



Thousands commemorate Denis Ten at memorial services worldwide



Memorial service was held in Almaty on July 21.

By Dilshat Zhussupova

ASTANA – Thousands of people attended the July 21 funeral services in Almaty of late Kazakh figure skating medallist Denis Ten. The services were held two days after he was fatally stabbed in Almaty at age 25.

Ten's 2013 World Championships silver medal and 2014 Sochi Olympics bronze medal were the first for Kazakhstan in figure skating.

Ten died from the stab wounds in a hospital following a confrontation with car thieves in downtown Almaty July 19. Two men have been arrested in connection with the stabbing and one suspect has confessed to the crime.

The ceremony took place at Almaty's Baluan Sholak Sports Palace, which was where the 17-year-old Ten won 2011 Asian Winter Games gold and silver medals. The 5,000-seat sports complex was at full capacity during the funeral services, and thousands more waited outside the facility to pay their respects at Ten's open casket.

Kazakh Minister of Culture and Sport Arystanbek Mukhamediuly opened the ceremony by expressing President Nursultan Nazarbayev's condolences to Ten's parents.

"Kazakhstan and the entire world are mourning today," said Mukhamediuly.

mediuly. "We have lost a person who wanted to make the world a kinder and better place."

Almaty residents held back tears during the moment of silence and when placing flowers at the foot of his casket and the table displaying his medals. They held banners reading "Forgive us, we couldn't save you" and listened to "She Won't Be Mine," an original song written and recorded by Ten.

Kazakh middleweight boxing medallist Gennady Golovkin flew in from Los Angeles, halting his training for his upcoming rematch with Saul Alvarez, to attend Almaty's ceremony. He comforted Ten's bereft parents throughout the service.

Golovkin also mourned the loss of Ten on social media, along with international figure skaters Adam Rippon, Gracie Gold, Mirai Nagasu, Patrick Chan, Tessa Virtue, Scott Moir, Alex Shibutani, Javier Fernández, Evgenia Medvedeva, Adelina Sotnikova and Aleksander Kibalko.

Ten was buried in a cemetery in Almaty's Druzhba village after the ceremony's conclusion.

All over the country and the world, people gathered at memorial services to pay tribute to Ten.

Kazakh speed skater Yekaterina Aydova, Kazakh speed skating medallist Denis Kuzin, Kazakh welterweight boxing medallist Daniyar

Yeleussinov, Kazakh light heavyweight and cruiserweight boxing medallist Beibut Shumenov, Ambassador from Japan Ichiro Kawabata and Ambassador from the Republic of Korea Kim Dae-sik attended the memorial ceremony in Astana's Barys Arena, where Ten had performed in the lead role of the ice show Denis Ten and Friends a month ago.

"Denis Ten is a descendant of General Min Geung-ho, the country's outstanding fighter against Japanese colonialists. We will always remember the hero of his country, a close friend of the Republic of Korea, Denis Ten," said Dae-sik in a telegram.

Memorial services also took place in Taraz, Shymkent, Karaganda, Atyrau, Aktau and Pavlodar.

Kazakh embassies in the Czech Republic, Russia, Latvia, Japan and Korea welcomed the public to lay flowers at Ten's portrait in front of their buildings. People weathered extreme heat to fill out eight books of condolences with their heartfelt messages at the Kazakh embassy in Tokyo.

"The doors of our embassies and consulates are always open to all," said the Kazakh Ministry of Foreign Affairs press secretary Aibek Smadiyarov in a July 20 statement. "Yesterday, people gathered near

our consulate in Riga. Today, a book of condolences has been opened at the embassy in Moscow."

Projects in commemoration of Ten are under way. A film script, which he had been working on in recent months, is planned for production.

"We are going to try to realise his idea and shoot a film dedicated to this multi-talented person," said Kazakh-Russian film director Timur Bekmambetov. "In his 25 years, Ten managed to do so much and had such grand plans, which he would have surely put into practice because he was a real hard worker."

Medeu Mountain Skating Rink management seeks to install a memorial of Ten in Almaty, hoping to finance the project through a crowdfunding platform.

"At the moment, we are negotiating with City Hall. As soon as the initiative is approved, we will decide on its exact location," said the skating rink's Marketing Director Aigerim Niyazbekova.

Born in Almaty to a family of Korean descent, Ten graduated from the Kazakh Academy of Sports and Tourism with a diploma with honours and had been pursuing an MBA programme in Oil and Gas at the Kazakh-British Technical University.

Coverage, A2; Editorial, A6.

Bolashak Scholarship programme celebrates 25th anniversary, sets sights higher

By Abira Kuandyk

ASTANA – Kazakhstan's Bolashak International Scholarship will mark its 25th anniversary in November. More than 10,000 specialists have been trained in 200 of the best universities of 33 countries since its launch in 1993.

The Astana Times interviewed President of the Centre for International Programmes (CIP) Zhanbolat Meldeshov to learn about the programme's key achievements, the issues it has faced and its future prospects.

The Bolashak International Scholarship was established Nov. 5, 1993 by the decree of President Nursultan Nazarbayev. The programme was a timely and visionary step by the head of state.

"The Bolashak programme made an invaluable contribution to the country's development. Throughout the whole period of its realisation, 12,898 scholarships have been awarded to students. The knowledge and experience of

graduates who have received education abroad are the driving force for our country's growth and prosperity," said Meldeshov.

"The scholarship became a symbol of trust in youth. The government invests in citizens' education and they, in turn, dedicate themselves to the country's good to prove worthy of the hopes that have been placed in them," he added.

The direct effect is the cluster formation of highly qualified specialists; the spillover effect is on youth.

The programme became a social elevator for youth. In addition, the scholarship proved to the younger generation the need to develop and strive for knowledge in order to be competitive.

At its start, the main objectives were forming highly-qualified professionals and transferring world-class knowledge and technology into Kazakhstan's economy and society, as well establishing the competitive nation.

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Direct flights to Italy will strengthen Kazakh-Italian relations, envoy stresses

By Aidana Yergaliyeva

ASTANA – Recently-appointed Italian ambassador Pasquale D'Avino says there's a need for direct Kazakhstan-Italy air connections due to the growing interest among Kazakhs in Italian culture and the prospects of economic cooperation between the nations.

In a recent interview, he said his top priority is establishing direct flights between Almaty-Milan and Astana-Rome by the beginning of next year, as he expects the routes will significantly increase tourism and cultural exchange. They will make trips easier for the growing number of businesspeople and Kazakh travellers wishing to visit Italy, while at the same time attracting

more Italian investors and creating improved cooperation.

Kazakh interest in Italy is tangible

D'Avino noted Kazakhs have increasing interest in Italy based on the ever-growing numbers coming to the embassy for visas each year, a figure that has reached approximately 40,000 annually. There is also a high demand for language and culture courses. The capital's Nazarbayev University and Al Farabi University in Almaty offer language courses, and he added the embassy plans to start Italian classes for students at Nazarbayev Intellectual Schools (NIS).

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Kazakh anti-nuclear activist wins 2018 Nuclear-Free Future Award

By Aidana Yergaliyeva

ASTANA – Karipbek Kuyukov will receive the 2018 Nuclear-Free Future Award (NFFA) in the education category for his essential contribution to the anti-nuclear movement. The award will be presented Oct. 24 in Salzburg, Austria.

Since 1998, three cash prizes and two honorary awards have been presented annually to anti-nuclear activists, organisations and communities who contribute to educating the public and policy makers about the risks and impact of nuclear weapons, as well as advocating for policy change in favour of sustainable alternatives. The jury determined Kuyukov, an anti-nuclear activist, artist and the ATOM Project Honorary Ambassador, deserves the attention of the wider world.

In the past 20 years, NFFA has honoured a range of dedicated and effective individuals and organisations around the world. Importantly, it provided international recognition for those who were deserving but not well known for their work, noted Alyn Ware, a jury member and a leader in a number

of international nuclear disarmament organisations.

Kuyukov said the award was a pleasant surprise and thanked Marzhan Nurzhan, Parliamentarians for Nuclear Nonproliferation and Disarmament (PNND) coordinator for the Commonwealth of Independent States

(CIS) countries and Convener for Abolition 2000 Youth Network, who nominated him. The two have met frequently in the last year, as she attended all the events and projects organised by The ATOM Project.

"Karipbek demonstrated incredible courage to forge a meaningful life as a painter and anti-nuclear activist despite the physical difficulties he personally encounters and the trauma of growing up in a community where so many children are born deformed and with horrific health problems, many losing their lives at an early age," Ware said.

Undoubtedly, Kuyukov has struggled throughout his life to merit the NFFA, yet he has never sought the honour. He believes the main achievement will be when the planet can be called entirely nuclear weapons-free.

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Karipbek Kuyukov

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NATION

WEDNESDAY, JULY 25, 2018

Kazakh President given right to head National Security Council for life

By Aigerim Seiseimbayeva

ASTANA – The Constitutional Council gave final approval June 28 to legislation granting Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev the right to head the country's Security Council for life.

The law stipulating his new status was published July 12 in the *Kazhstanskaya Pravda* national newspaper and came into force.

The county's parliament passed the bill May 31. After receiving President Nazarbayev's appeal to review the bill, the Constitutional Council recognised it as consistent with the Constitution June 28.

"Kazakhstan's First President – Elbasy (Leader of the Nation), due to his historic mission, has the lifelong right to lead the Security Council as its chairman," reads the law, which was signed by the President July 5.

Earlier, Justice Minister Marat Beketayev said Nazarbayev's lifelong right to head the security council follows the constitutional reform of last year and serves as a factor in strengthening the country's stability. The reform granted a number of presidential powers to the parliament and the government and made the executive branch more accountable to the legislature.

The law also expands the security council's role by providing it with the status of a constitutional body. It is now responsible for coordinating the implementation of a unified state policy in ensuring national security and defence capabilities to maintain domestic political stability, protect the constitutional order, state independence, territorial integrity and the national interests of Kazakhstan internationally.

"The decisions of the security council and the chairman of the security council are mandatory and are subject to strict execution by state bodies, organisations and officials of the Republic of Kazakhstan," the law reads.

Kazakhstan enacts law developing private venture financing

By Aidana Yergaliyeva

ASTANA – Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev signed a law on venture financing July 9 providing a number of innovations that should stimulate the private venture capital market.

The law was developed by the National Agency for Technological Development (NATD) and the Ministry for Investments and Development, reported Kazinform with reference to the NATD press service.

The government expects the new laws will foster the growth of innovation-active enterprises and venture capital market investors, create new jobs and increase entrepreneurial activity.

In the long term, the innovations will ensure scientific and technological progress, GDP growth and the country's competitiveness, said Minister for Investments and Development Zhenis Kassymbek.

The law introduces a clear definition of venture financing and specifies the features of its legal status. This will allow Kazakh investors to structure their transactions in domestic jurisdiction, thus avoiding the outflow of investment and innovations abroad.

Approaches to assessing the effectiveness of state support for innovative projects financed by venture funds have been changed, taking into consideration the high risks associated with venture investments. In particular, the results

of the entire portfolio of venture fund projects co-financed by the state will be considered during state audit and financial control, offering private investors the opportunity to more confidently invest in risky projects at an early stage.

The law also allows carrying out joint venture financing activities without forming a legal entity. In addition, other information and communication technology institutions can become involved in venture financing. For instance, Zerde, the national info-communication company, can create a venture fund to finance IT enterprises.

Importantly, the law introduces new corporate law contractual instruments in order to regulate the relationship between the parties involved in venture financing. The amendments include elements of English law. The following contractual instruments are used for venture financing, but were not fully regulated by civil legislation before the law was adopted.

The shareholder agreement allows establishing a balance of interests between shareholders, as well as avoiding conflicts of interests between persons on whom the effectiveness of such legal entity depends, such as managers, company directors and creditors. The agreement regulates a wide range of issues such as managing society and circulating shares.

The contract is the agreement to implement the rights of those involved in the partnership. It is designed to consolidate agreed-upon

"rules of the game" between partners, including the conditions for entering and exiting the business, as well as reducing the risks of corporate conflicts. The impossibility of changing the terms of the contract without the consent of its participants allows effectively protecting the rights of minority shareholders without violating the balance of interests of other participants.

The agreement also introduces a stock option contract, where one party can undertake to fulfil its obligations on the demands of the other party.

Another important innovation is the possibility of venture fund participants to require other participants on a convertible loan to contribute to the charter capital of the partnership.

The law also allows including contract provisions on representations and warranties. In these cases, representation is a statement of fact, based on the counterparty of the person who made the certification and entered into the transaction. It will allow the counterparty to spend less time rechecking the relevant circumstances within the legal expertise, receiving a guarantee for damages and saving transaction costs. The warranty is a statement that determines the essential terms of the contract, such as the price and term for retaining the force of some restrictions. Their violation gives the investor the right to demand terminating the contract and compensation for losses.

NATIONAL NEWS IN BRIEF

Nineteen projects worth 6.4 billion tenge (US\$18 million) to supply gas to rural settlements are being implemented in the Aktobe region, reports the regional akimat press service. Gas will be provided to more than 7,000 residents in 11 villages by 2019. "Today, 88 percent of the total population of the region or more than 752,000 people are provided with gas. The gasification of the Araltoke and Zhazyk villages will be completed by the end of 2018," said Energy, Housing and Communal Services Department head Dastan Amanov.

The largest expedition ever to the six most popular destinations in Kazakhstan was launched July 18, according to the Kazakh Tourism press service. Approximately 140 people will explore natural, historical and sacred sites to aid the further development of tourist routes and promote domestic tourism. "The expedition will travel the regions from Altai to the Silk Road areas. A team of professionals will visit the most interesting sites over three months. The expedition will identify necessary infrastructure solutions for the State Tourism Development Programme. New tourist routes will be launched, and a photo and video archive and illustrated guidebooks will be created," said Kazakh Tourism Board Chairman Rashid Kuzembayev.

Astana hosted July 18 the International Congress of Architects, this meeting dedicated to the 20th anniversary of Kazakh capital, reported Primeminister.kz. Leading architects, urban planners and researchers from more than 20 countries discussed modern national architecture and finding solutions to local identity questions in a global context. "Smart systems should be comfortable for residents. The city's development has reached a new level. We want to build not just buildings, but energy-efficient buildings with smart and advanced technologies. As for the housing and communal services, we have to conduct repair works and then turn to smart solutions," said Astana Deputy Akim (Mayor) Malika Bekurova. A team from Sredalab that presented a project on winter greenhouse complexes for residents won the Urban Environment: Smart District contest among young architects and students, an event held within the larger congress.

The Ministry of Healthcare has developed the Healthy Cities of Kazakhstan project to consolidate the actions of various services, including police, environmental authorities and municipal services, reported the press service of the Central Communications Services July 19. The ministry will support local executive bodies to create conditions for a healthy lifestyle and promote physical activity in universities and schools. "We will reduce air pollution and the risk of upper respiratory infections, allergy and asthmatic diseases if we reduce traffic on roads and increase pedestrian zones and cycle routes. Fewer cars mean fewer accidents and injuries, less disability and mortality," said National Public Health Centre Deputy Director Zhamilya Battakova.

Thirty-five projects worth 55 billion tenge (US\$159 million) will be upgraded in the Aktobe region, according to Kazinform. Fifteen investment projects worth 76 billion tenge (US\$220 million) were launched as part of the Basic Industrialisation programme, including the construction of a gold ore plant, a granite and building material production plant and the development of the Spring-Aralchinsky copper-pyrite deposit. "Four projects worth 62.5 billion tenge (US\$181 million) with participation of foreign investors are being implemented. A wind generator production plant, a gas utilisation workshop with soot production and an ice palace will be built. A plant on ceramic products manufacturing will be reconstructed in Khromtau," said Aktobe Region Akim (Governor) Berdybek Saparbayev.

Kazakhstan to upgrade prisons to international standards

Staff Report

ASTANA — Kazakhstan's correctional facilities will be reconstructed corresponding to the international standards in which convicts have to be detained in a single prison cell, said Prosecutor General Kairat Kozhamzharov in his interview with informburo.kz.

Kozhamzharov discussed measures to strengthen the rule of law and the prospects for the development of human rights mechanisms.

"First of all, room colonies will be reconstructed into the separate prison cells. According to international standards, every convict has to be detained in a single prison cell. It is planned to gradually reconstruct the residential blocks of operating colonies to comply with the international standards. It is also suggested to create conditions for convicts to serve the punishment based on the place of residence," said Kozhamzharov.

There are correctional facilities that are morally obsolete, said Kozhamzharov.

"There are prisons built in the 19th century. Convicts deserve strict punishment, but they are deprived of the most precious, their freedom. Their detention conditions should not be an additional punishment. It should not humiliate the person's dignity. This is based on the United Nations Convention against Torture (UNCAT) which

has been ratified in Kazakhstan," added Kozhamzharov.

Kozhamzharov highlighted that many efforts have been made this year to solve these issues.

"Last April, we examined reconstruction of correctional facilities at the extended board of the Prosecutor General's Office with the participation of the country's Security Council and interested state bodies. President Nursultan Nazarbayev and the country's Security Council supported our proposals for the modernisation of penitentiary system and bringing it in line with international standards. The government is already finalising the formulation of a development roadmap," he said.

Kozhamzharov added measures will be taken to digitise procedures to ensure the transparency of the punishment process.

"The criminal process digitisation will allow to exercise effective supervision and departmental in-house monitoring over criminal cases," said Kozhamzharov.

Kazakhstan's strategic goal to enter the 30 most-developed countries, along with other factors, requires the solution of a set of tasks to improve criminal policy, modernise the public security system, create an optimal justice system and strengthen the protection of human rights and freedom. This work is carried out with the participation of the Prosecutor General's Office.

Suspects confess to killing Olympic figure skater Denis Ten

By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – Kazakh police have confirmed two men have been detained on suspicion of killing Kazakh figure skater and Olympic bronze medalist Denis Ten July 19 and that both men have confessed.

Denis Ten died July 19 at the age of 25 after being stabbed in his thigh after he caught two men trying to steal the side mirrors of his car. Ten was taken to the hospital, where he died of blood loss a few hours later.

"As part of the investigation, including verifying testimonies of witnesses and studying outdoor surveillance cameras at the site of the crime and surrounding areas, the suspects were identified. Nurally Kiyasov, born 1994 in the Zhambyl region was detained. He confessed in the presence of attorney. He was placed in a temporary detention facility," said Almaty Chief Prosecutor Berik Zhurik-tayev during a July 20 press briefing.

The second suspect, 23-year-old Arman Kudaibergenov from the

Kyzylorda region, was detained July 20.

The judge decided July 20 Kiyasov will remain in custody for two months, while pre-trial investigation is underway.

The police initially said Kudaibergenov pleaded guilty to stabbing death, Kiyasov, however, claimed July 24 he was the one to stab the athlete.

"Currently, a pre-trial investigation into the crime specified in second part of Article 99 in the Criminal Code of Kazakhstan is continuing. Suspects Nurally Kiyasov and Arman Kudaibergenov confessed in committing this crime and submitted material evidence. In particular, suspect Kudaibergenov, when verifying testimony at the crime scene, showed where knife was hidden. It was confiscated and included in the case files," said the city internal affairs department July 24.

Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs Rashid Zhakupov told reporters on July 24 the examination will determine who stabbed Ten.

"As for the details of the crime and positions of suspects, today it

is not something new when suspects, after being detained, shift the blame to their partners in crime," said Zhakupov.

He also said the two suspects were previously charged with theft of car mirrors.

The police said in a statement Kudaibergenov was charged with theft in August 2013, when he attacked a man and stole his mobile phone. The court then sentenced him to one year.

Kudaibergenov was supposed to face trial in July in Astana, after he was caught July 11 attempting to steal side mirrors in the capital, reported time.kz.

Astana resident Sapar Shamsiyev, whose side mirrors Kudaibergenov was trying to steal, said he was sure the defendant is in jail.

"The police said the trial will be in seven or ten days and they will invite me. The police also told me the man (Kudaibergenov) was detained, that he was previously sentenced, and that he confessed," said Shamsiyev, as reported time.kz.

The police, however, released Kudaibergenov July 13 under certain conditions.

Legislative changes, including higher pensions and more expensive cigarettes, take effect in July

By Meruyert Abugaliyeva

ASTANA – Recent changes to Kazakhstan's legislation have resulted in higher pensions, more social assistance payments and more expensive cigarettes, while procedures for issuing visas and electronic passports for vehicles have been altered.

Higher basic pension payment

Some changes involved the calculation of basic pensions, which previously comprised 15,274 tenge (US\$44.75) or 54 percent of the subsistence minimum and were the same for all pensioners. Now the basic pension amount is directly

proportional to work experience and the duration of an individual's participation in the national pension scheme.

If a citizen worked for 10 years or less or did not work at all, the basic pension is set at 54 percent of the subsistence minimum. With more than 10 years of work experience, the payment increases by 2 percent with each additional year. For pensioners with more than 33 years of work experience, the basic pension comprises 100 percent of the subsistence minimum, which is set at 28,284 tenge (US\$82.90) this year.

The basic pension recalculation will be made automatically for all pensioners, and no additional documents are required to be provided.

New type of social assistance

Individuals who take care of people with disabilities belonging to the first category over the age of 18 are entitled to a state benefit set at 1.05 of the subsistence minimum or 29,699 tenge (US\$86.2) this year. The benefit is appointed for life and time spent is counted as work experience in pension payment calculations. The new state benefit will be extended to approximately 14,000 families.

Electronic passports for vehicles

Electronic passports for vehicles came into force July 1. The electronic

passports contain information about a given vehicle, its history, restrictions on its use, the quality and volume of maintenance works and its involvement in accidents since the date of production or entry to the Eurasian Economic Union. The passports simplify document processing, lower transaction costs and ensure transparency during each stage of vehicle use.

Easier visa procedures

Starting July 1, letters of invitation for visa applications must be submitted no later than five working days prior to the expected date of a foreign citizen's entry to Kazakhstan. Previously, the invitations had to be submitted no later than 14 working days before the entry.

Invitation letters should include

the foreigner's address of residence in Kazakhstan and his or her itinerary. Specifying this information exempts the foreign citizen with the visa from the responsibility of registering with the local migration office.

The application terms for valid visa extension have also been changed. Applications must now be submitted no earlier than 30 working days but no later than five working days before visa expiration.

More expensive cigarettes

Starting July 1, the minimum price of a pack of cigarettes will jump to 360 tenge (US\$1.04). In six months, cigarette packs will become more expensive by another 20 tenge (US\$0.06).

EURASIA&WORLD

WEDNESDAY, JULY 25, 2018

EXTERNAL NEWS IN BRIEF

Finnair will resume its Astana-Helsinki route in July, reported the Astana International Airport press service. The four-hour flight will be operated twice per week on Wednesday and Friday until September on the company's Airbus 319. Finnair, which serviced more than 3,000 passengers last summer along this route, flies to more than 70 destinations in Europe, including major cities, and 19 destinations in Asia.

Kazakhstan will host the Asian Weightlifting Championship in 2020, reported Kazakhstan's Weightlifting Federation press service. The decision was made at the International Weightlifting Federation (IWF) executive committee meeting July 4-6 in Tashkent and the Kazakh Weightlifting Federation subsequently received the official confirmation letter. The statement noted it will be an important qualifying stage before the 2020 Olympic Games in Tokyo. "We sincerely congratulate you on winning the bid to host the Asian championship and let us express support for the successful organisation of such a significant event," said the letter.

Experts and representatives from Afghanistan, China, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan discussed transboundary water management during the regional meeting on strengthening intersectoral interaction in water management and increasing the role of water for achieving sustainable development goals. The lack of coordinated and integrated actions between neighbouring countries has been one of the acute issues for the region facing water shortage and its deteriorating quality. The participants discussed ways to foster cooperation and offered suggestions that can be included in the International Water Assessment Centre's future programmes.

Kazakh Deputy Foreign Minister Yerzhan Ashikbayev spoke July 11 at the United Nations Security Council debate focusing on climate change-related security risks. He noted climate change can cause poverty, food insecurity, illegal migration, social instability and violent conflicts. Ashikbayev cited the drying of the Aral Sea, once the world's fourth largest lake which in less than decades has reduced to a tenth of its original 68,000 square kilometres, as a "tragic experience for Kazakhstan and Central Asia." The environmental disaster affected more than 60 million people.

Kazakhstan is interested in enhancing cooperation with Switzerland in energy, transport, small and medium businesses and advanced technology transfer and know-how. Kazakh Prime Minister Bakytzhan Sagintayev and Swiss Federal Counsellor (Minister) and Federal Department of Economic Affairs, Education and Research Chair Johann N. Schneider-Ammann recently discussed investment partnership and interregional cooperation, as well as developing projects in transport and logistics. Switzerland invested \$20.6 billion in the Kazakh economy from 2005-2017 and 436 companies with Swiss participation work in the country. Trade turnover reached \$3.2 billion last year, a 21-percent increase over 2016.

Kazkommertsbank (Qazkom) recently won two awards for its innovative products at the Asian Banking and Finance Awards 2018 in Singapore, reports forbes.kz. A jury of international consulting company representatives from Deloitte, Ernst&Young, KPMG and PwC awarded Mobile Banking Initiative of the Year to Qazkom's QR code payment product and Digital Banking Initiative of the Year to their Western Union transfers via Homebank product. The jury observed that taking into account market trends, best international practices and consumer preferences is what allowed the bank to lead in innovation. More than 200 banks and insurance companies from 40 countries were recognised at the awards.

Central Asian foreign ministers discuss regional security

By Almasbek Zhumadilov

ASTANA – Central Asian foreign ministers discussed regional cooperation and security matters July 21 in Cholpon-Ata (Kyrgyzstan).

The meeting included Minister of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan Kairat Abdrakhmanov as well as the foreign ministers of Kyrgyzstan Erlan Abdyldayev, Tajikistan Sirodzhiddin Mukhriddin, Uzbekistan Abdulaziz Kamilov and Deputy Foreign Minister of Turkmenistan Berdinyaz Myratiev.

Abdrakhmanov told the group Central Asia has an opportunity to lead on nuclear non-proliferation.

"Central Asia is a zone free of nuclear weapons, and our region has the opportunity to take the lead on this issue. We need to intensify cooperation between all the world's nuclear weapon-free zones," said Abdrakhmanov, adding Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev's initiative to hold the Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones Summit was aimed at securing Central Asia's role as nucleus of cooperation between nuclear weapon-free zones.

He also said the meeting of the ministers was a practical implementation of the first protocol reached during a Central Asian heads of state meeting in Astana in March 2018.

Abdrakhmanov also supported Turkmenistan as chair of the International Fund for Saving the Aral



Sea, the only institutional dialogue platform in Central Asia at the level of the heads of state.

The group also discussed transnational threats and praised participants' efforts to help stabilise Afghanistan and cooperate with that nation. Abdrakhmanov said the Regional Conference Women's Empowerment in Afghanistan in Astana in September will be important and offered to organise a high-level Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe meeting on Afghanistan in 2019.

The ministers praised on-going processes for international legal

registration of state borders between Central Asian countries and the intensification of interregional and cross-border cooperation in the region.

They said the region needs to expand cooperation in combating international terrorism and extremism, illicit drug trafficking, transnational organised crime and other regional security issues, including within international and regional organisations.

The participants of the meeting also called for efforts to strengthen regional trade and economic ties.

They also noted that improving transit infrastructure will facilitate

more freight traffic through the region.

The ministers also discussed the need to create long-term water resources cooperation that meets the needs of all the countries in the region.

They also affirmed their commitment to cooperation on education, culture, art, science, tourism and other spheres.

The foreign ministers said they hold similar positions on regional issues and that foreign ministerial meetings help promote cooperation. They called for regular inter-ministerial consultations and expert meetings to prepare for the

next Central Asian high-level consultation meeting on the eve of Nauryz in 2019 in Uzbekistan.

The ministers adopted a joint statement noting that they discussed regional cooperation, security issues, borders, transport and transit communications, use of water and energy resources, trade-economic and cultural-humanitarian cooperation, including interaction of Central Asian countries within international organisations.

They also stressed the importance of the upcoming regular consultative meeting of the heads of state of Central Asia in Tashkent in March 2019.

Direct flights to Italy will strengthen Kazakh-Italian relations, envoy stresses

Continued from Page A1

"This is a reason of being proud for us. This is a brilliant school institution. We believe we can show the rich Italian cultural heritage," he said.

Many Kazakhs currently study in Milan, Rome and Reggio Calabria, the latter gaining popularity especially among opera singers seeking to study Italian phonetics.

Kazakh interest in Italy is piqued by the Almaty and Astana opera houses staging numerous classic Italian masterpieces, such as this year's anniversary celebration of composer Gioacchino Rossini. D'Avino noted the collaborative work of Astana Opera House and Genoa's Teatro Carlo Felice, which participated July 5-6 in the capital's gala event honouring its 20th anniversary.

"Opera is certainly the flag of Italian presence here in Kazakhstan's major cities," he said.

It is not only Renaissance art and performances that are appreciated in Kazakhstan, as modern sounds are also encouraged. For Astana Day, the embassy and the Astana



Italian ambassador to Kazakhstan Pasquale D'Avino

mayor's office organised a concert featuring the Gabriele Buonassorte Quartet and Mauro Negri.

For those who want to enjoy additional events dedicated to Italian culture, the ambassador suggests visiting the National Museum next month, as beginning Aug. 3 Italian galleries will display paintings from Picasso's time. A similar exhibit is planned for a later date featuring young Kazakh and Italian artists and special events dedicated

to Italian design, language and cuisine will be also organised in the next few months.

Economy as a backbone of relations

Italy is an important economic partner for Kazakhstan. ENI, a big player in the oil and gas field, brings the most advanced technology to cities such as Aktobe and Atyrau and the Karachaganak, Kashagan and Tengiz fields, the envoy said.

Italy is also supporting Kazakhstan in transitioning to renewable energy and ENI's wind factory project in Aktobe oblast will soon be completed.

The relationship is expected to strengthen as the Kazakh economy continues to develop. Although Italy appears quite small on the map, it has more than five million working companies, yet only 300 companies with Italian participation are registered in Kazakhstan. Italy is a very promising partner in terms of cooperation potential and attracting investment.

D'Avino believes Kazakhstan is establishing a good basis for a favourable business environment through the Astana International Financial Centre (AIFC), as well as the nation's banking and finance systems. He noted Kazakh legislation and institutional changes seem persuasive. If Kazakhs want to build an advanced economy, however, these amendments should not only exist de jure (legally recognised), but also be enforced in conjunction with privatisation and the Belt and Road Initiative. One problem is the contrast in conducting business between highly-developed big cities and underdeveloped regional ones.

"Kazakhstan has very competent, skilful, high ranking managers. The presence of top management is interesting, but it is limited to Astana and Almaty. We want to see the same development in the regions," he said.

D'Avino supports President Nursultan Nazarbayev's plan to diversify the economy and highlighted the importance of Kazakhstan's new emphasis on agribusi-

ness for Italy. He referred to the ongoing negotiations between Kazakh and Italian companies for a pasta factory near Kostanai, a city with an abundance of wheat and grain.

Italian companies may also be interested in the country's railway system and defence and tourism industries, including in the Tian Shan mountain region in the latter category. The automobile industry is another area with a big future and a notable example is Fiat-Iveco buses running in the capital.

D'Avino described the relationship between the countries as excellent. After the collapse of the USSR, Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi was the first European leader to recognise Kazakhstan as a very reliable country, the envoy noted. Former Prime Minister Romano Prodi and former Minister of Foreign Affairs Franco Frattini are regular visitors to the Kazakh capital. Friendly relations have continued as the countries have always had a common interest in their commitment to peace and a free market economy.

EU, Central Asian delegations hold political, security talks in Ashgabat

By Elya Altynsarina

ASTANA – Delegations from Central Asian foreign ministries and from European External Action Service (EEAS) held the fifth annual High Level Dialogue (HLD) on Political and Security matters in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan, on July 9.

Central Asian authorities and the EU are working to present the updated EU Strategy on Central Asia aimed at upgrading relations between the two regions next year. The sides are also exchanging best practices in security to adopt common measures in combating terrorism, radicalisation and drug traffick-

ing, along with improving border security.

The common efforts to shape the strategy and focus on security is meant to shape inter-regional cooperation between Central Asia and the European Union. By inviting Afghanistan as a guest to the dialogue, the parties imply a common vision about the interconnectivity of security and development challenges in the region.

The session participants discussed cooperation areas, from revising the EU's Central Asia Strategy to the ongoing drafting of a new EU Strategy on Euro-Asian connectivity tasked to establish a sustainable connectivity for "equitable and balanced growth." Protection

of the environment, the use of water resources and social and economic rehabilitation of Afghanistan were on the agenda, as well.

The two regions are building inter-regional cooperation to employ opportunities offered by programmes in education, regional security and stabilisation in Afghanistan, said Deputy Foreign Minister of Kazakhstan Roman Vassilenko.

The update of the EU Strategy on Central Asia, with finalisation planned by mid-2019, is expected to enhance political, economic and humanitarian collaboration and expand the partnership.

HLD participants also reviewed cooperation within the Border Management Programme in Central

Asia (BOMCA) and the Central Asia Drug Action Programme (CADAP). Both projects have improved security in Central Asia.

BOMCA and CADAP were launched in the early 2000s as platforms to assist regional governments. Within the programmes, the EU contributed more than \$46.8 million and \$24.1 million respectively for monitoring activities, preventive campaigns and capacity building of Central Asian law enforcement agencies.

With Afghanistan on board, HLD allows reviewing the socio-economic and political situation in the region on a wider context, as well as on-site consideration of options for cooperation with Kabul on security matters.

Considering the expanding HLD agenda, Kazakhstan has suggested holding thematic seminars on cyber- and border security and economic connectivity under HLD auspices.

Several delegations recalled the Astana meeting of Central Asian leaders in March initiated by Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyev as a point that gave a new impetus to regional cooperation.

Traditionally, the HLD bases its meetings on agreements and guidance arising from the annual CA-EU ministerial meeting. The latest such meeting took place in Samarkand, Uzbekistan, with the next one planned for Nov. 23 in Brussels.

Kazakhstan and the European Union representatives later held separate meeting on the HLD sidelines.

EEAS Deputy Secretary General Jean-Cristophe Belliard and EU Special Representative for Central Asia Peter Burian led the EEAS delegation.

ECONOMY

WEDNESDAY, JULY 25, 2018

Labour, entrepreneurial programme for 2017-2021 showing positive results, says labour minister

By Abira Kuandyk

ASTANA – Minister of Labour and Social Protection of the Population Madina Abylkassymova reviewed the progress of the 2017-2021 Productive Employment and Mass Entrepreneurship Programme at the July 10 government meeting. The programme aims to advance the quality and potential of labour resources.

“In 2018, 110.6 billion tenge (US\$322.5 million) has been allocated for the realisation of the government project. These funds allow providing employment opportunities for 571,000 individuals. Within the first half of 2018, 290,000 programme participants received state support, 243,000 of them became employed and 158,000 of them

received a permanent job,” she said.

The government programme provides the opportunity to study the most in-demand professions in the labour market and acquire the necessary professional skills and qualifications.

“Starting in September, the programme will provide technical and professional education for 21,000 individuals, particularly youth aged 15-24, within a period of two and a half years,” she added.

Short-term education in the technical and service industry has already shown progress in specific regions such as Kostanai (75 percent), Akmola (67 percent) and Karaganda (58 percent). Of 9,513 programme participants, 4,732 are employed.

The second direction is target-



Minister of Labour and Social Protection Madina Abylkassymova.

ed at improving mass entrepreneurship.

“Microloan expansion, the fourth initiative of President Nursultan Nazarbayev, is meant to develop mass entrepreneurship

among self-employed and unemployed people. In 2017, 7,200 microcredits amounting to 32 billion tenge (US\$93.3 million) were issued,” said Abylkassymova.

In 2018, 8.8 billion tenge (US\$25.7 million) will be spent on microloans in rural settlements and six billion tenge (US\$17.5 million) in cities. To date, microloan recipients have created 1,808 jobs.

She noted 12,645 individuals participated in the Bastau Business Project in the first half of the year, 9,000 of whom defended their plans. The project, launched by the Atameken National Chamber of Entrepreneurs, offers the chance for unemployed or self-employed rural residents to learn the basics of entrepreneurship, as well as receive a preferential loan to open his or her own business.

Last year, more than 3,000 of 15,000 participants became full-fledged businesspeople, according to Atameken.kz

The third direction supports voluntary resettlement in order to increase labour mobility, said Abylkassymova.

“Ninety-one thousand individuals are targeted within the programme and 71,205 of them were moved before July. In 2018, 2,328 families are going to readapt into the northern part of Kazakhstan where the labour shortage is mostly featured. Approximately 2.4 billion tenge (US\$6.9 million) has been allocated for the realisation of this project,” she added.

In addition, 199 population employment centres are functioning in every city and district centre to facilitate employment opportunities.

ECONOMY NEWS IN BRIEF

Kazakhstan began supplying flour to Afghanistan through a new railway route from Kostanai July 18, the press service of Kazakhstan Temir Zholy (KTZ) reported. The length of the Kostanai-Bolashak-Serhetabat (Turkmenistan) route exceeds 3,500 kilometres. The train includes at least 50 wagons with a net cargo capacity of 3,300 tonnes. “Kazakhstan holds the leading positions in the world for the production of grain. The main task of the railway is to ensure timely and high-quality transportation of agricultural products, including this strategic cargo. The development of transportation along the new route will increase the transit capacity of Kazakhstan, reduce turnover and accelerate the return of rolling stock by two to 2.5 times,” Mukhtar Zhambulov, deputy general director for operations of KTZ-Cargo Transportation, said.

The National Bank of Kazakhstan subjected second-tier banks and other organisations to 64 sanctions and other measures following the results of their analysis of the banking activities of the second quarter, 24.kz reports. The bank imposed 24 sanctions in the form of fines, 37 written orders and three written warnings. Qazaq Banki, Bank of Astana, Sberbank of Russia, ATF Bank and ForteBank are among banks that committed the largest number of violations.

A plant in Shymkent’s industrial zone has begun manufacturing supplies for plastic doors and windows, according to kazakh-tv.kz. The plant’s output is in high demand as customers from Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan are ready to purchase high volumes of products made in Shymkent. The plant uses a special mixture prepared from locally produced powdered metals and cast parts that were previously imported from Turkey. Plant officials expect to manufacture approximately 6 million items annually. Modern equipment and advanced technologies ensure low production costs. The management of the facility plans to launch a second plant, which will double the current production volume and meet the rising demand of the market. The plant’s finished products are planned to be sold not only in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, but also Uzbekistan.

Construction of a large cement plant has begun in the Kerbulak district of the Almaty region, kazakh-tv.kz reports. According to investors, the enterprise has a favourable location, as the main highway and the major railway line pass through the district. “Most importantly, we are going to have locally produced cement and approximately 2 billion tenge (US\$5.8 million) will be provided to the budget. The plant will occupy 40 hectares of land. Investment worth 50 billion tenge (US\$145.2 million) was attracted to implement the Kazakh-Singapore project,” Deputy Akim (Mayor) of Kerbulak District Bolysbai Mombayev said.

Kazakhstan attracts 11 times more foreign investment than Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, according to Director of China’s International Economics and Finance Institute (IEFI) Zhou Qiangwu. “International investment in Kazakhstan reached \$10 billion in 2013, while in 2015 it was \$6.4 billion. In 2016, there was an upturn up to \$16 billion. Industrial investment grows as the countries adjust their policies. Prospects for attracting investment in the Central Asian region will improve over the course of time,” said Zhou, as reported by kazinform. The flow of investment is also related to the important investment environment reforms Central Asian countries have been implementing, including changing administrative procedures and improving public services, tax incentives and state support.

Gold reserves exceed \$31 billion

By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – The share of gold reserves in the Kazakh foreign reserves portfolio grew 3.3 percent reaching \$31.2 billion as of the end of May over the same period in 2017, reported finprom.kz. Last year, the figure was \$29.7 billion.

The increasing volume of gold reserves is underpinned by the rising price of gold reserves from \$11.2 billion to \$13.4 billion, according to the report.

At the same time, foreign exchange reserves decreased from \$19 billion to \$17.8 billion.

Kazakhstan’s gold and foreign exchange reserves consist of the National Bank reserves and National Fund resources. The fund was established in 2000 and has been accumulating revenues from

Kazakhstan’s oil and other raw material exports since then.

The total amount reached \$90.4 billion, 3.1 percent lower than in 2017, said the report.

The National Fund continued decreasing its resources and with such a course launched in 2015, the current reserves are estimated at \$59.2 billion down by 21.9 percent or \$16.6 billion over the past four years.

The last years have witnessed an increasing demand for the yellow metal in Kazakhstan and across the globe with the United States possessing the largest gold reserves followed by Germany and Italy.

Kazakhstan increased its gold reserves from 20.7 percent in 2013 to 42.9 percent in 2018, while cutting foreign currency reserves from 79.3 percent to 57.1 within five years.

Kazakhstan boosts oil, gas, fuel and electricity production

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – Kazakhstan’s fuel and energy industry is showing signs of growth. This year, Kazakhstan has increased oil production 6 percent, gas production 6.4 percent and electricity production 7.3 percent.

Electricity production reached to 54.5 billion kWh with an increase of 7.3 percent.

“In the first half of the year, fuel and energy industry show positive growth, with oil and condensate production reaching 45.2 million tonnes. The latter is an increase of 6.2 percent compared to the same period in 2017,” Kazakh Minister of Energy Kanat Bozumbayev said at a recent government meeting.

In particular, three major oil projects produced 27.2 million tonnes in total. Kashagan field production reached 6.2 million tonnes, Tengiz 14.7 million tonnes, Karachaganak 6.3 million tonnes. The total oil export is 36.5 million tonnes of oil, increased by six percent compared with the same period of 2009.

The volume of refined oil is 7.7 million tonnes, showing an increase of 5 percent in comparison with the same period last year.

The minister also said the volume of production of oil products at the three refineries reached 5.4 million tonnes. This figure increased 1.5 percent in comparison with the same period last year.

The volume of gas production was 28.1 billion cubic metres. Growth for the first half of the year is 6.4 percent. Gas exports reached 10.7 billion cubic metres, which is 35.4 percent more than in 2017. At that, 1.5 million tonnes of liquefied petroleum gas was produced, which is 4.8 percent more than in the period of last year. Petroleum bitumen production is 375,000 tonnes, which is 30 percent more than in the last year. The export of bitumen reached 23,800 tonnes, which is 19 percent higher than in the same period in 2017.

Electricity production reached to 54.5 billion kWh with an increase of 7.3 percent.

“In general, the situation in the market of petroleum products is stable and there is no deficit on fuel and lubricants. The quantity of fuel residues is sufficient to cover the domestic market’s demand for gasoline (351,000 tonnes), diesel fuel (255,000 tonnes) for a month,” the minister said.

Oil refineries have delivered 375,000 tonnes of fuel for agricultural producers for their spring sowing campaign.

The volume of coal production (excluding coal concentrate) is 52 million tonnes, showing an increase of 5.1 percent compared to the same period of the last year.

Economy minister notes slowing inflation, increasing investment

By Dana Omirgazy

ASTANA – Kazakhstan’s gross domestic product (GDP) growth reached 4.1 percent in the first half of the year, Minister of National Economy Timur Suleimenov said during a July 10 government meeting. The economic recovery comes as inflation continues to slow and investment is high.

“Inflation has been steadily falling and reached its lowest point in the last three years. From the beginning of the year, it was 2.6 percent,” Suleimenov said, according to primeminister.kz.

Investments in fixed assets extended their high growth trend of 25.8 percent. Industrial production grew by 5.2 percent, mining industry by 5.5 percent and manufacturing by 5.2 percent.

Among the processing industries, the production of paper products showed growth of 12 percent, the chemical industry

grew 11 percent and mechanical engineering output increased 17.2 percent. Metallurgy, refining and food production grew by 3.4, 4.4 and 5.2 percent respectively.

The volume of agriculture production rose 4 percent.

The construction industry grew by 3.8 percent over six months. The increased rate of construction of residential buildings, industrial and social facilities, and oil and gas pipelines; the building of a gas compressor station; the reconstruction of highways; the construction of a runway in the city of Semei; and the modernisation of the Shymkent petrochemical plant all accelerated the growth of the sector.

According to the minister, an increase in consumer demand and sustained business activity in the real sector of the economy triggered growth in the services.

Foreign trade turnover went up 24.3 percent or \$21 billion. Exports jumped 27 percent.

“High production activity has had a positive impact on the labour market. Since the beginning of this year, 178,700 people have been employed [as of June 1]. Wages are growing at a moderate pace. In January to May, the average monthly salary was 152,800 tenge [US\$445] and grew in real terms by 0.8 percent. Real monetary incomes for January to April increased 1.2 percent,” Suleimenov added.

Taking the floor, Minister of Finance Bakhyt Sultanov noted the growth in state coffers. Compared to the same period last year, the growth rate of the state budget revenues (excluding transfers) reached 112 percent or 407 billion tenge (US\$1.18 billion) more, he said. The revenue of the national budget grew by 114 percent or 329 billion tenge (US\$959.3 million), and local budgets increased 107.3 percent or 77 billion tenge (US\$224.5 million).

Oil and gas lead industrial investment growth

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – Industrial investments reached 2.1 trillion tenge (US\$6.1 billion) in the first five months of the year, increasing by 44.2 percent. Oil production investments increased 68.1 percent, reported Energy.kz.

“Three-quarters of the investments were attracted to the extractive activities in the commodity sector and 65 percent of investments to oil and gas production. Taking into account inflation, the growth in comparable prices is 31.2 percent year-on-year,” said the July 13 report.

In terms of investments in fixed assets, the largest investments (58.7 percent) are in the Atyrau

region oil sector. The 1.3 trillion tenge (US\$3.7 billion) is 71.1 percent more than the same period last year.

The recently established Turkestan region, composed of the former South Kazakhstan region and Shymkent, the city of national significance, has received 222.7 billion tenge (US\$650 million) in investments, an increase of 2.9 times per year. Investment volume in the Mangistau region fell 30 percent to 89 billion tenge (US\$259 million).

Approximately three-quarters (73.5 percent) of all capital investments in the industry are directed to the mining sector, accounting for 1.6 billion tenge (US\$4.6 million). The figure increased 56.6 percent compared to last year.

In the mining sector, 88.5 per-

cent of capital investments, or 1.4 trillion tenge (US\$4 billion), was directed to oil and gas production. The number is a 68.1-percent increase compared to the previous year.

In addition, 129.6 billion tenge (US\$378 million) was directed to metal extraction and 28.7 billion tenge (US\$83 million) to coal production, with an annual growth of 2.1 times.

Manufacturing coke and refined petroleum products attracted 225.4 billion tenge (US\$658 million), 38.3 percent more than a year earlier.

The metallurgical industry has 15.5 percent of processing investments. The food industry drew 46.3 billion tenge (US\$135 million).



Kashagan oil field.

BUSINESS

WEDNESDAY, JULY 25, 2018

BUSINESS NEWS IN BRIEF

National company Kazakhtelecom has been permitted to buy Kazakh market leader Kcell by antitrust regulators, reports reuters.com. The company will purchase a 75 percent stake worth \$650 million and owned by Norway's Telia and Turkey's Turkcell. As a result of the deal, 67 percent of the Kazakh mobile phone market will be controlled by Kazakhtelecom and the market will be reduced from three to two players. The antitrust committee's conditions for the takeover include maintaining existing subscription plans, independent management and infrastructure development deals Kcell had signed with competitors.

The Kazakh government will implement a new simplified taxation regime for the self-employed, reports the Kazakh Prime Minister's press service. The informally employed whose incomes constitute less than 12 times the monthly wage fall under the special tax regime, in which they will make a single aggregate payment. The monthly payment amount will be 1 MCI (US\$6.98) for city residents and 0.3 MCI (US\$2.10) for village residents. It will consist of an individual income tax, a state pension contribution, a state social insurance fund contribution and a state health insurance fund contribution.

Internet payments account for almost half of all non-cash card payments in Kazakhstan, reports ranking.kz. The turning point for internet payments' popularity took place in late 2017. Less than 45 percent of non-cash transactions pass through point of sale (POS) terminals, compared to 54 percent in 2017. In May 2018, the volume of Internet payments amounted to 184.9 billion tenge (US\$536.95 million), whilst POS terminals' volume amounted to 171.2 billion tenge (US\$497.17 million). Growth in the volume of non-cash payments was observed in all Kazakh regions, with Almaty seeing the greatest growth at 2.8 times.

Astana city civil servants will use taxicabs for transportation instead of administrative vehicles by the end of year, reports inform.kz. Astana Akim (Mayor) Asset Iskeshev said that this measure is much more cost-effective. In Russia, many large retailers, consulting companies, banks and fast food restaurants have made the switch. The Damu Entrepreneurship Development Fund became the first user of the Kazakh Yandex.Taxi for Business service. The company receives statistics on the trips taken from Yandex.Taxi, allowing for greater transparency in transportation costs. The money saved by the fund will be allocated towards the expansion of its subdivisions activities.

Kazakh flag carrier Air Astana celebrated 16 years of operation in the Russian market, reports the airline's press service. Air Astana President and CEO Peter Foster received an award for his contribution to the development of commercial air transport across the Commonwealth of Independent States. The airline began its Russian services in 2002 and now operates daily flights from Moscow, Novosibirsk, St. Petersburg and Yekaterinburg. Since 2012, 4.5 million passengers and 24,000 tonnes of cargo have been transported to Russia by Air Astana. For the first half of 2018, the passenger load factor on Russian services was almost 70 percent.

ArcelorMittal Temirtau has suspended its export of hot rolled steel coils to Iran due to sanctions the U.S. has imposed on the country, kazinform reports. "Supplies will be suspended due to the sanctions introduced. As soon as sanctions are lifted the supplies will be resumed," Alexey Agureyev, official representative of the company, said. ArcelorMittal Temirtau manufactures hot rolled steel coils and exports to more than 75 states. It manufactures at least 180 steel grades.

Kazakh banks to enter Uzbek market

By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – Kazakh National Bank and Uzbek Central Bank signed July 10 an agreement to exchange information in the banking sector that will allow Kazakh banks to open subsidiaries and offices in Uzbekistan, said Kazakh National Bank Chair Daniyar Akishev at a press conference following the signing of the agreement.

Kazakh banks, however, need to meet several requirements, which include an authorised capital stock of no less than 100 million euro (US\$116.87 million) for a parent bank and 100 billion Uzbek som (US\$12.77 million) for a sub-

siary bank, as well a long-term foreign-currency issuer default rating (IDR) of B and higher given by main credit ratings agencies, such as Moody's, Fitch or Standard & Poor's.

The two countries will be exchanging information on significant changes that affect their banking sectors as well as legal regulation and control as envisioned by national laws.

"Specialists have been working on the document for several months. It creates conditions for coordination of oversight functions," said Timur Ishmetov, Uzbek central bank first deputy chair.

Akishev believes the ongoing reforms in Uzbekistan will en-

courage local banks to set up work there.

"The big capacity of this market, large population, financial accessibility, in fact, demonstrate a huge potential of this market and probably at some point many Kazakh banks will become interested in this business," said Akishev.

Halyk Bank, one of the largest banks in Kazakhstan, which is currently going through an integration process with leading Kazakh bank Qazkom, is interested in entering its neighbour's banking sector, said Akishev.

He hopes other Kazakh banks will be encouraged to open offices in Uzbekistan.

Halyk Bank Chair Umot Shay-

akhmetova said in May that the group is planning to expand its geography to Uzbekistan. The bank's activities span five countries – Kazakhstan, Russia, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Georgia.

"We have an interest in entering the market of Uzbekistan, because the Halyk group occupies a significant place, level and share not only within the Kazakh market, but also in the Commonwealth of Independent States," she said in May.

The bank is now collecting the documents that it will submit to the Kazakh National Bank and Uzbek Central Bank to obtain the license.

Bilateral ties between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan have been

dynamically growing over the past year after Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev and Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev, who set forging close ties with its neighbours in Central Asia as a priority since his assuming the power in 2016, agreed to step up trade and economic cooperation.

The trade turnover reached \$2 billion last year witnessing a 31.2 percent increase compared to 2016. The governments agreed in March to bring trade turnover to \$3 billion in 2018 and \$5 billion by 2020.

Exports from Kazakhstan grew 35 percent in 2017 to \$1.3 billion, while imports increased 25.1 percent to \$735.2 million.

Kazakh Invest and UAE investors consolidate cooperation prospects

By Aidana Yergaliyeva

ASTANA – The head of Kazakh Invest and general secretary of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) Association of Foreign Investors signed a bilateral cooperation agreement as part of Kazakhstan Global Investment Roundtable 2018 in early July.

Saparbek Tuyakbaev and Jamal Saif Al Jarwan discussed cooperating and implementing current and new Arab investment projects in the priority sectors of Kazakhstan's economy, including agriculture, the food industry, engineering and tourism, reported the prime minister's press service.

"Your country has been and remains a strategic partner for the UAE in Central Asia and we are paying great attention to the development of the economy of Kazakhstan and the prospects that it opens for Arab business," said Al Jarwan.

Tuyakbaev noted Kazakhstan adheres to the principles of openness, protection and full support of international investors working in the country.

"The state privatisation pro-

gramme opens even more unique opportunities for your country's business in Kazakhstan and we are ready to provide all-round assistance and support to companies from friendly United Arab Emirates on an ongoing basis," he added.

Kazakhstan and the UAE established diplomatic relations in 1992. Trade and economic cooperation between the countries has subsequently increased significantly.

The UAE ranks first among Arabian Peninsula countries in terms of commodity turnover with Kazakhstan. The volume increased 3.5 times last year to more than \$380 million, according to the press service of the Ministry for Investments and Development.

In general, bilateral investment cooperation is showing stable growth. The inflow of direct investment from the UAE to Kazakhstan in the past decade has reached \$2 billion, while the outflow is approximately \$1 billion. In 2017, the number of joint ventures in Kazakhstan with the participation of the Emirati capital was estimated to be more than 190.

Country improves position on Decoding Global Talent report

Continued from Page A1

The estimated cost of starting a business, registering property rights and obtaining the right to build is lower than in neighbouring countries and much lower than the cost in comparable regions of the world (Middle East, Africa and Latin America).

Stability and growth attract labour migrants, although so far mostly from countries at a similar stage of development, while migrants are not the most expensive and skilled. A significant positive role, from our point of view, was also played by factors of increasing the recognition of Kazakhstan's image, thanks to several significant events of world scale – the Universiade 2017, EXPO 2017 and the establishment of the Astana International Financial Centre, a unique project across the region," said BCG Kazakhstan Partner and Managing Director Sergei Perapecka.

According to the survey, the United States, Germany and Great Britain are the most attractive countries for the global workforce.

The report noted 67 percent of global respondents and job seek-

ers who are experts in areas like user interface design, mobile app development and artificial intelligence or machine learning indicated they would be willing to move to a new country for the right job.

"By contrast, companies and countries may have challenges recruiting foreigners for less glamorous but still crucial blue-collar jobs. Countries need people to work in hotel housekeeping, take care of their elderly, repave the roads and work the graveyard shift in manufacturing plants," it said.

The reasons people would be open to living abroad have shifted somewhat since 2014. Four years ago, the top reason was to broaden one's personal experience. While that is still a factor, two more practical motivations – better career opportunities and a better standard of living – have risen in importance.

The authors of the study noted the reverse side of migration. Fifty-seven percent of people would work abroad, a drop from 2014; in Kazakhstan, the figure is 61 percent. The majority are young people under 30 (66 percent) and those who are highly educated (60 percent).

Summer business opportunities provide entrepreneurs with extra income

By Dana Omirgazy

ASTANA – Kazakhstan's seasons affect certain businesses. The capital's short summers are probably the most favourable time for fast income, with opportunities for both novice and experienced entrepreneurs.

Selling refreshing drinks, kvass (bread juice) and beer has long been a popular way to earn money in the warm weather, as the seasonal business typically ensures high demand and profitability. The seeming simplicity may attract many beginning entrepreneurs, but a number of difficulties may turn this opportunity into failure.

"This is not as easy as it might seem. Besides huge competition, an entrepreneur should obtain a number of permits and be ready for the attention of the controlling agencies. Of course, this business can be successful if one follows all instructions," said former business owner Bolat Ismailov.

As heat waves become more

common, ice cream becomes a favourite dessert. Ice cream sales are one of the most lucrative summer businesses, with parlours along the city's boulevards and in its parks offering a variety of flavours. Ali Oraz, a 27-year-old entrepreneur from the capital, opened his first ice cream shop in one of its parks last year. This summer, he manages three shops throughout the city.

"Ice cream is the tastiest way to chill out on a hot day. As usual, ice cream sellers begin opening their shops in May. There are a number of advantages to ice cream trading. They are in high demand during the season and have high profitability and small costs for organising a business. One also can sell some refreshing drinks along with ice cream," he said in an interview for this story.

The ice cream trade can also present some challenges, such as dependence on weather conditions and location, as well as stiff competition.

"Of course, high competition can be challenging for some ice

cream shop owners. For me, competition is a reason to be more creative, to offer better products and to sell them cheaper than your competitors," he added.

City parks are favourite summer spots for families and children. Youngsters know how to have fun and line up for face painting, a popular business idea for creative types. When the air turns cold, their services are still in demand at children's birthday parties and during the New Year holidays.

Almost all capital parks have areas where one can rent bikes, power wheels and electric cars or find inflatable bouncers and other entertainment for kids and adults.

Some local entrepreneurs open bait and tackle shops and sports equipment rentals for those who enjoy an active lifestyle. Such businesses are especially popular during the warm weather and ensure high profitability for their owners. Bait and tackle shops are located in all parts of the city and customers can buy items to use on its outskirts and at wilderness lakes.



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EDITORIAL&OPINION

WEDNESDAY, JULY 25, 2018

Upcoming agreement on Caspian legal status is important for water body, region

Given the instability and divisions across our world today, it is hardly a surprise that very little international attention has been paid to the challenges of the Caspian Sea or the fifth summit next month between the countries which border it. After all, it might be the biggest inland water body on the planet, but very few people could point to it on a map without difficulty.

But this lack of attention to the meeting of the leaders of the five Caspian Sea nations in Aktau does not make it any less important. The discussions taking place will have a big impact on the future of this huge area of water and the wider region by agreeing for the first time on a legal basis to resolve differences and encourage cooperation.

Not long ago, the need for such a legal basis was not so vital. Before the collapse of the Soviet Union, Iran was the only other country which bordered the Caspian so finding solutions to potential issues was relatively straightforward. But now there are five with Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan joining Russia and Iran as sovereign territories who rightly all have a say in how the Caspian is used and protected.

It is easy to see where there might be differences. For land-locked nations like Kazakhstan, the Caspian is a vital transport route. As a self-contained water body without access to the sea, any pollutants which flow into it from rivers, from industrial operations on it or

around its coasts are trapped with potentially damaging impacts on the entire eco-system and health of local citizens.

The stakes are higher still because of the vast reserves of oil and gas under the sea bed. The Caspian Sea basin contains some of the biggest fields in the world although harnessing their potential has required tremendous engineering ingenuity. But with such wealth, there is always the greater risk of tensions as well, of course, as environmental damage.

The potential for damage is not restricted to the fear of oil spills or chemical pollution. It might seem fanciful to believe that the very survival of such a huge water body – around the size of Japan and containing around 40 percent of all the lake water in the world – might be threatened, but the same would once have been said of the Aral Sea, which has shrunk to a fraction of its former size within two generations.

The Caspian Sea has regularly expanded and shrunk over many centuries, but there is some evidence that the higher temperatures caused by climate change have begun to reduce its depth over the last two decades. If this was to continue, vision and co-operation to counter this threat will be needed as it will to overcome many of the other shared challenges, such as agreeing on access and usage, tackling pollution and harnessing resources fairly and sustainably.

Removing the barriers to these goals has

not been easy, particularly without consensus on the legal status of the Caspian itself. Some countries argued that the international rules which governed seas and oceans did not automatically apply to an inland lake. Each, too, had its own national interests to protect and pursue with divisions over boundaries, mineral resources, demilitarisation and security.

Step by step, progress has been made with Kazakhstan playing a major part in this slow process. It was in Almaty more than 20 years ago that the first cautious steps were taken to find common ground over the Caspian's legal status. This has been followed by important measures in which our country had a detailed involvement on the protection of the marine environment, bolstering security and the creation of a plan for emergency cooperation in the case of accidents in the oil industry and on security.

Kazakhstan is now party to 17 international treaties covering the Caspian Sea, nearly half of which have been agreed between all five countries. But an agreement on the sea's legal status, which should be signed at Aktau in a fortnight, will finally provide the basis for disputes to be settled quickly and enhance cooperation. It may not receive global attention today but, given the importance of the region and the role the Caspian Sea plays within it, historians in the future may come to a very different conclusion of its long-term significance.

Bolashak Scholarship programme celebrates 25th anniversary, sets sights higher

Continued from Page A1

"I think the Bolashak programme has justified itself and made a considerable contribution to the country's growth," said Meldeshov. "The programme has prepared a cluster of surgeons and as a result, the death rate from heart defects dropped to third place in Kazakhstan."

Doctors perform hundreds of complex operations daily, with approximately 32,000 such surgeries currently conducted. Heart surgeons trained in the last 25 years will continue working for 35-40 years, influencing their own students and followers.

"Foreign citizens are also coming to Kazakhstan to undergo operations. I think within the next 10-15 years, our country's medicine and health care will evolve, and we will be able to promote our services throughout CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States) countries," said Meldeshov.

He recognised some of the brightest and most successful programme graduates who contribute to society and the country.

"In the field of medical sciences, a notable example is children's heart surgeon Dmitry Gorbunov; he has performed more than 3,000 heart operations. In dentistry, there is Bauyrzhan Aituov, who implemented innovative technology for the treatment of caries (cavities) in its early stages," said Meldeshov.

In engineering, he highlighted Magzhan Kistaubayev, Erbol Mirkhan and Bagdat Uapov, who are developing robotics. In the arts, opera singer Maria Mudryak glorifies Kazakhstan around the world.

Bolashak continues to train specialists in the medical sciences.

"Students can apply under the independent applicant category into the residency training programme. However, this direction is not popular among our citizens; this year, no one submitted documents for participating in this programme," he noted.

Since its inception, 53 percent of Bolashak graduates have completed their education in the humanities, 37.8 percent in engineering, 7.4 percent in medical sciences and 1.8 percent in the arts.

The programme is currently addressing the challenging aspects of entrants' geographic distribution and people's perception of graduates, said Meldeshov. The majority of applicants come from cities such as Almaty and the capital, possibly due to the language barrier faced by those from regions and districts. The country's trilingual system is relevant at this developmental stage.

"We have to understand that most of the innovations, whether in science, cinematography or technology, are available in English, then part of them is translated into Russian and only a quarter is translated into Kazakh. This takes time and slows the progress. In order to access up-to-date knowledge and be competitive, there is the need to know at least three-four languages fluently," he added.

People assume Bolashak graduates will bring immediate changes to the country, yet it requires time and the joint efforts of many specialists.

"Acquired knowledge is always relevant. There is a need to adapt the knowledge gained. For instance, otolaryngologists learned



Zhanbolat Meldeshov

new mechanisms in treating sinusitis and tried to apply them in Kazakhstan. It is highly relevant in our country. There might be insufficient equipment or medicines, so therefore we invested in the training of the specialists in various sectors. Thus, engineers have to devise equipment with the medical staff's direct involvement. Joint efforts help to advance the country further," said Meldeshov.

"Our graduates apply knowledge successfully in many spheres. However, it is wrong to assume that Bolashak graduates will immediately bring changes into the country. It is important to keep in mind that the introduction of new skills and technologies are gradual processes that require a certain [amount of] time," he added.

After careful programme analysis, Meldeshov plans to expand the opportunities available to Kazakh students for an education abroad.

"We are not going to be limited to one scholarship programme based on the government's budget. The centre is currently working on attracting grants from foreign universities and creating conditions for free education for Kazakh students," he said.

This year, CIP has received more than 20,000 scholarship opportunities from foreign universities, a figure the centre plans to increase to 40,000 by the spring.

Many scholarships fully cover expenses, including language courses, tuition fees, accommodations and a monthly stipend, allowing recipients to receive an education in many European and Asian countries.

"The CIP engages in creating the education hub in Central Asia and attracts franchises of foreign universities to Kazakhstan. This is similar to Malaysia's and Dubai's experience. There are plans to attract investors and professors from abroad to provide an opportunity to get a world-class education on the territory of our country. The quality of teaching has to be the main priority," said Meldeshov.

Education abroad is the current trend, and interest is continuing. In recent decades, the phrase "educational tourism" is one which has come into common use around the world. The centre strives to keep up with this development and globalisation opens opportunities to study in various countries.

"People have to understand that education abroad gives the possibility not only to study and obtain a recognised diploma, but also provide a chance for cross-cultural communication. Students can master one or two languages, develop social capital, made good contacts and network with people from all over the world," he added.

Denis Ten: a great loss and an inspiration

The terrible news of the passing of Denis Ten, one of Kazakhstan's most celebrated Olympians, has shocked Kazakhstan and the global community. It is difficult to accept that Denis has been taken from us at such a young age, especially under such tragic circumstances.

This is a loss not just for his parents and Kazakhstan, but for the entire sporting community.

The sorrow and sadness will never fully disappear. But let us pay tribute to our champion, who was an inspiration to many aspiring young athletes.

Denis Ten was the first figure skater from Kazakhstan to win an Olympic medal when he secured bronze at Sochi 2014. His diligence, determination and passion for the sport was clear for all to see.

He showed that hard work can eventually pay off. Very few people would have predicted that an ice skating athlete from Kazakhstan would ever stand on a podium with a medal around his neck.

Yet through his dedication and commitment to his sport, Denis became the first skater from Kazakhstan to win an International Skating

Union competition at the 2008-09 ISU Junior Grand Prix event in Belarus, aged just 16.

Four years earlier, at the age of 12, Denis competed with adult skaters at the Kazakhstan Championships and won. He then achieved even greater success by winning the Olympic bronze medal in 2014, as well as a silver and a bronze medal during the world championship in 2013 and 2015. He became a national icon in Kazakhstan and was admired all over the world.

Despite his successes as an athlete, Denis did not forget about his studies. He received a diploma from the Academy of Sports and Tourism in Kazakhstan, later enrolling and graduating from the Oil and Gas Institute.

Tributes have been pouring in from all over the world following the tragic news of his death. The President of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev led the tributes highlighting that Denis's "outstanding achievements glorified our country and helped popularise sport among youth. Denis was not only a prominent athlete, whose talent was recognised and revered in many countries of the world, but also a man of marked individuality, a true patriot." President Nazarbayev also instructed high officials to en-

sure that the perpetrators of this heinous crime would be brought to justice.

The President of the International Olympic Committee, Thomas Bach, has described Denis "as a warm personality and a charming man". American figure skater Adam Rippon tweeted that Denis "was so kind to everyone and a huge inspiration to me and so many other people". The International Skating Union President commented that "Denis Ten was a very talented skater and a true ambassador for figure skating".

Denis captured the hearts of many Kazakhs as well as sports fans around the world. Thousands of people have paid tribute to our hero across the country by lighting a candle and laying flowers and attending the services in Astana and Almaty on July 21.

During his short life, Denis has made a significant contribution to the development of figure skating and Kazakh sport in general. He was, and always will be, a great role model for the youth of Kazakhstan.

Thank you, Denis, for everything you have done for the country and for being a great champion. You will be sorely missed.



DISCOVER KAZAKHSTAN WITH A NEW APP

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

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

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

THE ASTANA TIMES

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OPINIONS

WEDNESDAY, JULY 25, 2018

Kazakhstan works to strengthen rule of law, Prosecutor General says

By Serik Arlanov

Kazakhstan's strategic goal of joining the top 30 most developed countries requires, along with other things, tackling a set of tasks to improve criminal policy and modernise the public security system, create an optimal model of justice and strengthen protecting human rights and freedoms. This work is carried out with the active participation of the Prosecutor General's Office. Kazakhstan's Prosecutor General Kairat Kozhamzharov spoke about the measures taken to strengthen the rule of law and the prospects to further develop human rights protection mechanisms.

In his recent state-of-the-nation address, the head of state tasked the law enforcement agencies to further strengthen the guarantees of citizens' rights, ensure the rule of law and humanise criminal law. What has specifically been done in these areas?

The modernisation of Kazakhstan's criminal legislation is in its active phase now. The work is being carried out gradually and systematically. New approaches allowed reducing the repressiveness of the criminal process and strengthened the guarantees of the rights of citizens involved in a criminal process.

In order to provide a bigger picture to the reader, I would like to add a bit of history. Kazakhstan inherited the extremely harsh Soviet justice system. In the early 1990s, our country ranked third in terms of prison population after the United States and Russia. Naturally, this problem had to be tackled. The situation was a prerequisite for excessive criminalisation and even marginalisation of a large part of our country's population.

Thanks to the political will of the President, very important legal, economic and structural reforms took place in the country, which made it possible to get rid of the status of a "camp country." The criminal,



Kairat Kozhamzharov

criminal procedural and criminal enforcement codes were fully updated in 2015 based on the experiences of Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries. The introduction of investigating judges strengthened judicial control. The actions of investigators affecting human rights and freedoms are now sanctioned by investigative judges, not by prosecutors, as was the case before.

Relief of liability due to conciliation became the criminal investigative body's duty, not its right. The spheres where alternative punishment can be applied have been expanded. The practice of early release has changed – now the court releases convicts if they have served a certain period, redressed the damage and did not violate the order in prison.

The law passed on Dec. 21, 2017 on the initiative of the head of state introduced amendments that are significant for modernising the procedural foundations of law enforcement activities. It increased the adversarial nature of criminal processes, expanded the powers of lawyers, reduced the number of grounds for arrest and the terms of detention of suspects from 72 to 48 hours, and to 24 hours for minors, as well as limited arrests for economic crimes. It is important, as it reduces the opportunities for putting pressure upon a person in a criminal case.

All the procedural sanctions that used to be issued by the prosecution have been fully transferred to

the investigative judge, which complies with the Legal Policy Concept until 2020 and the 100 Concrete Steps Plan of the Nation. We have also introduced electronic crime investigation. It minimises evidence falsification and violations of the rule of law. Four thousand e-cases have been opened to date. In about 2,500 of them, investigation has been completed, 1,800 cases were sent to the court and the courts have handled 1,300 cases.

All these measures have strengthened the guarantees of the rights of citizens in criminal proceedings. For instance, the risks of torture and ill-treatment of detainees have been significantly reduced. Eighty-three percent of detainees are detained for a period not exceeding 48 hours. The number of prisoners in criminal cases under investigation was reduced by 1,500 people.

And we are continuing this work. The President recently signed a new law aimed at reducing the repressiveness of the criminal code and the criminal procedural code. Its concept is that only those who represent real danger to society are subject to isolation. Punishments not related to isolation will be applied to those who committed non-violent crimes.

The expansion of the scope of alternative punishments is the main feature of the law. Public works have been introduced as an alternative for 258 crimes. Restriction of freedom is stipulated for 11 serious crimes against property, economy and malfeasance. The limits of significant, large and especially large damage increased twofold. Fines are being reduced and terms for their payment are being increased from six months to three years. The terms and grounds of arrests have been shortened, just like the upper threshold of deprivation of freedom for 36 crimes.

The reforms taking place in our country are positively evaluated by experts of European institutions. Members of the European Parliament did that during their visit to

Kazakhstan last May. Thanks to these systemic changes, the number of prisoners in the country decreased by 66,000 in 27 years. We have closed eight colonies, the maintenance of which required 12 billion tenge (US\$35 million) annually.

Today, there are 33,800 people in detention facilities. In the World Prison Brief, Kazakhstan ranks 82nd, which is better than Israel, Singapore and such EU (European Union) countries as the Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Slovakia.

These results are indeed impressive, however, there is a lot of controversy around humanisation. Will it not worsen the criminal situation in the country?

I was expecting this question. No, humanisation has not worsened and will not worsen the criminal situation. Judge for yourself: crime, including recidivism, decreases 7-10 percent annually.

The thing is that humanisation did not affect dangerous criminals. We have not reduced punishment for pedophiles, murderers, extremists, terrorists or bandits. Their responsibility remains as strict as before. They are not subject to amnesty. They cannot be exempted from liability due to conciliation, repentance or the expiry of the limitation period. Extremists and terrorists, if their crimes entailed people's death, as well as pedophiles, are not subject to early release. The latter are also subject to chemical castration.

As you can see, the most dangerous criminals did not fall under humanisation. On the other hand, humanisation has its own multiplicative effect. It makes the society healthier. After all, a large number of repeated offences happen due to the impact of the criminal subculture on people in prisons. They are released from there as dependents and cannot adapt to society.

Now, we try to return the strayed ones back to society – to resocialise them. Since the beginning of 2017, four types of probation have

been introduced for this – pre-trial, sentence, penitentiary and post-penitentiary. That is, the state provides social assistance to this category of the population from the first days of crime investigation. They are provided with education, employment, assistance in finding housing and sorting out their personal documents, as well as psychological and medical assistance. However, if they do not draw conclusions and violate the restrictions imposed on them, the court can replace their punishment with a more severe one. Incidentally, the recent law strengthens the responsibility of those who are released early. Now, they additionally risk their freedom if they consume alcohol or drugs.

One cannot but note the foreign policy advantage of humanisation. Seeing the humane conditions of detention of prisoners in our country, developed countries willingly conclude agreements on mutual exchange of prisoners. This way, we can bring back our citizens imprisoned in foreign states or call to account the criminals hiding abroad.

Since we are talking about detention conditions, could you please tell us about the situation in penitentiary institutions.

– This is a very frustrating issue. The basic funds of penitentiary institutions are 90 percent obsolete. There are colonies that were built in the 18th century. Yes, criminals deserve strict punishment. That is why they are deprived of the most precious thing – their freedom. But the conditions of their detention should not be an additional punishment. Those conditions should not humiliate a person's dignity. This follows from the requirements of the UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment that was ratified by Kazakhstan.

This year, we have made a lot of effort to tackle these issues. Last April, we reviewed them at an expanded meeting of the collegium of the Prosecutor General's Office

with the participation of the Security Council and interested state bodies. Our proposals on modernising the penitentiary system and bringing it in line with international standards have found support from the President and the Security Council. The government is already finalising the development roadmap.

First, we are planning to turn the colonies into cell-type prisons. According to international standards, every convict must be held in a separate cell. The plan is to gradually reconstruct residential blocks of operating colonies to meet international standards. In addition, there will be conditions in place to ensure convicts can serve their punishments at the places of their residence. We are also planning to digitise the execution of punishment, which will ensure the transparency of the process itself.

You touched upon the topic of ill-treatment. We journalists often hear stories of torture and abuse by those who should be enforcing the law. What measures have been taken in this sphere?

Yes, unfortunately, such things happen. That is why, together with law enforcement agencies, we are conducting active work in this direction.

First, we are increasing the responsibility for torture and strengthening the guarantees of protecting the victims of torture, who often depend on the abusers. The new law that I mentioned previously amended the criminal code to make sure there is no pressure on them during investigation. Today, in torture crimes, release from criminal liability due to conciliation with the victim or active repentance is prohibited.

The law "On Victims' Harm Compensation Fund" was adopted last January. Now, the state pays monetary compensation to the victims of torture. The law came into force on July 1.

The full version of this interview is available online.

New trends in global media reflected in Kazakh media development

By Svetlana Abenova

Modern society's intense technological development dictates new requirements in mass communication. Nurgul Maubertina, Kazakh Vice Minister of Information and Communications, spoke about the tasks currently facing the nation's media.

Today, experts unanimously affirm that journalism will never be the same – the high data transfer speed, mass 'gadgetsation' of society and overall development of new technologies cause serious transformation of global media. What, in your opinion, are the pros and cons of such processes?

Of course, the trends you have named have seriously changed all spheres of life of modern society and the media are no exception. When talking about the main advantages of this process, one should note the following positive trends.

First, it is the loss of monopoly on information by traditional media. Today, citizens have a huge choice of news sources. This means that the pluralism of opinions develops, while the transparency and openness of many processes increase.

Today, anyone who has a smart phone and access to the Internet can become a newsmaker, which is why we receive news almost instantly, directly from the scene. In addition, the so-called e-participation index is increasing, when the population actively joins the discussion of the most significant socio-political issues through new media.

Today, the role of public opinion is stronger and more tangible than ever. When competing with social networks, traditional media are forced to constantly develop and introduce new formats. Currently, the vast majority of them open Internet versions, accounts on so-



Nurgul Maubertina

cial media, YouTube and Telegram channels.

Secondly, the new media has become a barometer of public sentiment. They make it possible to study and analyse the key needs of citizens and their moods and get feedback better than any sociological research. This tool is priceless for a state, and governmental agencies are gradually starting to master it.

As for the media itself, journalists also have the opportunity to analyse comments, build feedback channels, react promptly to the audience's requests and, accordingly, generate the necessary content.

Today, the media cease to be just information providers and are increasingly engaged in its processing. Such a trend is clearly traced in the desire to give an exhaustive response to the audience on a particular issue and not just state the facts.

The main disadvantage is primarily the problem of new media usage in promoting terrorism, extremism, suicidal behaviour and online fraud, to name a few. It is becoming harder and harder to control such content. All over the world, states are constantly searching for an automated solution to monitor and remove illegal information.

In addition, the problem of spreading false and unreliable information has become acute.

Today, one tweet can cause panic on a country-wide scale. A well-planned information attack can easily collapse the shares of the largest companies.

Of course, we as a state are obliged to react to all this by putting the issue in the legal channel. The whole civilised world follows this path.

Indicative of this are the tough measures taken by U.S. authorities, including concerning Facebook. Or take French President Emmanuel Macron, who promised to draft a law on countering fake news before year-end. Germany and Spain are taking serious measures to combat fakes on social media.

The most developed democracies of the world follow the path of legislative regulation of the distribution of fake news. Kazakhstan was no exception in this matter. Last year, amendments were made to the current media legislation aimed at preventing the spread of false information.

At the same time, we clearly understand that in this matter there should be a balance between freedom of speech and the right of citizens to receive reliable information.

Do you really think that legislative regulation can solve the problem?

It is obviously not enough to fight fake news only through legislative means, especially when we are talking about the so-called fragile boundary that I just mentioned. We see several solutions for ourselves.

First, it is about improving the culture of information consumption and media literacy. If we have it, we will no longer need dozens of sites with refutations, plug-ins for browsers or "fake" marks on posts on social media. We must understand that this is one of the key skills in the modern world.

If the ability to find information

was important in the past, today, the ability to filter out and critically comprehend information is becoming more and more valuable.

Equally important is the issue of complying with journalistic ethics. Today, Internet journalism has put all of us before ethical challenges. This includes plagiarism, anonymity, false information sources and insults in comments that we see everywhere.

In his state-of-the-nation address "New opportunities for development in the conditions of the Fourth Industrial Revolution," President Nursultan Nazarbayev emphasised the importance of developing human resources. What new projects are planned or are already being implemented in this direction?

Yes, the head of state rightly noted that human capital is the basis of modernisation. At the same time, the professional growth of journalists is one of the key factors for increasing the competitiveness of domestic media and the foundation for modernising the information space.

You can talk a lot about competencies, their development and so on, but the most important thing is that a modern journalist has to quickly adapt to constant changes. As for the projects, there are a lot of them. Seminars for professional development are held annually for regional journalists and employees of press services of central state and local executive bodies. A media school has been operating since 2013 at the KazMedia Centre, where lectures and master classes are regularly held to train journalists of the national mass media.

I would like to emphasise special projects aimed at stimulating the development of domestic journalism, such as the Tumar and Urker prizes, Astana Media Week and the regional media forum.

Astana Media Week will be held

for the second time this year. It is an industry forum for fostering close partnership relations between journalists, media holdings, mass media and sectoral ministries not only in Kazakhstan, but throughout the Central Asian region. It is a platform for the exchange of opinions and experience, for discussing problems and establishing contacts with potential partners and suppliers.

In addition, partnerships have been established with journalism departments of Kazakh universities for the preparation of future journalists. The Professional Media Development project has been launched this year. It is aimed at providing a learning environment for journalism students in the offices of leading Kazakh media.

As part of the partnership between representatives of the media market and the academic environment, an interdepartmental meeting on the development of media education was held on the eve of the Day of Communication and Information Workers in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Science of Kazakhstan. During the meeting, representatives of the journalistic industry, NGOs and university employees discussed the current situation in the country's media market.

I think that this event will help consolidate the efforts of all stakeholders in improving the skills of media industry specialists.

Finally, the ministry has started the work on creating modern professional standards for media professionals. Undoubtedly, this will make it possible to formulate the overall strategy for labour market and training system development for the media industry, as well as to use it in the preparation of educational programmes for training future journalists.

In the age of information technologies, traditional newspapers surrender their positions to the Internet as a communication

channel. More and more experts and media analysts predict the disappearance of print media. What do you think about it?

You know, not so long ago, experts unanimously predicted the death of television and convinced everyone that it simply cannot compete with video content on the Internet. However, time has passed and TV is still a key source of information for the population. Polls clearly confirm this. In addition, the television industry has been able to master the possibilities of the Internet and today we have to state that smart TV is experiencing a real boom.

Everything depends on approaches and attitude to new trends; of course, if you perceive new technologies with hostility like the Luddites of the 19th century, nothing good will come of it. It is something different when you perceive the Internet as a tool and an opportunity to increase your audience and diversify the way you communicate your agenda to it...

The New York Times, an American daily newspaper, is a good example of how the print media use new technologies to expand their audience and capabilities. The national edition has a digital version and a mobile application and uses video games to prepare editorial materials.

The newspaper has not only been able to adapt to the new reality of the digital world, but also fully utilises all the opportunities offered by new technologies. The best practices of such publications allow us to state with confidence that the age of information technologies not only presents certain challenges for traditional media, but also has great opportunities for the development of the media industry.

Speaking about Kazakh journalism's transformation, one should clearly understand that this process requires consolidation of efforts from both the state and the journalistic community

EURASIA&WORLD

WEDNESDAY, JULY 25, 2018

Iranian cultural centre head commends ties between Kazakhstan and Iran

By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – Kazakhstan and Iran have enjoyed 25 years of dynamically developing bilateral relations. Iranian Cultural Centre Head Masoud Sheikh Zeineddin recently commended the current cultural ties between the countries and believes their development has potential.

The centre was one of the first in Kazakhstan after the country gained independence.

“The Iranian Embassy opened in January 1992 in Almaty and, next year in April, the two countries signed an agreement with the subsequent opening of the cultural centre in 1995 in Almaty,” he said in an interview for this story.

“If we look at the work of the centre for the last 23 years, we can say that we have done huge work in education, library and art,” he added.

The centre has been supporting and undertaking efforts to promote Iranian culture in Kazakhstan, offering free Persian language courses and culinary classes for students learning Persian and hosting celebrations of Iranian holidays.

Developing cooperation with Kazakh universities is among the centre’s priorities. It is currently working with Al Farabi Kazakh National University, Abylai Khan



Masoud Sheikh Zeineddin

University of International Relations and World Languages, and Abai Pedagogical University, all in Almaty.

Centres for Iranian studies, which offer Persian language courses, operate at Al Farabi University, Abylai Khan University and Gumilyov Eurasian National University in the capital.

“We helped the social sciences institute at the Eurasian University to equip a religious studies cabinet that will help religious studies scholars in their research,” said Zeineddin.

Kazakh students with bachelor’s degrees learning Persian language and literature are eligible for scholarships from the Iranian government to continue their master’s and doctoral studies in Iran.

“Many Kazakh students who studied Persian language and literature, international relations and governance have graduated from

prestigious Iranian universities, such as Tehran University, Shahid Beheshti University and Allameh Tabataba’i University,” he added.

Professors also have an opportunity to study and train at Iranian universities. More than 20 experts from the Kazakh National Library in Almaty, Kazakh National Academic Library and its Centre for Manuscripts and Rare Books attended courses on restoring ancient manuscripts.

“This year, we plan to send a specialist from Iran to Kazakhstan, so that Kazakhstan will save money and local specialists in manuscripts will be trained here,” said Zeineddin.

“The Iranian Ministry of Science selected the Shahid Beheshti University as a university connecting universities in Iran and Kazakhstan. We will make every effort to serve as a link between universities, including an exchange between professors and students as well as a provision of scholarships to students in both countries,” he added.

Last month, a Kazakh cultural centre opened in Allameh Tabataba’i University in Tehran and Zeineddin said the Ferdowsi Centre will soon open its doors at Eurasian National University.

The centre organises different exhibitions as part of its efforts to familiarise the local population with Iranian culture. In July, it presented a display at Kazakh

National Library of the works of well-known Persian miniature art master Mahmoud Farshchian, who combines classical Persian art with Western art elements. The exhibit was dedicated to the capital’s 20th anniversary.

Iranian representatives also participate in the Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions, a major annual event in Kazakhstan facilitating dialogue between representatives of different religions and heads of state, international organisations and NGOs. This year’s congress is slated for Oct. 10-11.

The upcoming visits to the Kazakh capital by the Iranian Minister for Culture and Minister for Education will take bilateral ties to a new level.

“Iran is actively participating in the dialogue between religions and confessions organised in Kazakhstan and is a permanent member of the Congress Secretariat. Every year, Iranians attend the meeting. We will continue taking an active part in such important events and participating in a religious

dialogue both at the global and regional level,” said Zeineddin.

Cultural cooperation is also dynamic in music, as Iranian bands often take part in Kazakh music festivals, including the Spirit of Desht-I-Kipchak international ethno cultural festival and Serper Folk Instrument Orchestra festival in the capital.

Babalar Sazy, a Kazakh folk music band playing ancient Kazakh instruments, presented five programmes in the Iranian capital in March. The band, he noted, received high acclaim.

In 2016, the centre organised a visit of well-known Kazakh singer Marat Omarov to participate in the festival celebrating the birth anniversary of Prophet Muhammad.

Zeineddin noted he was not familiar with Central Asia before coming to Kazakhstan three years ago for his third diplomatic mission. His first mission was to Zagreb and second to Moscow.

He once asked a professor at the university in Tehran about the role of Kazakhstan in Central Asia.

“This professor told me one thing. We have five Central Asian countries that can be compared to a hand and Kazakhstan plays the role of the thumb. Four fingers would not be able to do anything without the thumb. This was an expert and researcher focusing on Central Asia and in fact, this is true,” he noted.

Recalling his stay in Kazakhstan, Zeineddin believes local people are “hospitable, kind and friendly.”

“Once, we were on our way to Borovoye and a tire on my car got punctured. We were trying to repair it on our own as we had a tool that repaired tires, but it was

also broken. Then, a car stopped with a Kazakh family inside. They stopped and were helping us to change the tire for more than one hour. I was so pleased and it is still a warm memory for me,” he added.

He said the two countries are close neighbours that “lived side by side for more than 1,000 years.”

“This undoubtedly generates a common link that brings us closer to each other. Many names are familiar to people in both countries. They can understand more than 3,000 common words,” he added.

Islam and common culture also serve as a factor binding the people of Kazakhstan and Iran.

Zeineddin recalled Khoja Ahmed Yassawi, a Turkic Sufi poet of the 12th century and one of the most influential spiritual leaders in the region. His mausoleum, a popular sacred site, is located in Turkestan in southern Kazakhstan.

“He received his education in Bukhara from Yusuf Hamdani [one of the first Sufi scholars in Central Asia], who was Persian. Emir Timur [the first ruler of the Timurid dynasty and founder of the Timurid Empire in Persia and Central Asia] instructed building the mausoleum. It was done by Persian architects from Shiraz, Isfahan and Tebriz. All of them were Iranians,” he said.

“These important moments are part of the history of Kazakhstan and many historical sources about Kazakh history are written in Persian and are kept in old books,” he added.

He believes the upcoming visits to the Kazakh capital by the Iranian Minister for Culture and Minister for Education will take bilateral ties to a new level.

International press leaders, local journalists exchange views at Asia Media Dialogue

By Abira Kuandyk

ASTANA – The capital of Kazakhstan hosted the Asia Media Dialogue July 10 to 12, drawing the heads of leading media corporations into discussion with local and international journalists. The seminar, dedicated to the city’s 20th anniversary, included large-scale events such as the Radio Asia International Conference, the Media 2020 Conference and the Radio Asia Song Festival.

Kazakhstan’s Ministry of Information and Communication, the Asia-Pacific Broadcasting Union (ABU), KazMedia Centre and the Astana Convention Bureau organised the event, which was attended by approximately 150 delegates from 40 European and Asian states in addition to representatives of local and international media.

“Kazakhstan brought together prominent media representatives from the whole world, thereby manifesting itself as an important communication hub between Europe and Asia,” said Minister of Information and Communication Dairen Abayev.

Radio Asia, the largest industry conference, was held for the first time in Kazakhstan during Asia Media Dialogue. Its theme, “Radio – Unity and Diversity,” addressed the challenges facing radio broadcasters in the second digital age.

The fourth Media 2020 Conference Dialogue of Asia and Europe addressed the common issues the media industry in Asia and Europe must confront by 2020 and beyond. Experts highlighted the importance of media cooperation in Europe and Asia in meeting the challenges of modern times.

Leading experts from private and national TV and radio companies in Australia, Belgium, China, Germany and Japan moderated conference sessions. Claudio Cappon, secretary general of the COPEAM (Permanent Conference of the Mediterranean Audiovisual Operators) annual conference, spoke at the opening of

the first session about company’s experience in the Mediterranean basin.

ABU presented its fifth Radio Song Festival, a biennial competition based on the Eurovision Song Contest. Kazakhstan, India, Turkmenistan, the Maldives, Nepal, China, Indonesia, Afghanistan, Turkey and Vietnam were among the participants. Kazakhstan was the first country in Central Asia to host the event, held at the KazMedia Centre’s concert area. Admission was free.

“Kazakhstan’s television and radio industry are developing today and more than 200 television and radio channels are registered in the country. The analogue, digital, cable and satellite broadcasting networks are functioning successfully. The ministry is working towards a phased transition to digital broadcasting. Domestic channels are already taking the first steps to sell their content abroad,” said Abayev.

“I see not only in Kazakhstan but also in many countries in Asia that the media industry is developing fast. The media industry is taking the advantage of new technology and what it offers to enhance the quality of production, to reduce the cost of production and to give a better quality,” said ABU Secretary General Javad Mottaghi.

Cooperation with ABU helps Kazakhstan strengthen its broadcasting community and promote its interests regionally and internationally. It will also help the country improve the quality of its radio products and adopt world experience in programme production and news exchange, said Abayev.

ABU, a non-profit, nongovernment, professional association, assists in developing broadcasting in Asia. It promotes the collective interests of television and radio broadcasters and encourages regional and international co-operation between broadcasters, according to abu.org.my.

ABU has 272 members from large and small broadcasters in 69 countries across the region and beyond, with a secretariat in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

Kazakh anti-nuclear activist wins 2018 Nuclear-Free Future Award

Continued from Page A1

“Karipbek’s story vividly illuminates the tragic consequences of nuclear weapons, but also the hope that humanity can rise beyond this tragedy, break down the divisions between us and build a more peaceful world that rejects nuclear deterrence and abolishes nuclear weapons,” Ware added.

Kuyukov, who was born without arms and is one of the 1.5 million victims of more than 450 nuclear tests at Semipalatinsk, views a world without nuclear weapons as a global goal of special importance.

“I think that this work is my duty to other victims... Many children were born ill. There was a high rate of child mortality. My mother also had two children, neither of whom

could survive to be at least one year old. Therefore, in the 1990s I decided I will do everything that I can to bring change about,” Kuyukov said.

Closing the Soviet Union’s notorious Semipalatinsk nuclear test site in eastern Kazakhstan was his foremost goal when he joined the movement in the 1980s as a young boy. Reaching policy makers at that time was more difficult, however, because of less sophisticated communication technologies.

“I had to collect signatures, visit organisations and enterprises and we organised marches of peace and protests,” he added.

Although he was born without arms, Kuyukov was strong enough to realise this should not limit him.

“I can speak and I can draw.

These are the two of my abilities that I used in the fight [for nuclear abolition],” he said.

Kuyukov has given numerous speeches at international conferences about the irreversible harm nuclear weapons can cause. He has also fought alongside victims in the United States and Japan.

“We went to the Nevada polygon. I was standing next to American people living there. We protested together. I remember American police arresting people,” he said.

As part of his contribution to the anti-nuclear movement, Kuyukov spreads the message through his paintings, which he draws using his mouth and toes.

“Through my drawings I want to show not only the horror, but also how beautiful our planet can

be, and that only by standing hand in hand we can achieve the aim to fully eliminate nuclear weapons,” he added.

Kuyukov plans to spend the \$10,000 cash prize on a charitable goal. He still has strong sentiment towards his homeland, the village of Yegindibulak, and wants the money to be allocated for its preservation. He is worried the small village, just 100 km from the nuclear testing site, is becoming a ghost town, as locals keep leaving.

“Yegindibulak was among the first to feel the consequences of the testing during the 40 years [the site was active]. I remember waking up when my whole old small house was shaking with the chandeliers and how we used to run out of the house,” he said.

Kazakh literary collections to be translated into Spanish, English and French

By Abira Kuandyk

ASTANA – In mid-July, Kazakhstan has concluded agreements with various institutions in Spain, Britain and France to translate, publish and disseminate two major anthologies of modern Kazakh literature.

An agreement was signed with Madrid’s Visor Libros, while similar negotiations were previously completed in Cambridge and Paris to produce works in English and French.

Secretary of the national commission on Ruhani Zangryu (Modernisation of Kazakhstan’s National Identity) Aida Balayeva and Visor Libros President Jesús García Sánchez signed the memorandum at the Kazakh Embassy in the Spanish capital.

Translating the sample collection into the United Nations working languages is part of the Modern Kazakh culture in the Global World project, an integral part of the Ruhani Zangryu programme initiated by President Nursultan Nazarbayev in April 2017.

The project will translate and prepare anthologies of modern Kazakh

poetry and prose for publication. Each collection is approximately 500 pages and includes the works of 30 Kazakh authors. The structure and content were approved at a special meeting of the Kazakh Writers’ Union.

The initiative’s strategic partner is the Spanish Ministry of Culture, with Cervantes Institute serving as project advisor. Kazakh Ambassador to Spain Konstantin Zhigalov and National Translation Agency Director Rauan Kenzhekhanuly also attended the signing ceremony.

Visor Libros specialises in working with foreign literature and its editorial board has extensive experience in translating, printing and promoting poets and writers representing the culture of more than 10 countries. The firm is also widely known in Latin America and among North America’s Hispanic population.

As part of the cooperation agreement, the publishing house will participate in distributing the anthologies in Spain and abroad. Spanish is the native language of 600 million people globally.

“The most important thing for us is to ensure the high quality of trans-

lation in order to reach the hearts of Spanish readers. The joint work of our creative teams has to serve as a bridge for a greater convergence of Kazakh and Spanish cultures, as well as strengthen relations between the two countries,” said Balayeva.

Sánchez noted it is a great honour for him to be part of the venture, not because it is a political or commercial project, but because it is an important cultural initiative.

The agreement with Cambridge University Press will translate, print and distribute the anthologies into English.

“The support of the British Council and cooperation with Cambridge University Press, a famous organisation with 500 years of experience and unquestioned credibility, offers a good starting point for our project. It offers the best hope of high-quality translation and broader dissemination of publications not only in the U.K. but in the English-speaking world in general,” said Balayeva.

“The requirements for potential partners is high and emphasis is placed on experience, authority and capabilities of publishers,” she added at the signing ceremony.

The Cambridge University Press expressed its gratitude to be part of project.

“We are glad to cooperate with Kazakhstan in such an important cultural project and will make all possible efforts to acquaint English readers with Kazakh poetry and prose,” said Cambridge University Press Director of Education Reforms Jane Mann.

The national commission concluded a similar agreement with France’s Michel de Maule publishing house. Founder, editor-in-chief, linguist and poet Thierry de La Croix noted he sees great potential in the project that will reveal new culture to French readers.

Prestige Communication, another company, will facilitate in disseminating and promoting the anthologies in France and other countries where French either has official status or is widely used in addition to the native language.

The goal of Modern Kazakh Culture in the Global World project is to present the country’s achievements in literature, music, visual arts, choreography, cinema and theatre in the years since independence.

Nation&Capital

WEDNESDAY, JULY 25, 2018

PEOPLE

We are all blacksmiths of our own happiness, says one of 100 New Faces

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CULTURE

Marie Garel-Weiss's "Party's Over" takes grand prix at Astana's Eurasia Film Festival

B3

SPORTS

Astana Pro Team's Fraile wins Tour de France stage

B7

Five-year-old artist holds charity exhibit to help children with visual impairments

By Dana Omirgazy

ASTANA – Five-year-old artist Zere Dzhamaalova raised 4 million tenge (US\$11,614) for children with visual impairments at her personal exhibit in Almaty July 3.

The funds were allocated for the Dara Charity Foundation, aimed at improving living conditions and expanding opportunities for orphans, sick children and those with limited abilities. The foundation carries out its activities through children's medical institutions, orphanages and boarding schools for youngsters with limited abilities.

"It was Zere's and her parents' decision to hold an exhibition and send the raised money to the foundation. The foundation has been leading the Opening the World project since 2015. It appeared after the parents of a blind child addressed us complaining of the lack of special institutions for children with visual impairments in Astana and asked for help. Then, we began to analyse. Indeed, there were no institutions for children with visual impairments in Astana until 2014," said foundation Vice President Ainur Aimurzina in an interview for this story.

The foundation opened the city's first room that year which specialised in the problems of children with visual impairments up to age seven. Gradually, the Dara team realised the need to open such classes in schools.

"We addressed the city akimat (administration) and they supported us. We opened a special class for students at school No.10 in Astana," she added.

The first class, started in 2015,

is for third graders. This year, the school will again welcome first graders.

"If there are no such classes in Astana, these children would have to go to boarding school in Karaganda. It would mean that parents have to leave work, move to Karaganda and send the child for five days to a boarding school. It is too challenging for children to be detached from the family," said Aimurzina.

Children with challenges develop improved social skills when they have the opportunity to remain in their native city and attend a special class in a regular school. The classes offer specific features and equipment, such as Braille training, and the school also has goalball courts, a sport adapted for those with visual impairments.

"Astana' school No.10 is equipped with signal strips and children can safely move around the school. Besides opening the class, we organised an area for social orientation so that children could learn self-service. Now, our children are able to cook pies or make salads. In the future, our children will be independent citizens who will be able take care of themselves," she added.

Following the example of the inaugural classroom, the foundation opened similar ones in Aktau and Aktobe.

"There was a request, as the children had no adapted institution for their studies. Now, the foundation is working to open a special class in Kostanai school at the expense of our sponsor, the Global Link Company. Zere gathered funds at her exhibition to open a similar class in Kokshetau," said Aimurzina.



Zere Dzhamaalova

Zere showed talent for painting when she was three years old and her designs are full of bright colours, said her parents. Her mother

Aigerim Bektayeva, a member of Kazakhstan's Association of Artists, helps her daughter develop her talent, according to holanews.kz.

Chess champion Saduakassova ranks 11th among world's top female players

By Abira Kuandyk

ASTANA – Kazakh chess champion Dinara Saduakassova, 21, is ranked 11th among the world's female chess players after winning first prize among women at the recent Porticcio Open 2018.

"After the tournament in the Czech Republic, where I showed the best result among women, but played, in my opinion, not in the best way, I took the tournament in Porticcio as a challenge. The game was no less fierce. The tournament was attended by acting grandmasters, top players of

the FIDE (World Chess Federation) rating. In the tournament, there is also a rule of prohibiting the agreement on a draw, which made the game even more exciting and uncompromising," she said.

Saduakassova is a four-time world champion, many times champion of Kazakhstan and women's grandmaster. She received the new ranking after taking first place at the prestigious international tournament held June 30-July 7 in Porticcio, France, on the coast of Corsica, according to FIDE.

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Seedstars Astana awards WebTotem as best Kazakh startup

By Abira Kuandyk

ASTANA — WebTotem, a software as a service (SaaS) based in the capital, won the Kazakh round of Seedstars World. The company will represent the nation at the Seedstars Summit in Switzerland to compete for up to \$1 million in equity investment and other prizes.

The world's biggest startup competition in emerging markets, Seedstars World conducts more than 65 local contests to identify the best seed-stage startups, provide pitch training and award the winners with an opportunity to vie for the global title.

The Central Asian competition took place July 5 at Astana Hub, the first international IT startup hub in the region. Seedstars Astana brought together 10 selected startups with their innovative

solutions to present their companies before the local jury panel.

"For the past three years, we have seen ecosystem growth in Kazakhstan in terms of quality of startups and increasing support of the local ecosystem enablers, such as Astana Hub, Zerde, MOST and many more. It was great to see promising entrepreneurs and hear their pitches on July 5. We believe that having such a commitment and dedication will help them succeed in building their ventures," said Seedstars Regional Manager for Europe and Central Asia Agahuseyn Ahmadov, reported the Seedstars press service.

Seedstars Astana also included a panel discussion on the key factors that can boost technology and entrepreneurship in Central Asia.

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Kazakhstan's Jewish community is prospering, says Chief Rabbi

By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – Kazakhstan is home to people of different religions and confessions, including the Jewish community. In a recent interview with The Astana Times, Chief Rabbi Yeshaya E. Cohen discussed the history of Jews in Kazakhstan, the country's religious tolerance model and Jewish values.

The Jewish community, with its long history in Kazakhstan, is prospering, he said.

One of the first indications of Jews in the nation dates to the 19th century, as in 1825, 12 people of Jewish faith lived in the then-Semipalatinsk district in eastern Kazakhstan.

"They were merchants who travelled with their caravans to and from trading centres. We also know of Jews in the medieval city of Turkestan, where ruins of a 15th-century synagogue and an ancient Torah Scroll have been discovered," said Cohen.

In 1827, Russian Emperor Nikolai I introduced mandatory military service among Jewish men and obligated minors to military education in canton schools in remote parts of the Russian Empire.

The decree led to the increase of Jewish community. By 1870s, Verniy, as Almaty was known in the late 19th century, became home to the first Jewish community, mostly consisting of soldiers and cantonists, who, by the decree, were separated from their families and roots for 25 years.

"The community was not big, counting hardly more than one hundred," he noted.

The first synagogue opened



Chief Rabbi Yeshaya E. Cohen

in May 1884 in a small wooden building and 24 years later the local administration registered the Jewish prayer society.

Another inflow came during the Great Patriotic War, when the Jewish population was evacuated from the European parts of the Soviet Union to Central Asia, primarily Almaty. Many Jewish families also suffered from Stalin's repression and were deported to Kazakhstan from Belarus, Georgia, Russia, Ukraine and the Baltic countries.

"Later on, many specialists came to Kazakhstan to work on large-scale Soviet projects such as the Virgin Lands Campaign and construction of the Baikonur Cosmodrome and stayed here for a long time with their families," he said.

Cohen came to Kazakhstan in 1994.

"When I arrived in Almaty, it was an entirely different atmosphere: kind and friendly people. Quite the opposite of what I had experienced during my stopover. It is very important to continue

teaching your children to be hospitable and helpful, similar as they did for generations in Kazakhstan. This is key for the nation's wellbeing," he said.

The dissolution of the Soviet Union and the independence of Kazakhstan entailed a "dynamic revival of Jewish traditions among the local Jewish population," he noted.

"When the USSR broke up, people could return to their ancestors' traditions: Jews, Kazakhs, Russians and other ethnic groups could observe their holidays and customs openly without fear of being arrested and charged with anti-Soviet activity as had been the case for seven decades. Jews in Kazakhstan, like in other former Soviet republics, felt they could now live their spiritual life," he added.

Jews had a strong desire and commitment to revive customs, including celebrating Shabbat and ancient holidays.

"The Jewish community of Kazakhstan requested the CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States) Chabad Association to send a rabbi. At the time, I had already completed my studies and served as assistant to the Chief Rabbi of the Grand Choral Synagogue of St. Petersburg. I offered to serve in Kazakhstan – and here I am, for almost 25 years now," said Cohen.

He believes the arrival of Rabbi Levi Yitzchak Schneerson marks the "start of the modern stage in the history of Kazakhstan Jews." Born in Ukraine in 1871, for many years he served as chief rabbi of Dnepropetrovsk, Ukraine, and is considered an important figure for Jewish

community in Kazakhstan and abroad.

In 1939, Rabbi Schneerson was charged with anti-Soviet propaganda and exiled to Chiili in the Kyzylorda region in southern Kazakhstan, where he continued teaching Torah.

He died in 1944 in Almaty and was cleared of the propaganda charges in 1989.

"Rabbi Schneerson supported the spiritual life of Jews while in exile and died performing his sacred duty. Rabbi Schneerson's mausoleum is in Almaty and every year people from around the world come here to commemorate him," said Cohen.

Several thousands will gather in Almaty this summer to visit Schneerson's tomb on his death anniversary, said Cohen.

Kazakhstan has six synagogues in Almaty, the capital, Karaganda, Kostanai, Pavlodar and Ust-Kamenogorsk, all built after Kazakhstan gained its independence. The first opened its doors in Almaty in 1997.

"The spacious and beautiful Astana synagogue opened in 2004 and President Nursultan Nazarbayev attended the opening ceremony. The last synagogue was unveiled in Karaganda in 2015," he said.

Jewish values do not separate spiritual and material life.

"The wellbeing of a person, in other words the material aspect, depends on how well they fulfil the will of God, the laws governing the world that He created. And this is not just about prayers – the spiritual aspect – but the everyday conduct of a person. No killing, no stealing is the moral aspect that impacts the material," he added.

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THINGS TO WATCH & PLACES TO GO

NATIONAL MUSEUM

June 6 – Sept.10 Masterpieces of State Tretyakov Gallery

June 28 – Sept.30 Paul Sérusier and Brittany: The Magic of Legends, exhibition

ASTANA OPERA

July 27-30 at 7 p.m. Gala De Paris, ballet

August 1 at 7 p.m. Through Pages of 20th Century Chamber Music

August 10 at 7 p.m. Music Holidays at Astana Opera, concert

August 15 at 7 p.m. Benefit Viola Recital, concert

BARYS ARENA

August 9 at 7.30 p.m. HC Barys – HC Amur Khabarovsk, President's Cup

August 10 at 7.30 p.m. HC Barys – HC Neftekhimik Nizhnekamsk, President's Cup

August 12 at 5 p.m. HC Barys – Kazakhstan's national ice hockey team, President's Cup

PEOPLE

WEDNESDAY, JULY 25, 2018

We are all blacksmiths of our own happiness, says one of 100 New Faces

By Dana Omirgazy

ASTANA – A 55-year-old artisan from Semei preserves national crafts, making unique jewellery and traditional battle items from metal, leather, skin and bone. Abylaikhan Assylbai, the master with limited abilities but a strong will, has been named one of Kazakhstan's 100 New Faces.

"My father, grandfather and great-grandfather were engaged in crafts. This is in our blood. Unfortunately, earlier I did not have time for art. I worked, I did sports, but only after one day, ill-fated or happy, I continued the work of my ancestors," he said.

Assylbai fell from a construction crane in 1997. As a result of a fractured spine and numerous other injuries, he could not stand or walk.

"For three years, I could not even move. Then, I began to work intensively and this helped me to stand on crutches. I did not sit in a wheel-



Abylaikhan Assylbai.

Photo credit: 100newfaces.kz

chair – I gave my word that I would not sit in it and I have not violated that word for 20 years," he said.

While watching a TV programme about famous Kazakh folk artist and craft master Darkembai Chokparov, Assylbai realised the next path for his life. For several years, he spent each summer working with the master to learn and hone his skills, then opened his own small workshop.

In addition to jewellery, Assylbai makes nearly every piece of equipment for Kazakh batyr (Middle Ages-warrior) reenactors – helmets, armour, weapons, arrows and chain armour. He often works 10 hours a day.

His first undertaking was outfitting a Kazakh warrior with a 25-kilogramme chain mail, a three-year project. Assylbai did not have clear instructions as to how to make the armour, joining tens of thousands of wire rings in an uncomplicated pattern. When the military uniform was complete, he presented the creation at an exhibition. He also showed his work at the fair held as part of EXPO 2017.

Assylbai shares his knowledge and techniques with his students, a group that is growing every year. He also works with individuals with challenges who are seeking to learn new skills. He advises all to find their passion, believing every person is the blacksmith of his or her own happiness.

Kazakhstan's Jewish community is prospering, says Chief Rabbi

Continued from Page B1

Counting the number of Jews is difficult, as in Soviet times many people were forced to conceal their ethnicity or use documents to switch to another. Cohen, however, believes there are several tens of thousands of Jews in Kazakhstan.

"Many people, therefore, do not know their past. Sometimes, you hear people say they are Russians, but once you ask who their mother and grandmother were and in Jewish tradition the ethnicity is matrilineal, they say they were Jewish. We still have no clear idea about how many Jews there are in Kazakhstan, because your documents may say one thing while the reality can be quite different," he said.

Celebrating Hanukkah, he noted, is a "reflection of the tolerance model in Kazakhstan," as the holiday gathers representatives of the nation's different religions and communities. The winter holiday often coincides with Kazakhstan's Independence Day.

"I like when Hanukkah, which lasts eight days, falls on Dec. 16. It is a reason to be twice as happy, for we still remember the Soviet times when everybody had to be the same, as people were afraid to express themselves in their clothes, thoughts and beliefs," said Cohen.

Jews also take an active part in the Congress of Leaders of Traditional and World Religions held annually in Kazakhstan. This year's event is scheduled for Oct. 10-11.

The security component on the congress agenda gives extra meaning and significance to the event, he said.

"Today, we see more and more people distorting the words of God in pursuit of material benefits, be it money or power, and skillfully using their distorted rhetoric to capitalise on deaths. All religions hold human life as the highest of values, but extremists substitute these values, justifying deaths in the name of their ideas," he added.

Cohen believes the goal is to make religious leaders heard by

people from different countries, those living in peace and those suffering from terrorism. In his experience, he noted the congress has never witnessed an argument between participants or attempted to "identify the best religion or create a new one."

"All of the issues discussed are about love, friendship, kindness, life and peace, things that unite the different religions in today's world of atheism," he said.

"Our holy books say that once the Lord was looking for a vessel to hold His blessing and the only one He could find was peace. This means that God will give us His blessing as long as we try to keep peace. I wish for everybody in Kazakhstan to distance themselves from evil and injustice and sow only good and peace. This will bring wellbeing and accord both to this and future generations," the rabbi said.

"May God bless Kazakhstan and grant peace and prosperity!" he added.

Women's Republican Council seeks international cooperation to improve women's entrepreneurship

By Aidana Yergaliyeva

ASTANA – The Women's Republican Council (WRC) joined with Kazakh State Secretary Gulshara Abydkalikova and a delegation from the UAE (United Arab Emirates) Businesswomen Council July 3 to discuss future cooperation. WRC Chairwoman Khanzada Baltayeva spoke about the meeting in an interview with The Astana Times.

Developing women entrepreneurship can be a determining factor of Kazakh prosperity. Baltayeva feels one feature distinguishing women entrepreneurship is not only having an established business but doing good deeds and producing items or providing service that are helpful for society.

The international event was the first experience for both associations and Baltayeva believes such partnerships have the capacity to open numerous opportunities and possibilities for Kazakh women entrepreneurs. At the same time, more collaboration with foreign women councils can position them as ambassadors to promote the country.

The meeting ended with two important agreements between the parties.

The foremost is a memorandum of cooperation between Management and Business College (MBC) vocational school in the capital and Mona al Mansouri, a well-known UAE designer who will mentor young Kazakh students from the design and fash-

ion school. She will also provide a full scholarship annually for the best student with the most genuine sketches and outstanding results in academic performance and English to study in UAE universities. Mansouri also seeks to encourage young designers and promote them through a contest she organises each year. The winners will receive prizes up to \$3,000 and their works will be included in her new collection show.

The second memorandum was between UAE Businesswomen and two vocational schools, KMIB or MBC and Public Catering and Service College. The council will provide workshops led by the best chefs of the Arab World, as well as projects and internship opportunities in Arab restaurants.

"The students who will have such world class certification and experience that these women are willing to provide would put their candidacy in demand here in Kazakhstan," said Baltayeva.

Abydkalikova noted a new perfume production facility in one of the schools might be opened.

Baltayeva added this is just the first step and will result in a positive outcome. She believes if other embassies followed Kazakhstan's and the UAE's lead to work with the WRC, their teamwork would produce greater progress than the sum of their separate efforts.

Future projections

"This idea gets me excited. I want to cooperate with [women's councils in] all the other countries," said Baltayeva.

She predicts women entrepreneurship in general, and particularly in Kazakhstan, should flourish by expanding to foreign markets that are easier to access with the combined efforts of international women's associations.

"UAE Businesswomen liked the idea very much that they can share their experience and, most importantly, that their experience is interesting for us. They want to learn things from us, too, like our Oriental desserts and boursaqs

(traditional deep-fried donuts)," she said.

Cooperation can also contribute to attracting potential investors to the country, such as the UAE businesswomen who are interested in starting enterprises and investing in Kazakhstan. WRC and the UAE delegation toured local factories, learning production in Kazakhstan is cheaper, and were satisfied with the new regulations the government promised to enforce during the Kazakhstan Global Investment Roundtable.

Developing women entrepreneurship can be a determining factor of Kazakh prosperity. Baltayeva feels one feature distinguishing women entrepreneurship is not only having an established business but doing good deeds and producing items or providing service that are helpful for society.

Transparency International research shows women are less likely to pay bribes, and a higher level of their involvement in public life is associated with lower levels of corruption.

"A woman with a woman will reach an agreement faster," she added.

State of Kazakh women entrepreneurship

Kazakhstan has made progress in developing women entrepreneurship, yet there is still room for improvement, said Abydkalikova. It is not as perfect as it seems, noting the gap between urban and rural areas. Women entrepreneurship is well developed in big cities like Almaty and the capital but needs assistance on the regional level.

She added despite the fact the President and Constitution have made clear points about eliminating discrimination in all forms, it still exists. Statistics show income inequality between men and women, as men are more likely to be employed than women and women hold fewer leadership positions.

"We need help, but help is not just financial. It is rather the joint effort of people who want to make changes," said Baltayeva.

Sandra Real on being Mexican in Astana, cultural similarities and learning Kazakh

By Aidana Yergaliyeva

ASTANA – Sandra Real, a Mexican student at Nazarbayev University, recently shared her daily experiences and thoughts in an interview with The Astana Times.

Real, who learned about Kazakhstan as a 10-year-old by reading a book about the Soviet republics, always dreamed of visiting the country. Her wish finally came true, as she has been living and studying in the capital for nearly a year and is willing to stay.

"After graduation, if we put this in mathematical quantities, I want to stay here 80 percent if there is an opportunity, because you know I think that Astana is slowly developing and there are many opportunities," she said.

Real is one of only a few Mexicans living in the city, each of whom is either studying or conducting business. She knows only four others from her native land and while they typically communicate through social networking rather than formal gatherings, this year they plan to organise some cultural celebrations. Due to their small numbers, the festivities will not be solely dedicated to Mexico,



Sandra Real

but to the Latin American community in general.

While Kazakhstan has an embassy in Mexico, there is no Mexican embassy in Astana. As a result, visiting Mexicans must rely on documentation help from their embassy in Turkey. Real would like to help in establishing an embassy.

"Of course, not only all by myself, but with the collaboration of other Mexican citizens. Maybe, we can join and think about it in the future. I would like to assist if the opportunity presents itself," she said.

Real would like to see more Mexicans in Kazakhstan. Businesspeople should consider exporting avocados, Mexico's most abundant fruit, because those carried by local supermarkets are scarce and not high quality, she thinks. The city also lacks a restaurant with Mexican cuisine. She has also noticed many Kazakhs are interested in learning Spanish.

"There are a lot of people who are passionate about learning language. Some of them have already visited Spain or other Spanish speaking countries and some of them just amaze me. We had one event here at the university last semester – it was the day of Spanish language and culture. It was quite surprising to see so many people [interested] and also some of the speakers who participated in the event spoke the Spanish language so well. I was surprised with their level of proficiency," she said.

Although Real enjoys living in Kazakhstan and wants to remain, the distance and lack of communication in Spanish makes her miss her homeland. Her culture is very important to her in spite of many problems like the high rate of corruption and instabilities.

"Even though I don't use the

Spanish language here, I listen to songs or I show my culture to the students here through gastronomic creations, as one of my passions is cooking. Of course, it is not very close to the original Mexican food, as it hard to find many ingredients here in Astana. But still I think this is a connection. Connection comes mostly from the soul," she said.

Mexican and Kazakh cultures

Mexican and Kazakh cultures share a number of similarities, the most prominent being the importance of family.

"Usually, [in Mexico] you're not independent until you are at the legal age. You still have support from your parents," said Real.

Although the countries differ in their religious majorities, they have similar sentiments.

"While the majority of Kazakhs are Muslims, we [Mexicans] are Catholics. Actually, we don't take religion quite as seriously as well. We are more on the secular part, especially the young generation. Of course, we have our beliefs, but we don't have to visit a church every Sunday," she added.

As for cuisine, Mexicans consume more beef and pork and it's completely extraordinary to eat horse meat.

"For people who are not familiar with Kazakh gastronomic culture, it will be quite shocking to consume things like qazy (horsemeat sausage) and qarta (boiled horse intestine). For me, it is delicious. Beshbarmak (meat, noodles and onion sauce) is one of my favourite dishes here in Kazakhstan," she said.

Challenges in learning Kazakh

Real is learning Kazakh, but notes there is a lack of quality material available to help one master the language.

"There is only one book in English and it is not the best book on the market, because I feel even though you finish all the lessons in this book, there is still a lot to learn in the Kazakh language. It depends on the region you come from, maybe the expressions you use. Constructing one sentence can be interpreted in five different ways. Also, the part when you have to add suffixes [is hard]. The pronunciation is hard, as we for-

eigners don't have some letters," she said.

She started with a PDF of Colloquial Kazakh, using the book to learn the alphabet. Fortunately, she found the task a bit easier, because she studied Bulgarian five years ago and was familiar with Cyrillic letters. Real practiced the language in Mexico with native speakers during events and cultural celebrations organised by the embassy, but managed to learn only the basics. It is still a challenge to learn Kazakh in Kazakhstan.

"Actually, I still cannot construct a sentence, even though I'm immersed in the environment. Here, people I meet are more Russian speaking. There are only five people on my floor who speak Kazakh and sometimes they also speak Russian. It is more of a mixture of the two. At first, it was quite confusing to me. There are not many opportunities to practice," she said.

Real's facial features are very similar to Kazakh ones and in practicing the language she receives opposite feedback from people. Those who think she is Kazakh judge her for not speaking her "native" language, while others admire that as a foreigner she is trying to learn it.

"It was quite amazing when I wanted to buy kumyss (fermented mare's milk). I enjoyed it and when I wanted to pay for it, the lady selling it said 'No-no, it's free. It's free!' I was like 'why?' and she said 'you speak Kazakh,'" she said.

CULTURE

WEDNESDAY, JULY 25, 2018

Marie Garel-Weiss's "Party's Over" takes grand prix at Astana's Eurasia Film Festival

By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – "Party's Over," the first feature film by French director and screenwriter Marie Garel-Weiss, won the grand prix of the July 1-7 Eurasia Film Festival in Astana.

Established in 1998, the Eurasia Film Festival is the largest film festival in Central Asia. The festival is accredited by the International Federation of Producers' Associations and was included in the International Film Guide's list of the world's 35 leading film festivals in 2012.

"Party's Over" is a debut feature film for Marie Garel-Weiss that tells a story of two young women, Céleste and Sihem, who ended up in a rehabilitation facility after years of substance abuse and quickly became friends. The film depicts their struggle after they leave the rehabilitation centre

and had to piece their lives back together.

An annual event that this year had its 14th edition brought 12 feature films in a main competition programme and 35 films in a short film competition programme.

The organisers received approximately 1,000 applications, and 98 films, including 21 from Kazakhstan, were selected for in-competition and out-of-competition programmes.

Out-of-competition programme cut across different sections.

These include "Caravan" that screened films from the Turkic countries, "From the Heart of Eurasia" that brought Kazakh feature films, documentaries and animations movies, "NETPAC (Network for the Promotion of Asian Cinema) Choice," "Around the World" presenting films that won top prizes at A-class international film festivals, "Objective" that showed 12 documentaries from around the world, and "Special Event."



French Ambassador in Kazakhstan Philippe Martinet (C) receives the prize for Marie Garel-Weiss from Kazakh Minister of Culture and Sport Arystanbek Mukhamediyev.

Best Director award went to Bulgarian director Milko Lazarov for his feature film "Aga."

Karim Mirkhadiyev won a Best Male Lead award for his role in "Perseverance" directed by Rashid Ma-

likov from Uzbekistan, and Marta Kozlova was named best actress for her role in "Anna's War" directed by Alexei Fedorchenko from Russia.

Every year the festival organisers invite prominent actors from across the globe to headline the event. This year French actor Vincent Cassel, Serbian filmmaker and actor Emir Kusturica visited the capital for the festival.

Kazakh actress and this year's Cannes Best Actress award winner Samal Yeslyamova also attended the festival and was among international short film juries.

Russian director Huat Akhmetov's "Aruakh" premiered as part of the festival starring famous Kazakh actor Asanali Ashimov.

Another highlight of the festival was a performance by Emir Kusturica and his world renowned The No Smoking Orchestra during an opening ceremony.

At a press conference, Kusturica spoke about the trends in global

cinema industry and his impression of the Kazakh capital. He believes the overwhelming majority of films have no value.

"The world witnesses two movements – films based on realism and surrealism (phantasmagoria). Such films as 'Star Wars,' 'American Heroes' that reflect power, majesty and might. On the other side, there are films that narrate a real story that are really worth watching. They are of course produced by independent companies," said Kusturica.

Global cinema industry, he noted, is driven by commercial market and its demand.

The Serbian director is interested in making a film in Kazakh steppes based on novels written by one of his favourite authors Chingiz Aitmatov.

Speaking about Astana, he called the Kazakh capital a "delicious city."

"It gives me the feeling of calmness and soul harmony," he said.

Astana Opera presents open-air performance in Borovoye

By Yerbolat Uatkhany

ASTANA – Astana Opera travelled to Borovoye July 14 to present "Birzhan-Sara." The open-air event was dedicated to the capital's 20th anniversary, and the directors decided that the forest acoustics can bring fresh colour to the singing.

"Birzhan-Sara" is the property of Kazakh opera art. To make the production more authentic and show the unique world of the Kazakh countryside, the Astana Opera administration has organised the performance in one of the nation's most beautiful spots.

The premiere of composer Mukan Tulebayev's new stage edition opened to grandiose audiences this spring at Astana Opera. The open-air event was supported by the Ministry of Culture and Sports.

All dramaturgy, with the exclusive decisions of the production group, and scenographic decisions of the play were preserved. The specifics of the theatre are conditional, however, and the experience of performing outdoors opened new opportunities.

Nature was part of the scenery, although the audience was still able to see the stunning waterfall, which so impressed those in the theatre, and pictures for the public's imagination. The beautiful voices of the soloists, such as Birzhan singing his aria from afar, and harmonious sound of the orchestra

promised unforgettable impressions.

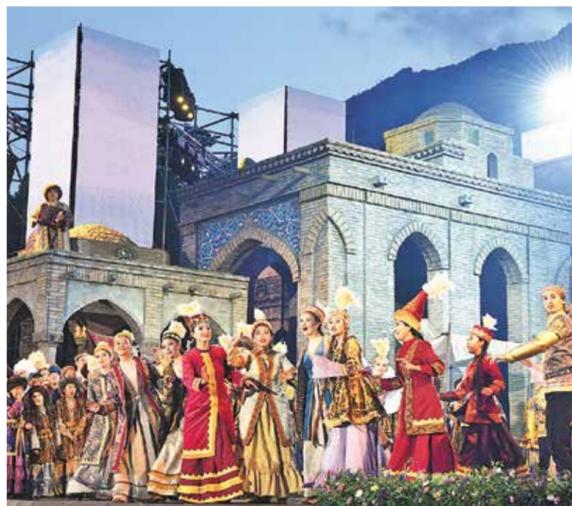
The concept of the performance is characterised by the lack of a one-dimensional interpretation of the characters' images. Viewers will get to know the story of Birzhan and Sara, a love that did not find a place on earth. The opera traditionally ends with the death of the protagonist, but the directors have decided to show the audience that the love sacrificed was not in vain.

International competition laureate Meir Baines played the part of Birzhan, while Kazakh honoured artist and state premium laureate

Maira Mukhamedkyzy performed the part of Sara.

The performance featured Kazakh honoured art workers Zhanat Shykbayev (Zhanbota), Dina Khamzina (Analyk) and Saltanat Akhmetova (Altynai). The cast was completed by international competition laureate Talgat Galehev (Zhienkul), Shyngys Rasykhan (Kozhagul), Ramzat Balakishiyev (Serik) and Beimbet Tanarykov (Estai).

Kazakhstan President Nursultan Nazarbayev, who is an avid opera lover, attended the staging of Birzhan Sara opera in Borovoye.



Indian Cultural Centre in Astana offers yoga, Indian dance and other classes

By Dana Omirgazy

ASTANA – Free classes on Indian music, dance, the Hindi language and yoga were recently launched at the Swami Vivekananda Cultural Centre (SVCC), the Embassy of India press service announced.

According to Sanjay Garg, SVCC director, the classes are open for everyone regardless of age or educational qualifications.

"Indian dance classes would include lessons in Indian classical dance form – Kathak, – as well as [that seen] in Bollywood (contemporary dance). The music classes would include lessons in both instrumental and vocal music traditions of India. Lessons in playing of the Indian drum (Tabla) and

flute (Bansuri) as well as the singing of Bollywood and other Hindi songs would be offered at beginner and advance levels," the announcement said.

Yoga classes are also available at SVCC. Two open sessions will welcome non-enrolled persons without prior appointment each week. A new course for the Hindi language at the beginner level has been introduced for the first time at the centre.

All of these courses are available at the SVCC, located at 2 Zhyly Oi Street, 2 Karaotkel Microdistrict 2.

The embassy of India also runs the Centre for Indian Music and Dance (CIMD) at Nazarbayev University, which opened July 18. Indian music, dance and yoga classes are being offered.

SVCC, formerly known as In-

dian Cultural Centre is a cultural wing of the embassy, set up in May 1994 in Almaty to strengthen cultural relations between India and Kazakhstan. The centre moved to Astana 2007, when the embassy was relocated from Almaty to Astana.

SVCC has been engaged in cultural activities, including yoga, dance and Hindi classes, the celebration of Indian festivals, the organising of cultural performances by the centre students, the screening of Indian films and documentaries and the organising of performances by visiting Indian cultural troupes in Kazakhstan and Kazakhstan's cultural troupes in India. The centre also houses a library.

More information about the classes can be found at www.indembastana.in.

Film studio plan for Technopark in Astana

Staff Report

ASTANA – Astana Invest City Development Centre for Investment and V.S.E.E. company headed by Kazakh actor and director Niyaz Abdygapar recently signed a memorandum to establish a film studio at Technopark located on the premises of the Tselinselmash plant, reported Astana Akimat (city administration) press service.

"We helped find the venue thanks to social entrepreneurship

corporation... The building has a good condition and occupies an area of 7,000 square metres including a dormitory," said Zhyldyz Seisenbekova, head of new economy project office creative sector at Astana Invest.

Seisenbekova believes the studio has potential and is of interest to Russia.

"Production of films and ads using a special production equipment is possible (in the film studio) as well as shooting of historic films and fest movies as well as projects based on the orders of state bodies.

This all can be produced in a film studio," she said.

The document was signed at a recent forum of mayors of Silk Road countries in the Kazakh capital that concluded with signing of 14 memorandums worth \$73 million, including green technology projects, a DNA diagnostics laboratory at Nazarbayev University, construction of school based on Singapore education system and production of high technology construction materials, among other areas. More than 3,000 delegates from 60 countries attended the two-day event in early July.

Kazakhstan's Golden Man, Saka artefacts travel to China

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – Exhibits of priceless Kazakh art and photography of ancient sites opened July 12 in Xi'an, the capital of China's Shaanxi Province. The Legacy of the Great Steppe: Masterpieces of Jewellery Art exhibition and the Sacred Kazakhstan photography exhibition feature 370 valuable items, including 196 authentic artefacts and 174 copies.

The National Museum and Historical Museum of Shaanxi Province initiated the event to promote and expand cultural exchange between Kazakhstan and China as part of an on-going global museum project through which Kazakhstan's Golden Man is making his way through the world's museums.

The Golden Man, or Altyn Adam, is perhaps the most famous and significant archaeological discovery in Kazakhstan to date. Kazakh archaeologist Kemal Akishev discovered the Saka gold artefacts near Almaty in 1969 (the Saka were a group of Eurasian nomads). In a site known as the Issyk burial, he found a warrior's costume made from approximately 4,800 gold items of warriors' attire sent to the afterlife with a Saka warrior.

The travelling exhibition includes the set of gold armour, a silver bowl with runic inscriptions and a golden badge with two mirror-reflected leopards.

The exhibition also features unique works of jewellery art dating from the beginning of the 15th century found in the Sairam settlement in southern Kazakhstan and artefacts found in the Taldy II burial site in central Kazakhstan, which date to the middle of the second half of the 7th century BC.

that lived from the end of the sixth to the middle of the fifth century BC, that were found in western Kazakhstan in April 2012. More than 500 fragments of various gold items were discovered in that burial site, and exhibit characteristics of the Scythian-Siberian animal style.

"The exhibits are only a small part of the gold items from the museum's funds. Unknown artisans created the items, which demonstrate the uniqueness of Eurasian culture and the continuity of its artistic traditions," reported the press service of the museum.

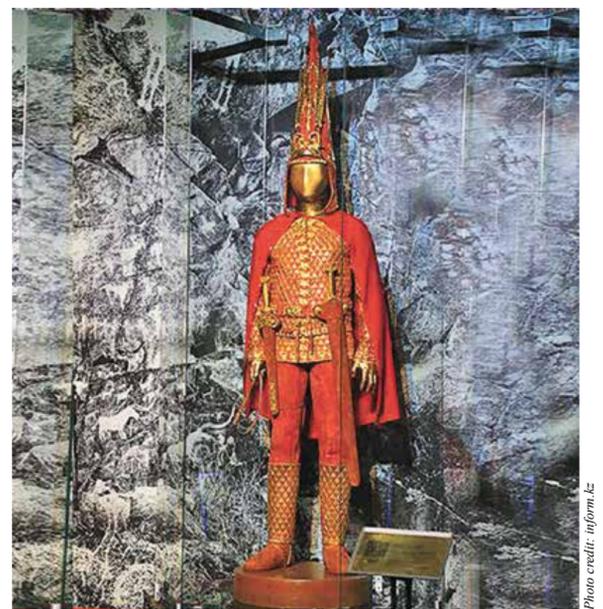
Ambassador of Kazakhstan to China Shakhmat Nuryshev said at the opening ceremony that the exhibits that both countries pay special attention to their current cooperation in light of their Great Silk Road links. The exhibition

of the culture and art of Eurasian nomads will contribute to the understanding of the culture and diversity of China's neighbour and help strengthen ties between the peoples of the two countries.

The exhibition in China will last until Sept. 12.

The Golden Man Procession through the World's Museums exhibition was inaugurated in Minsk in December. It travelled to Moscow in April and May, and will travel after its sojourn in China to the National Museum of Azerbaijan in Baku, Gdańsk National Museum in Poland and the National Museum of Korea in Seoul.

In 2019, the Golden Man will be exhibited in the U.K., Georgia, Japan, Spain and Turkey; in 2020 in Austria, France, Germany, Italy and the U.S.; and in 2021 in Austria and France.



WEDNESDAY, JULY 25, 2018

Finance minister recommends quick sale of privatised state assets

By Dilshat Zhussupova

ASTANA – Kazakhstan's second privatisation wave is more than 75 percent complete. Results from the first half of 2018 show that 502 out of 887 state-owned enterprises were put up for sale and 421 of them were sold for a total of 216 billion tenge (US\$630.25 million). Another 266 facilities are at the reorganisation and liquidation stage. The sold assets and those being liquidated and reorganised account for 77.4 percent of the country's current privatisation push.

Fifteen out of 63 top-ranking objects of the 2016-2020 Complex Privatisation Plan have been sold for a total of 110.5 billion tenge (US\$322.42 million). Thirty-nine

top-ranking facilities were planned for implementation this year. Eight of them have already been put up for sale and two were sold in the first half of the year. The remaining facilities are at the pre-sale preparation and potential buyer negotiation stage.

"These are objects of communal property and corporate social entrepreneurship, for which sellers must urgently undertake measures to compile and include in the Roadmap registry," said Kazakh Minister of Finance Bakhyt Sultanov at a July 17 government meeting. "I propose to instruct state and local executive bodies, national holdings and companies to accelerate the process of placing these facilities on sale."

He further recommended state agencies monitor the execution of the sales schedule, as four top-rank-

ing objects marked for privatisation are lagging behind the established timetables.

The companies include Kazgeology, under the Kazakh Ministry for Investments and Development; Kazakhstan Gharysh Sapary, under the Kazakh Ministry of Defence and Aerospace Industry; Kazsportinvest of the Kazakh Ministry of Culture and Sports; and the Bobek National Scientific and Practical Educational and Health Centre of the Kazakh Ministry of Education and Science.

"State bodies have not implemented the necessary measures for the objects' timely sale and the privatisation commission's recommendations. The risk of not realising these facilities has consequently surfaced this year," said Sultanov. "It is thus necessary to produce pun-

ishment proposals for those responsible in the event of the untimely execution of the Roadmap activities in their first nine months."

There are a total of 12 object-related violations so far: four violations for delaying pre-sale preparation and evaluation, six violations for delaying liquidation measures and two violations for not yet including objects in the Roadmap.

The minister noted that there is growing interest from private firms and the population in state assets put up for sale. Following an inventory of state assets, another 38 salable enterprises were identified and included in the list of state assets to be privatised. In the coming year, privatisation decisions will be made on national companies Air Astana, Kazakhtelecom and Kazatomprom.

Number of children in orphanages decreases 40% in five years

By Dilshat Zhussupova

ASTANA – The number of children in Kazakh orphanages has decreased 40 percent in the last five years, as 4,445 children have been returned to their biological families. Approximately 6,000 remain in orphanages, leading to the reorganisation and closure of 50 facilities.

Of Kazakhstan's five million children, approximately 26,000 are orphans and without parental care. Seventy-eight percent are under guardianship and foster care in Kazakh families and 21 percent are raised in orphanages.

The main driver behind the reduced network is a steady decline in the number of children without parental care who are sent to the facilities. The figure was 1,166 in 2017, compared to 1,854 in 2016 and 2,598 in 2015.

Efforts to keep youngsters in their biological families have been facilitated by early identification of family problems and provisions by state authorities for comprehensive assistance to families in difficult situations.

In May 2017, the Kazakh Ministry of Education and Science approved new rules for Centres for the Support of Children in Difficult Life Situations, organisations distinct from orphanages. Their expanded activities aim to help youngsters in adverse family conditions and those suffering cruel treatment, in addition to children from disadvantaged families. Psychological, social and legal assistance is provided to mitigate family problems at an early stage.

In addition, public foundations such as Zhanuya and Ana Uyi have played an increasingly important role since 2016 in transforming orphanages and developing family arrangements for children without parental care.

The efforts of special services and foster parent schools have also led to a decrease in the number of orphanage returnees after adoption, patronage, custody or foster care is cancelled. Foster parent schools, in particular, centre on training those who seek to raise children who lack parental care. Only 125 children were returned in 2017, compared to 195 in 2016 and 246 in 2015.

Kazakhstan has been undertaking a number of actions in accordance with the recommendations of the United Nations Committee on

the Rights of the Child to curb the growth of the number of orphanages and place children in them as an extreme and temporary measure.

Kazakhstan has been undertaking a number of actions in accordance with the recommendations of the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child to curb the growth of the number of orphanages and place children in them as an extreme and temporary measure.

Transferring children under adoption, patronage, custody and foster care is regulated at the legislative level and financially backed by the state. To ensure transparency in orphanage activities and procedures, a guardianship council and national databank of orphans and children without parental care have been formed.

Nurbek Orshubekov, Chair of the Committee for the Protection of Children's Rights under the Kazakh Ministry of Education and Science, relayed the meaningful housing and educational support provided to children in orphanages. As in the case of Great Patriotic War participants, orphans and children without parental care may receive housing from the state housing fund. Since 2014, 4,459 children in this category have become homeowners.

An account is also opened within the state-funded educational system for every student in an orphanage to receive an education at a Kazakh university or college. As a result, 7,779 students in orphanages have received assistance worth more than five billion tenge (US\$14.47 million) since 2014.

"The aim is to socialise the students in these orphanages," said Orshubekov. "Two hundred and twenty-five students continued their studies at universities and colleges in 2017 and the programme will continue its work in the future."

Zhambyl establishes sugar beet seed fund

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – Seed-breeding farms for sugar beets are being revived in the Zhambyl region. Farmers formerly spent up to \$1.2 million to import seeds and the administration is creating its own seed fund to cut expenses.

Sugar beets are one of the region's most important crops and significant amounts have been allocated annually from the local budget to purchase imported seeds, according to the regional agriculture department.

In 2016, 420 million tenge (US\$1.2 million) was earmarked from the re-

gional budget to buy Avantazh seeds from France. The amount decreased to 350 million tenge (US\$1.02 million) the following year. The need for Zhambyl farmers to purchase seeds from foreign producers increases the price of the final products.

The region has a significant need to create its own seed stock to decrease dependence on imported seeds and reduce product costs. At one time, the region had its own seed farms and experienced agricultural stations and is now furnishing mini-workshops with special equipment to raise their own seed material to high European standards. As a result, farms in the re-

gion plan to switch to domestic seeds within the next year.

The regional agriculture department planned to breed sugar beets on 10,000 hectares this year, but only 8,300 hectares were planted. The largest areas for sugar beets are in the Kordai district, where farms recorded record yields last year using moisture-saving and up-to-date technologies.

In the last year, which wasn't the most productive, farmers planted 9,000 hectares of beets and collected more than 120,000 tonnes of root crops. The average yield was 228 centners per hectare.

Since the 1930s, sugar beets have been cultivated on more than 42,000 hectares in the region with an average yield of 300 centners per hectare. Famous farmer Dariga Zhantokhova produced 900 centners from every hectare.

With the elimination of large-scale agricultural collective farms in the 1990s, the region's beet growers lost experienced personnel and the technology to grow the labour-intensive crop. As a result, by 2009, sugar beet crops were planted on fewer than 1,700 hectares. Today, the region is actively reviving this valuable agricultural activity.

Smart innovations being implemented in cities

By Dana Omirgazy

ASTANA – Smart city project innovations are being introduced in many sectors throughout the country, according to a report delivered by Minister of Information and Communications of Kazakhstan Dauren Abayev during a July 17 government meeting.

"At the moment services such as an electronic gradebooks, kindergarten queue have already been digitised... The efficiency of the educational process increased three percent in the Pavlodar region following the introduction of electronic gradebooks. In the East Kazakhstan region, 67 remotely located clinics were connected to the system. Energy consumption on street lighting in

Astana was reduced 30 percent," he said.

The largest city of the country, Almaty, is implementing the smart city project as well. Modern technologies are being introduced into various spheres of life in the city, kapital.kz reported. The project hopes to increase the efficiency of urban services and provide Almaty residents with comfortable, safe and environmentally friendly living.

According to Talant Baskinbayev, head of the Digitisation Department at the Almaty Development Centre, the smart city project implies not only the introduction of innovations, but also the search for the synergy of the potential of citizens and their initiatives. Intelligent solutions combine analytics and technologies which meet specified conditions. Worldwide cities are implementing

solutions to increase productivity, energy efficiency, reduce air pollution, the costs of city authorities, save water and other resources. For systemic solutions to the most important challenges of the city, several main areas were identified: health care, education, urban planning, housing and communal services, transport, security and open akimat (city administration).

"One of the projects that we have already implemented in the healthcare system is a medical information system. It allows you to switch from a paper-based health passport to an electronic one. Thus, we want to reduce the paper use. It is comfortable. Any doctor will know the patient's medical history in advance. Now, 89 percent of the city has been transferred to this system. Until the end of the year, we plan to

completely switch to this system," Baskinbayev explained.

Also, the education sector has seen several innovations. The electronic diary system named "Kundelik" is used at schools. Parents can remotely monitor their children's progress. E-diary reduces the risks of false grades. Digital educational is also meant to improve lessons. Students can also enrol in a school or college through an electronic queue.

To increase security in the city, a monitoring system will be installed in crowded public places. Approximately 1,000 video surveillance cameras will help improve the security of the city. Also, the city has introduced a system of a single registry of administrative production, allowing administrative tasks to be handled electronically.

Kazakhstan to start coalbed methane exploration and production

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova



Exploration work.

ASTANA – Kanysh Satpayev Kazakh National Technical University and ArcelorMittal Temirtau will begin a joint venture to explore and produce coalbed methane in the Karaganda coal basin, reported the university press service.

Coalbed methane is a gas present in active, working mine sites. According to forecasts, its resources in the Karaganda coal basin, reaching a depth of 1,500 metres, are significant.

"We conducted the geological and technical data analysis and economic parameters of the project. As a result, we decided to launch this project. We will contribute to ensuring the success of the project. The company's primary goal is to ensure safe workplaces and improve the environmental situation in the Karaganda region. I express my gratitude to colleagues and employees of Satpayev University for their work," said CEO of ArcelorMittal CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States) Paramjit Kahlon.

The parties also agreed to implement innovative projects aimed at

improving the region's environmental situation, personnel training, information technology and industrial safety organisation.

The project will start with coalbed methane geological prospecting in coal seams on contractual territories with subsequent methane extraction.

"The project is the first step towards coalbed methane production in Kazakhstan. We thank the management of ArcelorMittal Temirtau for effective cooperation. We are sure our cooperation will significantly increase the energy potential of the Karaganda region," said Satpayev University Rector Iskander Beisembetov at the July 10 meeting in the capital.

Providing safe workplaces for miners is an essential factor in extracting coal seam methane. Tax preferences for coalbed methane production are provided as part of state support. Coalbed methane is classified as a mineral in accordance with the new code "On Subsoil and Subsoil Use" adopted in December.

Methane processing is the next goal, which will be developed in the coming months, said Beisembetov. Cooperation between the

industrial company and national scientific and research technical university is a major achievement for the country.

The university includes Parasat National Technological Centre and eight research institutes which meet all the requirements for scientific and technical support of the project, he added.

Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev set the task of developing Karaganda's green economy, energy sector and coalbed methane exploration and production. The gas can be used both to meet the needs of the company and the region as well as for gas-chemical methane processing to obtain a range of high value-added products.

Coalbed methane is an important source of energy in countries such as Australia, Canada, China, and the U.S. World coalbed methane production is currently 58 billion cubic metres per year.

ArcelorMittal Temirtau, part of ArcelorMittal Group, is Kazakhstan's largest mining and metallurgical enterprise. It includes a steel plant in Temirtau, eight coal mines in the Karaganda region and four iron ore mines in the Akmola, Karaganda and Kostanai regions.

SOCIETY

WEDNESDAY, JULY 25, 2018

Kamkor Zhurek changes people's lives

By Abira Kuandyk

ASTANA – Americans Victoria Charbonneau and Elizabeth Turnock launched Kamkor Zhurek (Caring Heart) in Taraz in 2015. The fund's main purpose is to provide assistance to orphans, single mothers, children with disabilities and those who are disadvantaged. With its help, families, mothers and children prosper, change their priorities and values and set high ambitions.

The Astana Times interviewed Victoria Charbonneau to learn how and why they launched the fund as well as to gain insight into its achievements so far and plans for the future.

Kamkor Zhurek seeks to ensure that every child can reach his or her full potential, as they need families and others to invest in them.

"On a regular weekly basis, there are about 25 mothers and 30 children that we work with. Some of the mothers live on a property, they live in a house," she said.

Mothers who work from home participate in Kamkor Zhurek's daily programmes, sending their children weekdays from 9 a.m.-6 p.m. The fund's sales department engages the women to make felt items, offering them the opportunity not only to learn how to make products, but also acquire social skills.



Victoria Charbonneau

"Some of them cannot write, read, tell time and do basic math. Our masters also teach them these kinds of basic skills that they will need long in life," she added.

Charbonneau came to Kazakhstan for 18 days in 2000 as part of a delegation of social educators. She helped in an orphanage, falling in love with the 180 kids.

"I did not expect to love the country, to love the children so much and find my life calling," she said.

"I fell in love with the beautiful people, their warmth and hospitality, as well as the breathtaking landscapes of Kazakhstan. I love that people enjoy spending time with their family and friends, love to

laugh, sing and dance. I love that most Kazakh people also love the beautiful nature all around them and enjoy spending time out in nature," she added.

Charbonneau subsequently came to Taraz every year through the non-profit Interlink Resources, an American charity. She moved to the city in 2009 to work in orphanages and children's camps.

She noted she did not realise the changes happening in children's lives through their efforts. The youngsters still needed more support, life skills and the need for a home environment.

Turnock, her colleague and friend, shared Charbonneau's vision and plans. Their dreams trig-

gered building Kamkor Zhurek and ensuring the kids will have a chance for a better future.

Charbonneau sees the ways the children quickly progress. They speak Kazakh, Russian and English and are very bright.

"I also saw mothers growing and learning. We had one mother who came in and lived with us; she was not in very good shape in the beginning. She visited the U.S. to have surgery because she had severe scoliosis, a hump and cleft lip," she said.

"Now she knows how to take care of her son, has better parenting skills, rents an apartment and has a job. She thinks about her son's future prospects, his education and job opportunities. Before, all she kept thinking about was ensuring her son had food to eat," she added.

She also spoke about a mother and her young son with Down syndrome.

"He came when he was eight months old with his mother and they lived together at a property. She was afraid for her son before. Now he is 2.5-years old, he is very talkative and loves to go for a walk. His mother thinks of him as a precious child and knows he is a true gift," said Charbonneau.

In the orphanage, she had been discouraged from getting a job and taking care of her son.

"Recently, she got a job and a new apartment. We helped with

little things to make the house a bit sweeter and warmer. She still visits us six days a week. I love seeing them grow. This is the most important thing – contributing to their better future," she said.

Charbonneau said American culture differs in some ways, as people there believe one person can make a huge difference and individuals try to work together to help each other. People believe that together they can make an impact.

Kamkor Zhurek is full and in need of expansion. Fund leaders plan to move the day programme and rent a different building where they can accept more mothers and children.

"We want to make it a family centre, welcoming families that either have children with disabilities or single parents that are struggling in making an income and finding resources," she said.

Charbonneau also organised a visit to the U.S. for surgery for young girls Natasha and Saule and accompanied them there.

"Those were very successful and the doctors in a hospital all volunteered and donated their services. We had host families there as well," she added.

Charbonneau noted doctors came to Almaty to conduct master classes and work with some doctors and patients. Similarly, the Kazakh medical staff traveled to the U.S.

"Now, we hope to bring Dr. Darin Hubert and his colleague, anesthesiologists and surgical nurses to Kazakhstan. They are donating all their services. We just need to raise funds for their plane tickets. It is all they want," she said.

The doctors plan to perform surgeries on some children from the orphanages and low-income families. The medical exchange will help more people in Kazakhstan have a better future, she feels.

Kamkor Zhurek was nominated in 2016 and 2017 for the Alтын Zhurek (Golden Heart) national award, an annual honour presented to charities for their contributions to Kazakhstan.

"We won the award in 2017. It was amazing because there were many great people and organisations who were doing considerable things for Kazakhstan. Although we are a small project, it was big surprise and honour to be up there and meet many incredible people," said Charbonneau.

She believes social issues must be addressed with a common effort.

"If we work together, we can make a difference. I want to see Kazakhstan on the leading edge of how it cares about the life of each citizen," she added.

For more information, one can visit j127ranch.org and follow the fund on Facebook and Instagram @kamkorzhurek.

Kazakh state healthcare programme services, contributions expanding

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – Contributions for compulsory social health insurance totalled more than 80.6 billion tenge (US\$233 million) for a one-year period, said Social Health Insurance Fund Chairperson Yelena Bakmutova at a July 17 meeting. The figure covers approximately six million individuals, including 553,560 employees.

This year, the Mandatory Social Health Insurance Fund will also provide guaranteed free medical care. The medical benefits package will be provided in advance and within the limits of the fund's annual revenues.

"The fund works as an operator of the free medical care programme and interacts with suppliers through budget transfers. A

total of 924 billion tenge (US\$2 billion) was allocated to this programme," she said.

The operator is not fully funded and all finances received for the year will be used to purchase medical services.

"There is a need to pay the contribution and deductions to become a participant in the social health insurance system. An individual will receive a medical benefits package and has equal rights to receive medical assistance despite the amount of contributions," she added.

Citizens can get free check-ups including computerised tomography, magnetic resonance imaging and laboratory tests and planned hospitalisations. Preventive examinations and sanatorium treatments are also included.

A new model of the free medical

care and compulsory social health insurance system will be launched in 2020, said Minister of Healthcare Yelzhan Birtanov. He presented new services to the list of free medical care and medical benefits package under the compulsory social health insurance system.

"A package of free medical services will be provided for all citizens, permanent residents and oralmans (ethnic Kazakhs who have immigrated back to Kazakhstan since its independence). The services not included in the list of free medical care will be available for social health insurance system participants," he said.

The free medical care includes emergency ambulances, sanitary aviation, primary healthcare and emergency and palliative care.

More than six million people took part in healthy lifestyle events

in the first six months of the year. Approximately 1.5 million people, or 91 percent of the planned volume, were involved in population screening. Vaccination coverage reached 95.2 percent.

"We continue to work to attract investment in the healthcare sector. The investments increased by 63 percent compared with the same period last year. The largest amount of extra-budgetary investments was attracted to sanatoriums by 41 percent, hospitals and specialised clinics by 21 percent," said Birtanov.

Thirty public-private partnership projects were executed in January-June. Sixty-five contracts worth 35 billion tenge (US\$101 million) are being implemented in 2016-2018.

Paper-free medical records were launched in all regions.

Sergek video surveillance system detects unlicensed drivers

Staff Report

ASTANA – Since the beginning of the year, the Sergek video surveillance system has helped to detect 30 drivers whose licenses had been revoked, according to the press service of Astana Department of Internal Affairs.

"These criminal offences are in many cases detected by police officers using a system of CCTV cameras. The Criminal Code of Kazakhstan establishes criminal liability for driving a car without license and in a state of alcoholic, narcotic and/or intoxication," the report said.

Since the beginning of the Sergek project, 467 million tenge (US\$1.35 million) has been provided to the capital budget and approximately one billion tenge (US\$2.89 million) still has to be received on fines already levied, said Alisher Abdykadyrov, head of Astana's investment and business development department.

Earlier this month, members of the Astana maslikhat (city admin-

istration) amended the state obligations in the implementation of the Sergek project. The document provides for reducing state obligations by more than one billion tenge (US\$2.89 million).

"We submit for your consideration the question on reducing state obligations. In general, these funds would not have been paid, that is, we would have seen from audited statements (reporting on the financial position of the company, its activities and changes based on accounting data), that in fact these expenses were not incurred, respectively, the state budget, the local budget would not bear these costs," Abdykadyrov said.

The maslikhat members voted unanimously July 20, 2017 for the decision to install 13,000 cameras in the capital under the public-private partnership (PPP) programme. The cost of the project was set at 8.4 billion tenge (US\$24.3 million) with a contract period of six years and seven months.

Astana marks Nelson Mandela's 100th birthday with charitable acts

By Abira Kuandyk

ASTANA – The Mimiorya Development Centre, partnering with the South African Embassy in the city, marked the centenary of anti-apartheid leader Nelson Mandela's birth July 18 with acts of charity. As part of the event, children from orphanages and low-income families became acquainted with South African culture.

South African Ambassador Keitumetse Seipelo Thandeka Matthews announced the celebration.

"Today, I am wearing traditional clothing that belongs to the Mandela tribe. In fact, there are many tribes in South Africa, and I come here in the traditional clothing [of one of them]," she said.

The youngsters joined in a flash mob, participated in master classes on beadwork and cooking with a South African chef, played national games and attended a disco.

Matthews noted Mandela's love for children and quoted him in her welcoming speech.

"Mandela always said our children are the rock on which our future will be built, our greatest asset as a nation. They will be the leaders of our country, the creators of our national wealth who



Nelson Mandela day.

care for and protect our people," she noted.

"It always gives me great pleasure to be surrounded by the beautiful children of our land. Whenever I am with energetic young people such as yourselves I feel like a recharged battery, confident that our country can look forward to great things. You are the future of this country – you are the people who will

lead us into the next century," she said.

Matthews provided the guests with a bit of history.

"Mandela was the first President of South Africa to be elected under the new constitution and one of the most famous fighters for the free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunities. From an early age, he believed all people are the

same regardless of their colour, race, ethnic group or religion," she added.

She ended with her wishes and advice.

"It is important to go to school, work hard and get a quality education. Mandela's famous quote stated education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world," she said.

Mandela was born July 18, 1918 in the village of Mvezo in Umtata. In November 2009, the United Nations General Assembly declared July 18 as Nelson Mandela International Day.

Rather than hold an official event dedicated to Mandela's 100th birthday, the South African government proclaimed July 18 as the National Day of Service in honour of the leader who valued those who changed other people's lives for the better, said the South African embassy press service.

The South African government inspired representatives of all nations, groups and corporations to devote their time to serving others by doing something to benefit local communities. Each person has the opportunity and the duty to change the world for the better, to add value and force for change, it added.

Citizens to re-register land when renouncing citizenship

Staff Report

ASTANA – Kazakh citizens will have to re-register land when renouncing their citizenship, the Akmol region's Regional Communication Service announced as a reminder of Kazakhstan's land code standards.

Citizenship renunciation is a citizen's statutory right to end his or her relationship with the state of nationality in a prescribed manner. In Kazakhstan, it is realised on a voluntary basis.

Kazakhstan's land code was adopted in June 2003 as part of its economic reforms and was last reviewed for amendments in 2016.

According to the law, Kazakh citizens' private property may include land plots for the management of a peasant or agrarian economy, personal subsidiary husbandry, afforestation, gardening, individual housing and suburban construction. It may also include land plots granted for building construction or built-up by production and non-production, including residential buildings and their complexes.

Article 23 of Kazakhstan's land code states that upon citizenship renunciation by a citizen who is the owner of a land plot granted for the management of the aforementioned

activities, the property right shall be subject to alienation or reissuance.

"Land plots located in the border zone of Kazakhstan's state border cannot be owned by foreigners, stateless persons, Kazakh citizens married to foreigners or stateless persons, foreign legal entities and Kazakh legal entities with foreign participation," according to the Akmol region's Department of Domestic Policy.

It should be noted that upon a Kazakh citizen's marriage with a foreigner or stateless person, the ownership of land plots located in the border zone and frontier zone of Kazakhstan's state border shall be subject to re-registration or alienation in accordance with Article 66 of Kazakhstan's land code.

Article 66 concerns the rights and obligations of land plots' owners who may not have rights to that land. It states that if a person accrues the right to a land plot, which he or she may not have, this right shall be alienated within three months or it must be officially re-registered within the specified time limit.

In case of the non-fulfillment of these requirements, the akimat (city administration) shall file a claim for the return of the land plot at its location.

TOURISM

WEDNESDAY, JULY 25, 2018

Kazakh President visits Burabai, reviews tourism development

Staff Report

ASTANA – Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev visited tourist attractions in Burabai July 11. He reviewed the development of the region's tourism cluster and noted the importance of promoting Kazakh tourism potential.

Nazarbayev said Borovoye Resort is an important tourism area and can be more popular with additional development. He also stressed that it is not the only place

in Kazakhstan with the potential to increase tourism.

The head of state pointed to several zones that will be given special attention. These are Imantau, Bayanaul, Turkestan, Almaty region, Charyn Canyon, Alakol and the Caspian Sea coast.

"Turkestan is a unique place; we will build the city and develop it quickly. It has to be a good tourist centre. Approximately 1.5 million tourists visit Turkestan and with good infrastructure, this number can be doubled," said Nazarbayev.

"The Almaty region's ski resort needs improvements, there are ideas, projects and opportunities. Almaty has Charyn Canyon, we have to tell about its beauty. Charyn Canyon leaves a lasting impression for every visitor," he added.

"There will be subsidies for tourism facilities. Tourists can be attracted by competitive prices. We have to attach importance to this economic sector," he added.

Nazarbayev noted that the main task is to create recreational places

inside the country where citizens can witness the beauty of Kazakhstan's nature.

First Deputy Prime Minister Askar Mamin, Minister of Culture and Sport Arystanbek Mukhamediuly and Akim (Governor) of the Akmola region Malik Murzalin reported on plans on the implementation of the Tourist Kazakhstan programme and subsequent development of the Shchuchinsk-Borovoye resort zone.

The Promenade Burabai tourist

site in the Shchuchinsk-Borovoye resort zone will include apartments, townhouses, business premises and a congress centre.

The Visit Centre tourism complex includes thematic museums, a 5D cinema and a display of the animals living in Burabai National Park and those brought from abroad. Visitors also can get detailed information about the regional flora and fauna.

The head of state was also briefed on new sports and tourist facilities to conduct training ses-

sions, training camps and competitions in Shchuchinsk.

The national skiing base, in addition, includes a ski stadium, a shooting range, an indoor sports complex with a swimming pool and training halls, facilities for jumping from a ski jump and administrative buildings.

The President also stressed the importance of training specialists to upgrade tourism services. He called on regional leaders and potential investors to participate in developing Kazakh tourism.

Tanbaly archaeological site opens tourist zone with Bronze Age petroglyphs

By Aidana Yergaliyeva

ASTANA – The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in conjunction with the Kazakh government has opened a reception area at the Tanbaly (also Tamgaly) historic and archaeological site for tourists and guests to view 3,000-year old artefacts.

The open-air museum is in the Ile-Balkhash zone, the pilot territory of the UNDP project to conserve desert ecosystems. The centre is in the Zhambyl district of the Almaty region.

"The opening of the reception area will help increase the flow of people visiting this unique place, giving them the opportunity to learn more about the history of Kazakhstan and to be inspired to preserve treasures abandoned by their ancestors – not only the petroglyphs themselves, but also nature with its flora and fauna," noted the UNDP press service.

The Tanbaly archaeological complex has been included among the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisa-

tion's (UNESCO) World Cultural Heritage Sites since 2004, as some of its most valuable artefacts are the petroglyphs, images carved into natural rock formations. The site has more than 5,000 petroglyphs, most belonging to the Middle Bronze Age and presumably directly related to the intertribal sanctuary. Their composition is unique and has no equals in the world.

Tanbaly also has dozens of other monuments such as settlements, cemeteries, altars and quarries from different epochs.

The tourist zone was established as part of the project called "Enhancing the sustainability of the system of specially protected areas in desert ecosystems through the promotion of biodiversity-compatible livelihoods in and around protected areas," noted the release. The UNDP global environment fund and the Committee of Forestry and Wildlife of the Kazakh Ministry of Agriculture support the project.

UN and UNESCO regional representatives, as well as the chairman of the committee attended the opening ceremony.



Atameken discusses prospects of affordable tourism

By Abira Kuandyk

ASTANA – Enjoyable vacations are respites appreciated by all. To accommodate travelers, priorities of developing tourism infrastructure needs to consider the viewpoints of local industry associations, residents and entrepreneurs, and government projects must facilitate affordable, cost-effective and comfortable getaways, said Chair of Atameken National Chamber of Entrepreneurs Timur Kulibayev.

He recently discussed the issues surrounding domestic and inbound tourism, as well as support for tourism businesses, with Vice Minister of Culture and Sports Erlan Kozhagapanov and CEO of Kazakh Tourism Rashid Kuzembayev.

"The government allocates huge funds for improving infrastructure and promoting the country's brand. The task is to ensure that funds are allocated efficiently and the ultimate goal is to ensure citizens can get active leisure and affordable vacations," said Kulibayev.

The state budget has allocated 140 billion tenge (US\$406.8 million) in the coming years for infrastructure development.

"It is essential to consider the infrastructure development in a complex. Infrastructure has to be



Hiking in Almaty.

modernised and expanded everywhere: roads, sewerage, heating systems and the number of hotels, leisure centres and sanatoria and clinics have to match every taste and budget. The availability of modern treatment facilities plays a pivotal role. The influx of tourists into Burabai, for example, may undermine the region's environment," he added.

Kulibayev also called on government representatives to consider residents' and entrepreneurs' opinions in creating tourist maps. The map recently presented by Minister of Culture and Sports Arystanbek Mukhamediuly includes

62 tourist destinations and facilities, 46 active and 16 new. The criteria for choosing the locations were potential tourist growth and the objects' uniqueness, as well as their historical and cultural significance.

"The vacations have to be comfortable and affordable; it is important to consider where people can have a rest with children. Developing cost-effective tourism both for longer holidays and weekend holidays are needed," he said.

Locals typically know the best spots for a rest and those which need improved infrastructure, he noted.

"Another important aspect is to develop year-round leisure opportunities for tourists. There is also a need to develop cultural, pilgrimage adventures and eco-tourism at the sacred places of Kazakh cultural heritage. Ulytau, Turkestan and Bayanaul are unique places where academics, military commanders and other honoured Kazakh figures come from," he added.

The mechanism for developing mass tourism is creating an open sky.

"Developing domestic and inbound tourism requires increasing flight frequencies of low-cost carriers. Air Astana, for instance, provides high-level service but at a very high price. It is necessary to improve citizens' mobility. Leisure and cultural amenities have to be accessible regardless of income size, residence place and social status," said Kulibayev.

In addition, plans to ease the visa policy by introducing electronic visas should minimise communication with officials and potential corruption.

Kulibayev noted the mechanisms will substantially increase the country's cash flow and tourism development.

"Kazakhstan's tourism potential, the geographical position and cultural heritage, have to be utilised to the full," he said.

Kazakhstan to create list of travel agencies qualified to assist international travelers

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – Kazakhstan's Travel Agencies Association and Turistik Kamkor Corporate Fund plan to create a list of travel agencies qualified to assist Kazakhstan citizens experiencing emergency situations while traveling abroad.

The list will be finished by the end of the summer and will be available on the website of the corporate fund.

There is a state register of travel agencies which has requirements for all travel agencies. However,

the requirements are not enough, according to Zhandos Bimaganbetov, deputy chairman of the Committee for Tourism Industry under Ministry of Culture and Sports.

"At the moment, we are working on requirements for travel agencies to guarantee their proper operation without any deception. First of all, we will differentiate licenses for travel agencies in the field of inbound and outbound tourism," Bimaganbetov said, highlighting that one of the main criteria will be the conscientiousness and quality of travel agencies' operations.

Companies that have joined the fund give each tourist a unique tour code, which can be used for emergency assistance abroad during his trip. The companies pay for joining the fund. According to Kazakh legislation on tourism activities, travel agencies have to submit a bank guarantee for 5,000 and 15,000 Monthly Calculation Indexes (MCI).

The fund members are obliged to pay 0.5 MCI for each tourist sent.

"This industry should be taken seriously. If the company does not

have enough money to provide a bank guarantee, it means that it does not have enough money to be a travel agency and to re-buy the product from a stronger player in the market," said President of the Association of Tourist Agencies Assel Nurkebayeva.

More than 380,000 codes have been issued since the fund was established Nov. 7, 2016. The fund has collected more than 400 million tenge (US\$1.16 million). All money is accumulated in an account in national currency and can be used only for the intended purposes.

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WEDNESDAY, JULY 25, 2018

Astana Pro Team's Fraile wins Tour de France stage



Photo credit: cyclingtips.com

By Anuar Abdrakhmanov

ASTANA — Astana Pro Team's Spanish cyclist Omar Fraile won the 14th stage of the Tour de France. He was the first to finish the 188-km stage between Saint-Paul-Trois-Châteaux and Mende. Fraile finished in 4 hours, 41 minutes, 57 seconds. France's Ju-

lian Alaphilippe, riding for Quick-Step Floors, was six seconds behind for second place. Belgian Jasper Stuyven, of Trek-Segafredo, had the same result. The win was Astana Pro Team's first in this year's race.

"It was wonderful, unbelievable! I cannot believe it! I had a dream to win a Tour de France stage and now it has been reached!

A year ago I won the Giro d'Italia stage and I had the same success at the Tour de France. I've started to feel myself well since yesterday and I was motivated to win the stage. I knew it would be very difficult, mainly because of the size of our team. During the final climb there was a crosswind; however, I attacked and put 100 percent out to get an edge and did

not let opponents get out ahead," said Fraile.

The day was a difficult one for the Astana cyclists, as the team and the nation mourned the death of Kazakh figure skater Denis Ten. The 2014 Olympic bronze medallist was fatally stabbed July 19 and, in his memory, the cyclists rode with mourning buttons on their sleeves.

"The day was hard, for our thoughts were about Denis. Our cyclists started the race with black buttons on their sleeves. We had lots of our thoughts about Denis, remembering him. I knew him in person; he was an open, nice and well brought-up guy. It is terrible to lose such young and brilliant people. It is a day of mourning for the entire sport. Today's victory by our team was the only thing that we could do at the Tour de France in memory of our compatriot Denis Ten," said team manager and London Olympics gold medallist Alexander Vinokourov.

The Tour de France, the world's most famous and prestigious bicycle race, has been held for more than 100 years. It started on July 7 in Vendée and will finish July 29 on Paris' Champs Elysees. British racer and Sky Team member Geraint Thomas is the overall classification leader, followed by fellow Brit Christopher Froome and Dutch racer Tom Dumoulin.

Chess champion Saduakassova ranks 11th among world's top female players



Dinara Saduakassova

Continued from Page B1

The fifth edition of the tournament brought together 250 of the world's chess elite from 24 countries. The participants' ages ranged from 14 to 50.

"Such tournaments allow sport-people to show themselves and present their countries. Kazakhstan was represented for the third time and I'm glad to hear that international grandmasters see strong competitors in Kazakh chess players," said Saduakassova.

She added she intends to fulfil the promise to enter the top five strongest female players and bring the chess crown to Kazakhstan.

After the tournament, Saduakassova visited Aktau to participate in the children and youth event committed to preserving the memory of prominent Kazakh chess player Lazar Yelmukhanbetov, as well as conduct master classes and play with tournament members.

"The chess tournament came to its successful end. Lazar Yelmukhanbetov was always aspiring to develop chess in the region and in the country. He always supported the youth and had a dream to conduct a tournament in Aktau. His dream came true," she said.

Saduakassova became a United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) national goodwill ambassador last year and the events

are among her activities in the post.

"It is a great honour and a huge responsibility to be UNICEF's national goodwill ambassador. To follow in the footsteps of Batyrkhan Shukenov (her predecessor) and avoid any mistakes are quite difficult tasks, but also ambitious ones. There is lots of work ahead. Unfortunately, child abuse and disregard for children's rights are quite widespread in our country," she said.

Saduakassova became a United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) national goodwill ambassador last year and the events are among her activities in the post.

"As a goodwill ambassador, I want children, youth and adults to see the opposite side of life – light, hope and the pursuit of a better life. It includes not only charitable work and contributions, but also direct engagement with children. I want them to know that they have a friend who hears their thoughts and dreams, as well as tries to help them," she added.

FC Astana beat Montenegro's champion in first UEFA Champions League match

By Anuar Abdrakhmanov

ASTANA — Kazakhstan's FC Astana recently beat FK Sutjeska from Montenegro 1:0 in the first match of the UEFA Champions League qualifier.

The Montenegro team started strong and were good on offence. However, several attacks by the Astana team resulted in a goal in the 29th minute. The referee assigned a penalty shot that was made by Astana defender Roman Murtazayev.

Astana continued to attack but was unable to increase their lead.

"Football is a real pleasure once goals are scored. If we had scored and additional one or two goals, the mood would have been much better. I agree that there were the moments when our footballers were inefficient at the end of the match, and it means a lot. We do not have reasons to be sad. We should thank God for the victory. Such matches can end up differently. It could happen that the opponent scores a goal, which is worse. However,

our team managed to score a goal, won and estimated the opponent [correctly]. We will be prepared for the next match much better. So, we meet tomorrow with our heads held high," said Roman Grigorchuk, head trainer of FC Astana.

"The thing is that our team won.

Everyone expected that we would score 3-4 goals, but it is the Champions League and each team tries its best to win. For us, of course, it is important that we have won and did not let the opponent score a goal. I think that we will leave for Montenegro for a difficult match,

and hope that we will advance," said Antonio Rukavina, Serb defender of FC Astana.

On July 18, FC Astana will have a return match against FK Sutjeska in Montenegro. If Astana wins, they will play Danish FC Midtjylland in the second round.



Photo credit: Prosports.kz

Kazakh boxers win gold at Brandenburg Youth Cup boxing tournament in Frankfurt

Staff Report

ASTANA — The Kazakh boxing team took first place at the July 3-8 Brandenburg Youth Cup in Frankfurt, Germany. The team won seven gold, one silver and one bronze medals.

The first gold was won by light flyweight Makhmud Sabyrkhan (49 kg), who secured a 3:2 victory over Adam Hession in the final.

Beybars Zhaksen won the gold medal in the up to 56 kg category, defeating Ireland's John Paul Hale.

Another gold was obtained by Rakhmat Seitzhan, defeating Alexander Rodionov from Belarus in the 60 kg category.

Kazakh light welterweight Talgat Shaiken (64 kg) also collected a gold medal by a unanimous decision 5:0 in a bout against Russian Andrey Chunikhin.

Yermakhan Zhakpenov (69 kg) won a silver medal, losing to Ar-

tur Demin from Russia in the final match.

Nurbek Oralbay in 75 kg category failed to make the finals and won a bronze medal. His opponent Alexandr Sheshunov from Russia advanced to the final and won a gold medal.

In the 81 kg category, the gold medal was awarded to Sagyndyk Togambay, who defeated boxer from Belarus Alexey Alferov in two rounds.

Aibek Oralbay, who was named the best boxer in heavyweight (91 kg) category, also won a gold medal. His opponent Daniil Dubrovskii from Russia refused to continue their bout after the second round.

The last gold medal was secured by superweight (+91 kg) Damir Toybay, defeating 4:1 Russian boxer Damil Sharafutdinov.

The tournament was organised by the German Boxing Association and Amateur Boxing Association of Land Brandenburg.



WEDNESDAY, JULY 25, 2018

Street artists bring life to Astana's houses, connect people to art



The snow leopard mural located at 187 Street in Astana.

By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – The Kazakh capital will host Urban Street Art Fest July 16-30, bringing street artists to paint the façades of houses. Eight murals, two of which are still in process, will transform the city landscape to reflect national themes.

The festival is a continuation of a pilot project run by the city's Saryarka district Akimat (administration) last year, said Olga Veselova, deputy director of the Eurasian Cultural Alliance, the event organiser,

in an interview with The Astana Times.

The goal is to popularise contemporary street art and connect people to art, as well as promote young and talented street artists.

"This was not our initiative. We were approached by the Saryarka district akimat to bring art to urban space. Last year we decided to try, because Astana had not had murals before," she said.

The first mural appeared in June 2017 on a four-storey house at 1 Beitbishilik Street near the Yessil River embankment. DOXA Artgroup from Kyrgyzstan recreated

a postcard photo taken by Nikolai Chernysh in the 1970s depicting a young man and woman in traditional Kazakh clothing riding horses.

The project, which helped the organisers understand the reaction and get feedback, was a "successful experiment," noted Veselova.

"The British Council organised the conference about creative industries, where a British fashion observer said that the best thing she saw in Astana was this mural art. We realised we needed to do it again," she said.

The idea for the fest coincided with the capital's 20th anniversary.

"As we know, this year Astana is celebrating its 20th anniversary and it is important to capture this history and comprehend it with art," she added.

In April, the organisation announced an open call for sketches. During the month-long application period, 70 drawings were submitted by artists from Azerbaijan, Indonesia, Israel, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Poland, Russia, Spain and Ukraine.

The participants were required to reflect local themes, including the nation's history and culture. Some contacted the organisers for additional historical information, while others had previously visited the city.

The selection process had three stages – expert council, including French, Ukraine and Kazakh curators, the local administration and the public. The council selected 26 works, which were then judged by the akimat followed by online voting on Instagram and Facebook.

"In most cases, public opinion matched expert opinion. The expert council was set up to give Astana residents the chance to choose the best of the best. As professionals, they had to choose the works that had quality," said Veselova.

Though the public could only pick from the works selected by the council, one became an exception. The sketch depicting a snow leopard, one of the symbols of independent Kazakhstan, did not advance to the next phase, but quickly went viral after artist Damir Lotfullin posted it on his page.

"City residents started writing they wanted bars [snow leopard]. Because of the reaction, we decid-

ed to add this sketch as well," she added.

The decision to include the mural in the final list produced an unexpected, but positive effect.

"There are places in Astana that are used to dry clothes. There [near the house where the mural was to be painted] was an old such place and a newer one. We have no right to destroy anything, but the residents of that house collected signatures to remove this site, because it prevented one from seeing the mural. I believe this is a great effect of the festival, because art encouraged people to unite to solve the problem. Next time, it will be even easier for them to self-organise," said Veselova.

The search for locations was also challenging.

"There is a certain urban development strategy. Relevance is important, because you cannot produce a mural wherever you want. For instance, you could not imagine the mural featuring Saken Seifullin anywhere but on Seifullin Street. It should be site specific," she said.

"Working in a public place, it is important to make it understandable for everyone, even for an unprepared person, and it should not provoke protest or frustration or hurt one's feelings," she added.

Murals are different from graffiti, as the latter has an element of illegality.

"Our project is completely legal. Here, we refer to mural art that takes its roots in Argentina. During the revolution (in Argentina), artists wanted to bring ideas of equality and enlightenment to the urban space and promote them with the help of art," said Veselova.

The festival also generates positive interaction between the local art community and foreign artists. With the growing demand for urban space development, art is one of the ways to encourage people to go to the streets.

"To bring them [people] to the streets, the city should be interesting and it should provoke emotions and what could generate emotions better than art, because mostly it is art that touches people's hearts," she added.

Veselova said she is pleased the Saryarka district administration trusts them and listens to professionals. With her vast experience in art and working in other Kazakh cities, she noted the capital is distinct in its effort to understand and comprehend and its attitude inspiring.

"In fact, it is pleasant to work in Astana. I have worked in Almaty and Petropavlovsk. The public takes time to understand what you try to convey and does not reject it right away. Probably it is because the city is new and this spirit translated to people and something new for them is not rejection," she said.

The Eurasian Cultural Alliance has been organising festivals for nine years in Almaty, promoting street art, running education projects and coordinating many exhibitions in Kazakhstan and abroad. Among its biggest projects are the Arbat Fest in Almaty, which is entering its ninth year, School of Artistic Gesture for young artists and four public art sculptures and four public places presented during EXPO 2017.

Cash-for-trash programme pays residents for recyclables

By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – Astana residents are able to earn cash for bringing their waste to one of nine waste collection points, reported the Astana Akimat (city administration) press service.

Astana Clean Time company has been running the Zhasyl Tandau (green choice in Kazakh) initiative since the beginning of this year. The Kazakh capital produces approximately 300,000 tonnes of solid domestic waste annually.

The collection points are set up near residential complexes, such as Northern Lights at 5 Dostyk Street, Dostar, Dostar-2 and Dostar-3 complexes at Mustafina Street, Arman Kala at 11 Uly Dala Avenue, Edem Palace at 66 Kenessary Street as well as Shapagat market located at 69 Bogenbai Batyr Avenue.

"We came up with the idea to install such collection sites in the beginning of this year. We studied the experience of other countries in introducing waste sorting and opted for the Japanese case. We have a person at each point who collects waste from people according to a price list. We employ mostly from

socially vulnerable groups of population, pensioners and people with disabilities," said Astana Clean Time Director Timur Ismagulov.

The eco points receive waste paper, cans, multi-colour and transparent cellophanes and glass items. People dropping off their waste at the collection points can earn between 20 tenge (US\$0.058) and 70 tenge (US\$0.2) for a kilogramme depending on the type of waste.

"We have nine sites across the city so far. Approximately 500 kilogrammes are collected every day at one eco point. We also purchased five eco cars that take the waste from the sites to a base site near the 'Shanghai' market. All waste is being recycled there. Those products that we do not recycle are sent to Almaty or Petropavlovsk," said Ismagulov.

Most common items are paper cartons and bottles, he added. The company plans to expand the list of waste types they collect and set up 22 more points in the Kazakh capital.

The Zhasyl Tandau project is part of Astana's recent efforts to protect the environment, develop a comprehensive waste collection and management system and stimulate waste

recycling culture among residents, which is currently at its lowest.

The city akimat is installing 6,275 yellow containers at 2,070 container sites across Astana as part of a pilot project meant to organise the two-fraction, dry and wet, separate collection of solid household waste.

The yellow containers will be used to collect the dry fraction of recyclable solid household waste, such as metal, plastic, paper and glass.

Explaining the city's initiative to set up such containers, Astana Akim (Mayor) Asset Issekeshiev cited the European experience in waste sorting.

"Many European countries are now shifting away from sorting waste in four containers, because it is very difficult. It is also difficult to keep four bins at home," said Issekeshiev in July.

While yellow containers are meant for dry waste, green containers will be used to collect food, organic and other non-recyclable solid household waste.

"The most difficult thing now is to explain to people that yellow containers are for dry waste and green are for wet waste. This will make our city cleaner," he said.

Food box delivery service makes healthy eating easy in Astana

By Aidana Yergaliyeva

ASTANA – Kese.kz, a food box delivery service, launched two weeks ago in the capital. It offers customers daily, affordable meal kits with recipes that are both healthy and easy to prepare. The company sees the service as life changing for many residents.

Kese.kz offers a variety of items for those tired of the heavy Kazakh diet. It has approximately 60 international recipes, from Mexican nachos to Chinese stir fry, categorized in accordance with the demands of the pickiest client, such as Quick & Tasty, Exotic Spicy or No Meat, No Fish.

Although home delivery might be new to some urbanites, similar services like HelloFresh, Elementare and Adams Matkasse have been popular in developed countries for the past decade.

"I don't have many customers at the moment, but those who have tried it give very positive feedback. I have some friends who have ordered from Kese.kz already and they told me that they felt Jamie Oliver-ish while they were cooking foreign food. They have kids who were very excited. They were running around the kitchen trying to help and curious about different tastes. So, it is a good thing. I like to bring this positivity and good feeling to our people," said Kese.kz founder Saule Kudaibergenova.

In addition to a fairly broad range of tasty and healthy food, customers save time and money. The individual purchase price is about the same as in supermarkets, with some dishes even cheaper. Barley risotto with chicken and mushrooms for two is 1,400 tenge (US\$4).

Food box delivery also eliminates the burden of time-wasting queues, transportation expenses and the universal problem of deciding what to cook that will please each family member. Orders should be made at least two days in advance and a few clicks or a phone call will deliver almost everything one needs right to his or her door step.

Kudaibergenova believes adopting healthy eating habits is an important factor in Kazakhstan's modernisation. The meals com-

mon to Kazakh tables are often rather difficult to digest and food box delivery is seen as a perfect solution.

The variety adds more nutrients to the regular diet and benefits locals and foreigners. The former can prepare international foods offered in restaurants without worrying where to find good ingredients, while the latter can eliminate the problems of discovering reliable places to explain and buy the necessary items. The procedure, including the website, is available in Kazakh, Russian and English.

The ingredients are high quality and selected from suppliers based on reputation and certification and "people should not doubt what they are getting in their food box," she said.

"That's very important to me. I want Kese.kz to be associated with the best quality food. I've researched the local market in Astana. I chose the suppliers that offer the best ingredients," she added.

The company strives to use products from local markets as often as possible, which not only shows support for local businesses, but concern for the environment. Unlike imported products, local items take less time and fuel to ship, resulting in lower greenhouse gases.

Clients have no doubt products will be fresh and organic.

Yet making that claim all the time is quite a challenge, especially for fruits and vegetables that are core ingredients for certain dishes. Kese.kz addresses the issue with seasonal menus.

"I use whatever vegetables are available now in Astana. In winter, I use more frozen vegetables and meaty food that we like to eat during the winter. So, the menu changes and the quality of the ingredients will be impeccable, as this is very important to me," said Kudaibergenova.

She also plans to build controlled storage areas, which should produce non-interruptive supplies as the business grows.

Ten tenge (US\$0.03) from every purchase is donated to charity, as Kese.kz is concerned with citizens' personal safety.

"I would like to bring better life to the people in Kazakhstan. It is appalling for me to see children riding bikes without helmets. Each of us should contribute more for our safety. I know many kids and people in general are dying on roads in Kazakhstan. I don't see people wearing reflective coats, bands that would make them visible on the roads for drivers," she said.

Seedstars Astana awards WebTotem as best Kazakh startup

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Astana Hub, for instance, is ready to accept and support entrepreneurs who can positively impact regional development, it added.

Speakus, from Gorey, Ireland, was awarded second place for its innovative solution for conducting multilingual events and conferences through a cloud-based interpretation delivery platform.

Smart Zapravka (fueling) app from the Kazakh capital captured the third spot by targeting drivers and providing them with a new way to find cheaper fuel and the best service at gas stations through online payment and pre-ordering.

The remaining startups included AIR (advance in robotics), a mobile app for programming robots, and assistent.kz, an electronic service targeted at small and medium-sized enterprises that substitutes for an accountant by generating reports and calculating taxes.

KazMotor provides a marketplace to sell spare car parts. LinguaHub is a marketplace for online and self-education courses as well as customer relationship management for schools.

The Zumcare mobile app connects patients and doctors and provides transparency through available reviews and rankings. Podpishi Online (sign online) provides the ability to sign agree-

ments quickly and remotely. Egistic is an information and analytical platform for crop field monitoring and precision farming through online services.

The event was organised by Seedstars World local ambassador and MOST Business Incubator Director Alim Khamitov with local partners Astana Hub and Zerde, the national infocommunication company.

Seedstars World's mission is to impact people's lives in emerging markets through technology and entrepreneurship, particularly addressing the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Its next stop is Ulaanbaatar to select the best startup in Mongolia.

