a new Afro-Brazilian identity with a distinct set of cultural practices was born. With this new identity came the development of capoeira, a practice that would years later be referred to as the art of liberation, according to capoeirabrasil.com.

Today, capoeira is practiced around the world.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 30, 2018

Astana is a financially self-sustaining city, says mayor

Staff Report

ASTANA – Speaking at the 11th Astana Economic Forum May 17, Astana Akim (Mayor) Asset Issekeshev said the capital city produces more revenue than it takes from the national budget.

“One of the myths to dispel about Astana is that it lives at the expense of the state budget. Considering the total amount of investments, I would like to say that over the past 20 years, the state has invested considerable money in Astana, namely 2.3 trillion tenge (US\$7 billion). The capital has returned 6 trillion (US\$18.3 billion) to the budget in the form of taxes. That is, it returned 2.5 times more than had been invested. Revenues to the state budget through Astana increased almost 80 times from 13 billion tenge (US\$39.7 million) in 1998 to one trillion tenge (US\$3 billion) in 2017,” said Issekeshev.

He also added that Astana annually transfers about 750 billion tenge (US\$2.3 billion) to the national budget.

“In other words, Astana is a



Asset Issekeshev

donor city. As businessmen say, Astana is an economically efficient project,” he added.

Addressing the forum, Issekeshev underlined, among other things, the progress of the capi-

tal in the past 20 years. According to his report, Astana is one of the fastest growing capitals in the world. The population of the city has tripled in 20 years in comparison with 1997 when only 300,000 people were registered. Today, more than 1 million people live in the capital, which comprises 5.5 percent of the entire population of the country. The city's area has also grown three-fold, and the number of cars has increased tenfold. Approximately 1.6 trillion tenge (US\$4.9 billion) has been invested in the housing construction in the capital, with the introduction of 1,265 multi-apartment houses for 180,000 apartments and overall 19-fold increase in available housing.

“Builders would understand this titanic work behind these numbers. Of course, this is a big achievement and a specific challenge,” said Issekeshev.

For the last 20 years, the gross regional product of the city has grown almost 190 times, reaching 5 trillion (US\$15.3 billion) tenge. The industry has increased 30 times. The output volume of small

and medium-sized businesses amounted to 4.3 trillion tenge (US\$13.1 billion). Approximately 1,170 industrial, social, cultural and public facilities were built. These have included factories, administrative buildings, business centres, shopping centres, museums, theatres, gyms and hotels.

“This year alone, 2,360 million square metres of housing have been put into operation. This is also a record figure. Each year, there is significant growth,” the akim said.

In the sphere of investment, new economic strategies envisage a transition from budgetary expenditures to private ones, including foreign investment. There are approximately 60 projects with private investments exceeding \$3 billion, among which more than 30 transnational companies are present. Investments have grown more than 50 times, totaling \$47 billion. EXPO 2017 became a trendsetting factor that generated wealth and investments. The volume of industrial production grew by more than 7 percent and amounted to 550

billion tenge (US\$1.6 billion), and Astana comes second after Atyrau in this regard.

“Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) are vital for us because they employ more than 316,000 people or 62 percent of the workforce. The share of SMEs is 57.4 percent [in gross regional product], representing the first place in the country. More than 19,000 new jobs have been created in the labour market, of which 15,000 are in the SME sector,” stated Issekeshev.

The Astana akim mentioned the launch of an intelligent video monitoring, analysis and forecasting system called Sergek and outlined Astana's strategy to become a smart city.

“Astana is thriving. There are specific tasks set by the President, and his most recent state-of-the-nation address entrusts us with a big responsibility because Astana was defined as the standard for a Smart City. I am confident that all our projects and all tasks with the support of our government and Nur Otan party will be realised,” concluded Issekeshev.

High-tech yurt-style streetfood restaurant with beshburger, kazy-pizza to open in Astana



By Roushan Shamsharkhan

ASTANA – A new high-tech yurt-style restaurant with Kazakh-Italian-American cuisine will open June 1 near the Baiterek Tower.

“It will be a project with a national flavour. We want to show how unusual and unique the Kazakh culture as a whole is. A united version of three main cuisines, Italian, American and Kazakh, will be demonstrated in our menu. We decided to make Kazakh cuisine more universal; we integrated it into both Italian and American cuisine, supported by big data and high-tech innovations,” Restaurant Owner and York Food CEO Miras Abdushahmanov told The Astana Times.

It is a restaurant designed in the style of Kazakh nomadic houses with a high-tech interior and integrated cuisine. Abdushahmanov was inspired by the EXPO 2017 theme, a love of Kazakh food and a desire to experiment.

The outward appearance honors the traditional yurt style but inside customers will find a high-tech theme in addition to more traditional Kazakh elements. For example, wireless chargers will be incorporated into the dining tables.

“You can just pop your smartphone in the desk while eating, it will be charging, no need to go somewhere and plug anything,” said Abdushahmanov.

That is not the sole project of the entrepreneur, however. At age 22, the young Kazakh man has already established two pioneering street food corners in Astana. He became an entrepreneur at such an early age because he's hungry for

change and determined to revolutionise the way Kazakh restaurants are perceived. With his infectious passion for food, he started working in catering at the age of 12.

“First, I washed the dishes in the hotel with my aunt in Karaganda. And then, when I moved to Astana with the whole family, I worked in different cafes and restaurants. Subsequently, working in different environments, I realised what the drawbacks and advantages were,” said Abdushahmanov.

He started to delve into the food industry by attending workshops, tutorials and exploring different cities in Kazakhstan. Born in Karaganda, he heard positive stories about the best service in the south of Kazakhstan. He travelled to Shymkent and Kyzylorda, where he learned to treat every guest as his best friend. He upgraded his knowledge in Moscow with the help of Rosproject, a factory for training food specialists in post-Soviet states. When he returned to his homeland, he looked for a professional coach and found one in Astana. He worked and learned from the choicest restaurants and chefs, namely El Gaucho sous chef, Gulnara Temirzhanova who agreed to mentor him, which helped ease his way forward as a first-time entrepreneur. Along the way he learned to create his own recipes and developed a line of made-to-order burgers. At some point, he realised that burgers with kazy (horsemeat) were a food sensation Astana residents and tourists would embrace.

“At the very beginning, we opened a small project with an area of 12 square meters. With cash raised through my own sav-

ings and borrowed from family and friends to set up my own business. I then opened my first store in

October 2017. It worked so well that we have warned the tummies of many satisfied consumers in the

coldest days of Astana,” recalled Abdushahmanov.

Indeed, it used to happen that in October, a line would develop along the street outside waiting for their burgers. That response gave them the impetus to expand the project. They make their own homemade buns and are starting a permanent workshop in the Chubary area. Their cooks will learn and experiment with baking new buns, preparing new types of sausages. He wholeheartedly believes that Kazakh cuisine is rich primarily in meat delicacies, sweets and snacks and that should be further promoted, developed and rebranded.

“We want to introduce kumys (fermented mare's milk) and shubat (fermented camel milk) as well,” adds Abdushahmanov.

Determined to maintain their eco-friendly attitude, his company selects locally-sourced items and only uses seasonal market sourced ingredients for their burgers with an emphasis on meat quality. “Our main feature is that we use whole meat while most establishments use diluted meat to make the product cheaper,” he said.

At York Food, every guest can

assemble their favourite burger or pizza and have it delivered.

The company uses big data to know the preferences of the client and recommend goods based on the preferences and history of search as Amazon operates. And Abdushahmanov is already dreaming of bigger things. In just one year since the first restaurant opened, he's launched a second restaurant and plans to franchise his chain in Atyrau.

“We will launch a yurt and finalise the current York Food establishments in the neighbourhoods. Now we are actively working with Respublika Plaza and we plan to open by the end of the year. Four to five projects will also launch in Almaty. In Atyrau, there is an increasing interest in opening our franchise,” said the entrepreneur.

Even though the street food in Kazakhstan is a very recent thing, with these types of projects and a recent upsurge in youth population, the Kazakh street food is leaping and gaining a foothold in Astana.

With a growing business, Abdushahmanov is one of Astana's innovative young food entrepreneurs.

Twenty years ago, a city of light rose from an empty steppe to become the center of a dynamic new nation. From its towering skyscrapers to its unique Palace of Peace and Harmony pyramid and lively Khan Shatyr, the new capital is fulfilling its promise as a vibrant city and world class economic and political hub.

The population of Astana has more than tripled to reach one million people, industrial production has grown to \$1.7 billion and average monthly salaries have increased by a factor of 21.5 times since the birth of the capital.

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- UNEMPLOYMENT HAS DROPPED TO 4.6% FROM 12.6%.
- FOREIGN TRADE TURNOVER HAS INCREASED 13-FOLD TO \$4.1 BILLION.
- AND SMALL- TO MEDIUM-SIZED BUSINESSES ARE FLOURISHING WITH A VOLUME OF OUTPUT AT \$13.4 BILLION.

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