



Caspian Sea nations sign historic convention



By Elya Altynsarina

AKTAU – After two decades of diplomatic efforts, the five Caspian Sea nations signed the convention on the water reservoir legal status that had been in the works since 1996. In addition, six more documents were signed on various aspects of cooperation.

The convention and the agreements were signed on the International Day of the Caspian Sea during a summit in Aktau by Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Russia, Iran and Azerbaijan.

The convention establishes the rights and obligations of the parties with respect to the sea, including its waters, the bottom, subsoil, natural resources and airspace.

The convention also settles a long dispute over whether to consider the water body a sea, which would make it subject to international maritime law and accessible by outside countries, or to consider it a lake, which would require dividing it equally among its five coastal nations.

The dispute was settled by granting the water body a "special legal status."

The status establishes territorial waters within fifteen maritime miles, external borders become state borders where each country exercises subsurface rights; ten-

mile fishing zones adjoin the territorial waters and are under the exclusive fishing rights of each state. Outside the fishing zones, the common water area remains unchanged; beyond the state lines, the freedom of maritime navigation applies to ships of coastal countries.

The countries agreed on freedom of transit to other seas and oceans and foresee the possibility for laying pipelines under the waters if environmental requirements are observed.

Previous Caspian summits took place in Ashgabat (2002), Tehran (2007), Baku (2010) and Astrakhan (2014), giving the political impetus to the negotiation process and stimulating the achievement of consensus.

The Aktau summit was preceded by the final 52nd meeting of Ad Hoc Working Group and a Ministerial of the Caspian States where foreign ministers signed a protocol on actions to be taken upon the signing of the convention.

"The region has a unique culture, significant human resources [of 240 million people] and is rich in natural resources; due to its location, the sea also has geopolitical importance," said Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev at the summit.

The summit participants covered issues of ensuring security, preventing emergencies and regulating military activities of the Caspian states.

Some of the fundamental principles agreed upon include transforming the region into a peaceful zone of good-neighbourliness and friendship; using the waters for peaceful purposes; respecting sovereignty and territorial integrity of each other; not allowing the military presence of third parties.

Among challenges addressed was the sea's proximity to the areas of political instability. In this regard, Nazarbayev proposed a multilateral agreement on confidence-building measures in the field of military activities.

The Kazakh President invited the leaders of littoral states to explore the potential of the convention regarding energy, transport and transit sectors, as well as proposed to optimise the tariff policies between members of the convention.

"We have discussed measures for multilateral cooperation and signed trade, economic, transport and security agreements," Nazarbayev said at a press briefing after the summit. He noted that all parties considered the deal – already dubbed the "Constitution of the Caspian Sea" – from the point of ensuring political stability, developing the region while preserving and enhancing its natural and bio resources. "The Aktau summit demonstrated once again the ability of Caspian Five to jointly solve large-scale tasks," he said.

Heads of state of Azerbaijan, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Turkmenistan and Russia have also made statements on the convention. Nazarbayev later held bilateral meetings with each leader of the Caspian countries.

President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev noted that the Alyak Port his country launched in May will ensure full integration of traffic flows in connection to the newly opened Kuryk multimodal hub.

"Trade (between our countries) is growing and the cargo transportation is increasing, agricultural products supply is especially active," President Hassan Rouhani of Iran said during the meeting on the sidelines of the summit.

He underlined that Kazakhstan has always been supportive of Iran on international stage while complying with international agreements on nuclear issues.

"Although actively growing, our trade relations have large potential to be explored," said President of Turkmenistan Gurbanguly Berdimukhamedov. The two leaders are to meet later this month in Turkmenistan to discuss the Aral Sea.

President Vladimir Putin and Nazarbayev praised the state of Kazakh-Russian relationship, flourishing on "all directions, with especially close ties in economy, military-technical and space areas."

Astana to host WTO Ministerial Conference in 2020

By Aidana Yergaliyeva

ASTANA – World Trade Organisation (WTO) members confirmed the capital as the venue for the 12th Ministerial Conference (MC12) in 2020. The general council meeting reached a consensus July 26.

Kazakhstan will be the first Central Asian country to organise a ministerial conference. The event is anticipated in June, with the exact dates to be announced later, reported wto.org.

The mere fact that Kazakhstan offered its candidature to host the next conference "demonstrates its strong belief in the multilateral trading system," said WTO Director General Roberto Azevêdo.

Kazakhstan's Ambassador to WTO Zhanar Aitzhanova thanked the members for their trust on behalf of her country.

"It is a great honour for a young independent state and recently-acceded member to be hosting such an important meeting. We stand ready to contribute to addressing all outstanding issues to secure substantive outcomes at MC12," she said.

Kazakhstan, the organisation's 162nd member, joined in 2015.

Afghanistan and Liberia, the newest members, acceded the following year.

"Coming from one of the newest WTO members, this is powerful," said Azevêdo.

The ministerial conference is WTO's highest decision-making body that can make rulings on all matters under any of the multilateral trade agreements. The meeting, held every two years as instructed by the Marrakesh Agreement that established the organisation, brings together all WTO members representing countries and custom unions. Buenos Aires hosted MC11 in December 2017.

The full list of items for general council discussion can be found at wto.org.

WTO was created as a result of negotiations, and works through opening dialogue amid the chaotic interdependence of the international community. The significant work was done in 1986-1994 under negotiations known as the Uruguay Round and earlier negotiations within the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). WTO is currently hosting new negotiations under the Doha Round launched in 2001.

Kazakh doctors transplant artificial heart with donor

By Aidana Yergaliyeva

ASTANA – Kazakh doctors marked a historic moment in cardiac history Aug. 1 by successfully performing the world's first orthotopic heart transplant on a patient with an artificial heart implant.

"This is a new milestone in the development of cardiac surgery," said Vice Minister of Healthcare Alexei Tsoi at a press conference.

In December, doctors at the National Scientific Cardiosurgical

Centre implanted a fully artificial heart into 60-year-old Kunanbay Abrayev, who was suffering terminal stage heart failure. A group of specialists from CARMAT, a French medtech company, and Airbus created the one million euro (US\$ 1.16 million) artificial heart.

"After the implantation of an artificial heart, the patient once again underwent a transplantation of a donor heart. Now, the surgery is successfully done," said Tsoi at a press conference.

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Kazakhstan launches a multimodal transport hub on Caspian shores



See the story on Page A2.

Enhanced bilateral cooperation promotes security, says Afghan ambassador

By Abira Kuandyk

ASTANA – The main priority of the Afghan diplomatic mission in Kazakhstan is to strengthen economic, political and cultural ties between the people and governments of the countries, said Afghan Ambassador to Kazakhstan Kadam Shah Shahim in an interview with The Astana Times.

Relations and cooperation have expanded and will continue to improve, he noted.

"Last year, the President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan Mohammad Ashraf Ghani travelled to Astana to attend the first OIC (Organisation of Islamic Cooperation) Summit on Science and Technology. Afghan Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah also visited the capital to discuss further

prospects of trade and economic cooperation. It symbolises existing valuable relations between the countries," he said.

Trade, security, and education are among the priority areas of cooperation between Afghanistan and Kazakhstan.

Trade turnover in 2017 was \$564.8 million, with Kazakh exports amounting to \$562.8 million, and imports amounting to \$2 million.

Kazakhstan is important for Kabul as its largest trade partner in Central Asia. The nation exports grain crops and flour (67 percent), food products (27 percent), liquefied gas (7.2 percent) and metal rolls (5.6 percent). Afghanistan, in turn, supplies various types of fruits, nuts and other products to the Kazakh market.

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NATION

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 15, 2018

Kazakhstan launches a multimodal transport hub on Caspian shores

By Elya Altynsarina

AKTAU – President Nursultan Nazarbayev officially inaugurated the ferry complex of the Kuryk Port – a multimodal hub on the shore of Caspian Sea on Aug. 11. The port will link several Eurasian highway and railway transit corridors to the sea and is part of the country's Nury Zhol (Bright Path) infrastructure development programme.

Transport and logistics companies from Azerbaijan, Georgia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Iran, China, Russia, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan attended the opening ceremony, along with Kazakh officials and industry representatives.

According to a press-release by Kazakhstan Temir Zholy national railways company, which manages the facility, the total capacity of this railway-ferry-automobile hub exceeds seven million tonnes per year.

The customs service and facilities at the port will handle vehicles in less than 30-40 minutes and include updated terminals and warehouses. Thanking those who contributed to the project, President Nazarbayev noted that over the past several years, Kazakhstan has built more than 2,500 kilometres of railways and reconstructed 12,000 kilometres of highways. He said additional infrastructures being built and the rolling stock in the country is being updated.

"We launched the Western Europe-Western China highway and the Khorgos Gateway dry port, modernised the Port of Aktau," he said.

Port Kuryk enhances automobile transit as the trans-Caspian route

via the Kuryk port facilitates cargo delivery from China, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and the Ural-Siberian Region of Russia to Turkey and Europe, and vice versa.

Over the last decade, Kazakhstan invested nearly \$30 billion into its transport and logistics systems.

"Kuryk is important in a way that its capacity for transit will help boost country's transit revenue up to \$5 billion per year by 2020," Nazarbayev assured.

He drew attention to the importance of developing the country's transit and transportation potential and indicated that the connection to the intercontinental Eurasian transport system is a strategic task.

Improving Kazakhstan's transit and logistics potential has been determined to be a national strategy and the government has been tasked with connecting to intercontinental transit routes in Eurasia.

It also hopes that the multiplier effect of transport infrastructure will enhance economic competitiveness and will increase trade flows on the revived Silk Road, expanding regional cooperation and economic advancement.

Kazakhstan's Mangystau region is home to both of the country's Caspian Sea ports and is moving towards becoming a major logistics centre where aviation, railways, road and water transport networks are concentrated.

The region also wants to advance its service sector, attract investments, including the use of technologies to develop processing industries, as well as look at developing the tourism.



Barys is one of the first Kazakh cargo ships built for the Kuryk Port - Prorva Port transportation route.

Pointing to these tasks, Nazarbayev ordered national and local governments to draw a Comprehensive Plan for the development of additional production facilities and a service sector on the premises of Aktau and Kuryk hubs, to diversify the local economy.

The measures may include adapting existing industries to a new economic reality, opening jobs, training personnel and developing small and medium-sized businesses in the region.

During the opening ceremony, the Kazakh leader officially launched road and railway services along the Kuryk – Tazhen Customs Point and Kuryk – Khorgos Gateway dry port.

"This container train will arrive at Port Kuryk within three days," reads Facebook post of Zhenis Kassymbek, Minister of Investments and Development of Kazakhstan. He reminded that the railway terminal at Kuryk was launched in December 2016. According to Kassymbek, within sev-

en months of 2018, the terminal handled over one million tonnes of cargo.

He also confirmed that the logistics chain offered at Kuryk has already attracted customers from China, the Caucasus and Southern Europe.

"Consistent work on the project will ensure that we will be transporting two million containers to the markets of Eurasia by 2020," the minister wrote referring to the transportation from China and back.

Ex-Secretary of Security Council appointed Minister of Defence

By Meruyert Abugaliyeva

ASTANA – Nurlan Yermekbayev, until recently the Assistant to the President – Secretary of the Security Council, was appointed Kazakhstan's Minister of Defence Aug. 7.

"In the light of changing geopolitical situations and formation of new challenges, one of the main tasks placed ahead of the Ministry of Defence is technological improvement and weapons modernisation. Therefore, I have made a decision to appoint Nurlan Yermekbayev the minister, an officer with the experience



of military service, especially in conflict zones," said President Nursultan Nazarbayev.

Yermekbayev was born in 1963

in Shymkent. In 1986, he graduated from the USSR Ministry of Defence Military Institute in Moscow as an officer with the command of the Chinese and English languages. In 1996, he received a degree in engineering and economics from Kazakh National Academy of Architecture and Construction.

In 1984-1985, he served as a military interpreter in Angola; in 1986 through 1991 served in the Soviet Armed Forces.

In 1991-2006, he held various positions in private companies and banks and Kazakhstan Embassies in China and Singapore and the Presidential Administration.

In 2006-2007, he worked as

an advisor to the President leading the Centre for Foreign Policy in Presidential Administration. In 2007-2010, Yermekbayev served as Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs.

In 2010, he was appointed Assistant to the President. After two years, he started working as Ambassador of Kazakhstan to China, Vietnam and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

In 2014-2016, the official served as the Assistant to the President – Secretary of the Security Council.

In September 2016, he went on to work as the Minister of Religious Affairs and Civil Society prior to being appointed the Secretary of Security Coun-

cil for the second time in April 2018.

In addition to Kazakh and Russian, he speaks English, Chinese and Portuguese.

He replaced Saken Zhasuzakov, who was appointed head of the National Defence University.

"There are important tasks assigned to the university, such as military forces staff qualification upgrading and development of the military science. The university should become the main scientific and educational centre, where not only local students will be trained, but also those coming from the neighbouring countries," said Nazarbayev explaining the decision.

Kazakh doctors transplant artificial heart with donor

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He noted the surgery is the first of its kind not only in Kazakhstan, but in the world.

Abraev had issues with other organs before receiving the artificial heart transplant and based on his health, doctors initially said transplanting the donor heart was impossible. The artificial heart normalised the functions of his liver, lungs and other organs and made it safe for him to receive the donor heart.

"We noticed this improvement immediately after implantation. Three months later, the pressure in the pulmonary artery was reduced to the norm when a donor heart can be transplanted and we were observing him three months after the operation. The donor heart that was found was perfectly suitable for him," said National Scientific Cardiosurgical Centre board chairperson Yuri Piya.

Abraev's condition is now stable and he "eats, watches TV and leads a normal lifestyle inside a hospital room," said deputy chairperson Mahabbat Bekbosynova.



L-R: Vice Minister of Healthcare Alexei Tsoi, Chair of the Board of the National Scientific Cardiosurgical Centre Yuri Piya and Deputy Chair Makhabbat Bekbosynova.

At this point, he still needs to be under observation in the intensive care unit.

"The development and use of a fully artificial heart can rightfully be considered a breakthrough in modern world medicine, which will allow us to revise the approaches to surgical treatment of the terminal stage of heart failure

in the future," said Tsoi on his Facebook page.

The young man who provided the donor heart also saved the lives of three other individuals. At the press conference, Bekbosynova expressed her sincere gratitude to his parents who gave consent for harvesting his vital organs, while keeping his name secret as required by law.

"With the consent of the family, one patient gave the opportunity for at least four patients to live," she said.

Sixty individuals, including several children under 12, are currently registered on the waiting list for a heart donor. Finding a suitable donor is both luck and challenge and the recent operation involved

a significant degree of risk for the surgeons.

"The risk was very high, as this was the first replacement of an artificial heart. In purely surgical terms, one had to think about how to do it correctly. There is only one way and there is no turning back. A mistake could cost the patient's life, but we took this risk. The quality of life with the donor is better than with the artificial one and if there is an opportunity to improve the quality of a person's life, then this opportunity should be used," said Piya.

CARMAT provided a more sophisticated type of artificial heart with a pulsating blood flow that is close to the body's natural physiological conditions, he added.

Bench tests have shown this model can serve for more than seven years. Abraev spent eight months with the device, which has been returned to the company for further research on its longevity.

CARMAT covered all surgical expenses, as the operation had the status of international research. The cost for a similar operation is still difficult to estimate, as research has just begun.

NATIONAL NEWS IN BRIEF

The Denis Ten Public Foundation will be created in Almaty, according to Kazinform. The city administration also plans to open a figure skating academy and hold an annual international tournament in memory of the Olympic bronze medalist. A monument will be set at the site where Ten was stabbed to death July 19. "We thank all Kazakh people for their support in these difficult days. Many ideas and proposals were voiced honouring the memory of Denis. We are already working with the state authorities to implement some of them. All our proposals are supported by the Ministry of Culture and Sports. The authorities will install a plaque on our house, where Denis was born and lived, and will help publish a book about him," said his mother, Oksana Ten.

A 21-billion tenge (US\$58 million) integrated gas processing facility creating 258 jobs will be built this year in Aktobe region. "The new facility will increase the processing of associated gas and develop new types of products. The annual capacity is expected to be 300 million cubic metres of dry stripped gas, 37,000 tonnes of propane-butane technical mixture, 5,400 tonnes of gas condensate and 10,500 tonnes of sulphur. It will improve the environment situation, too," said Baiganin District Deputy Akim (Mayor) Zhandarbek Zhanabai.

Samruk-Kazyna Trust will build in excess of 40 sports playgrounds on more than 53,000 square metres in ten regions, reported the company's press service Aug. 9. The project, which aims to promote a healthy lifestyle among the population, will include football and hockey fields with artificial turf, workout areas and inclusive playgrounds. The project is one of the main directions of the Menin Elim (My Homeland) initiative launched in 2016. "We encourage more and more people to participate in sports and this is also a safe zone for children. Last year, new playgrounds were opened in Akmola, Aktobe, Mangystau, Pavlodar and the West Kazakhstan regions," said Samruk-Kazyna Trust social project development fund General Director Diyaz Azbergenov.

A 5.4-billion tenge (US\$15 million) waste sorting plant creating 530 new jobs was launched in technical mode Aug. 9 in Almaty, reported Kazinform. Sites for secondary raw material processing will be also opened. Solid household waste represents up to 95 percent of all municipal waste. "Its design capacity of 550,000 tonnes per year is the entire volume of solid household waste taking into account the next five years. Now, the city produces approximately 600,000 tonnes of waste. We plan to cover the whole city. There are plans to extract about 50,000 tonnes of secondary raw materials from waste," said investing company head Dmitry Danilchenko.

An Almaty plant with a capacity of 100 buses a year will produce the first German Eurabus electric buses this autumn. "The investment project costs \$44 million. Colossal work is being done to develop electric transport and to improve the ecological situation. This project will upgrade electric buses and create more than 400 jobs," said Kazakh Invest regional office head Zhandos Orazaliyev. Seven investment projects worth \$252 million will also be launched, including a steel pipe production plant, cable and wire production plant and two building material hypermarkets. Almaty is the most attractive city in the country for doing business, with approximately 7,500 foreign companies participating.

Almaty-based Chilik Farmers won London's CSR Excellence Award in the Best Social and Economic Project of the Year category. The project was initiated in 2013 by a community fund in Enbekshikazakh district. "Our objective is to develop the agriculture sector, improve the quality and competitiveness of agricultural products and improve the quality of life in villages. We organise trainings, seminars and consultations at the agribusiness centre and meet with local farmers to exchange experiences and adopt best practices," said the company's press release. Earlier, the project won the Best Partner Project of the Year nomination by the European Business Association of Kazakhstan (EUROBAK) and received a major award from the American Chamber of Commerce in Kazakhstan.

EURASIA&WORLD

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EXTERNAL NEWS IN BRIEF

Euronews NBC will air a segment of "Adventures" in September featuring Kazakhstan, reported inform.kz. "Adventures," one of the channel's most popular programmes with an audience of more than 250 million, explores the wonders of countries across the world, offering viewers the chance to enjoy a journey "out of the ordinary." The production team plans to make four episodes about Kazakhstan – Burabai, one of the country's most popular resort areas, the Alatau mountains, Mangystau region and mountain tourism. "I am very impressed with Kazakhstan. Beautiful nature, kind and caring people. A wide choice of different activities for every tourist," said Euronews reporter Marta Pisoni.

Kazakh and Thai aviation authorities recently agreed to increase the number of flights between the countries, reported the Kazakh Ministry of Investments and Development civil aviation committee. Kazakhstan's SCAT Airlines and Air Astana and Thai Airways participated in the negotiations, with Air Astana granted the right for a code-sharing agreement with airlines of other countries. "This will open opportunities for Kazakh passengers and will facilitate development of the country's transit potential," said the Kazakh committee statement. Direct flights are currently offered from Astana to Bangkok three times a week and Almaty to Bangkok five times a week.

European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) provided a local currency loan up to \$5 million to Uzbekistan's Davr Bank to develop small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in its broader effort to support the country's private sector. The agreement was signed in Tashkent during EBRD President Suma Chakrabarti's visit to the Uzbek capital. He said funding the development of SMEs is among the bank's priority areas and "demonstrates strong commitment to supporting this significant area of the country's economy." EBRD invested \$1.045 million in 54 Uzbek projects between 1992-2010 and by the end of 2017 signed its first six new operations in the country since 2010 worth more than \$179 million.

Kazakhstan and Iran agreed to simplify visa procedures for businesspeople, said Iranian Ambassador to Kazakhstan Mojtaba Damirchilu, stressing the willingness of the two countries to ease the movement for their citizens. "Certain measures are taken in this area. I would like to highlight that Iran's position in regard to neighbouring countries is to simplify or introduce an entirely visa-free regime with them," he noted. Among the recent steps to facilitate cooperation with neighbouring countries was the country signing an economic cooperation agreement with the Eurasian Economic Union that, among other objectives, will create stable conditions and rules for Kazakh and Iranian bilateral trade.

Kazakhstan invited Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkey to join the Silk Road Visa initiative to introduce a single visa for the region. The plan, negotiated by Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, was proposed by Kazakhstan in March and is designed to simplify the often tedious visa procedures for tourists wishing to explore and travel through Central Asia. Turkic Council member countries are currently working to develop proposals for the project. Kazakh Minister of Culture and Sports Arystanbek Mukhammediyev said the suggestions should be ready before the Turkic Council summit scheduled for Sept. 3 in Kyrgyzstan. "The introduction of such mechanism will be an analogue of the Schengen Visa, but with a tourist purpose," he added.

Indian FM meets with Kazakh counterpart, Prime Minister

By Malika Orazgaliyeva

ASTANA – Kazakh Minister of Foreign Affairs Kairat Abdrakhmanov and Foreign Minister of India Sushma Swaraj discussed cooperation between the two countries as well as regional and international issues Aug. 3 in Astana.

"During today's fruitful negotiations we agreed on a number of matters concerning the main international and regional issues. I am sure that our meeting gave a good impetus to the strategic partnership between Astana and Delhi. The peoples of Kazakhstan and India are united by the lasting bonds of friendship, cooperation, mutual respect," Abdrakhmanov said at a joint press conference.

"India's relations with Kazakhstan are built on a strong foundation of centuries old historical and cultural ties. Both India and Kazakhstan have developed multifaceted cooperation in all areas of bilateral and multilateral relations and are strategic partners since 2009," Swaraj told the media.

Abdrakhmanov and Swaraj discussed implementation of agreements reached in 2017 during the visit of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Astana, as well as his meeting with Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev in June 2018 on the SCO Summit sidelines in Qingdao.

"We do not have any political disagreements, and our positions are close on many important international issues. Our cooperation is carried out within the framework of international organisations and multilateral forums," Abdrakhmanov said.

The two ministers discussed bi-



lateral trade and economic cooperation, which reached almost \$1 billion in 2017. As a result, Kazakhstan became one of India's main trading partners in Central Asia.

"Following the recent meeting of our presidents in Qingdao, President Nazarbayev gave a number of specific instructions to the Kazakh government on strengthening bilateral cooperation in the fields of investment, energy, logistics, information technology, space, pharmaceuticals, tourism and film production. These are the key areas we will focus while preparing official high-level events in 2019," Abdrakhmanov noted.

"We are going to expand the potential of the Kazakhstan-Turkmenistan-Iran railway with access to the Indian Ocean through the Iranian seaports," he added.

According to Swaraj, India has

emerged as the fastest-growing large economy in the world. It is a global hub for manufacturing and innovation.

"To enhance people-to-people contact and to promote tourism, India has extended the electronic visa system to the nationals of Kazakhstan since February 2018. Thanks to the pro-active leadership of President Nazarbayev. We already notice positive changes facilitating travel by Indians to Kazakhstan," said Swaraj.

The foreign ministers agreed to deepen bilateral military-technical cooperation. This concerns the assistance in the deployment of the Kazakh peacekeeping contingent as part of the Indian battalion for the UNIFIL mission in Lebanon, and the joint Kazakh-Indian military KAZHIND exercises planned for autumn 2018.

"Our defence and security sector cooperation has intensified in

the last two years," Swaraj noted.

The ministers also identified steps to increase interaction within international organisations, such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA) and the United Nations.

The parties agreed that India's accession to the SCO would boost the political and economic potential of the organisation, including its ability to stabilise the situation in Central and South Asia, as well as assist in the resolution of the crisis in Afghanistan.

The ministers also focused on cultural and humanitarian ties.

"We thank Indian friends for their support in the restoration and holding a solemn opening of the grave of the famous son of the Kazakhstan steppes, the outstanding historian and statesman Muhammad Haydar Dulati, in the

city of Srinagar," noted Abdrakhmanov, adding Kazakhstan will continue to seek deeper relations with India.

"Kazakhstan firmly intends to continue its course towards the development of friendly relations and partnership with India, and to make efforts for joint and harmonious development for the benefit of the peoples of both countries," he said.

Swaraj also met with Prime Minister of Kazakhstan Bakytzhan Sagintayev to discuss expanding cooperation in trade, economy, defense industry, space, transport and logistics, primeminister.kz reported.

The meeting raised the issues of participation of leading Indian financial and investment companies in the work of the Astana International Financial Centre (AIFC).

Trade turnover between Kazakhstan and India between January and April totalled \$250.3 million, which is 31.2 percent higher than for the same period in 2017.

Exports from Kazakhstan to India between January and April increased by 37 percent and amounted to \$174.2 million. The main export commodities from Kazakhstan to India are crude oil, silver, asbestos, hydrogen, inert gases and other non-metals, ferroalloys, tantalum and its products.

Imports to Kazakhstan from India between January and April increased by 19.8 percent and amounted to \$76.1 million. These are mainly industrial furnaces, equipment for sorting and grinding soil, refractory ceramic products, machines and mechanisms for soil works, sulfur-organic compounds and other goods.

Palestinian FM makes first visit to Kazakhstan, discusses relations with counterpart

By Elya Altynsarina

ASTANA – Kazakhstan and Palestine signed a memorandum on consultations between their foreign ministries as well as a memorandum on trade and economic ties in Astana during the first official visit of Palestinian Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates Dr. Riyad Malki on July 30-31.

The trade and economic memorandum has been endorsed by Federation of Palestinian Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture. The Chamber of International Commerce of Kazakhstan hopes the document will expand trade, economic and technical cooperation.

Malki and Kazakh Minister of Foreign Affairs Kairat Abdrakhmanov also outlined additional areas to increase cooperation and discussed regional and international issues.

"Kazakhstan attaches great



importance to the development of bilateral relations with Palestine. The basis of this cooperation was laid with the visit of the leader of the Palestine Liberation Organisation and

President of the Palestinian National Authority Yasser Arafat to our country in 1991 – the year Kazakhstan proclaimed its independence, as well as the return visit of the President of the

Republic of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev to Palestine in 1995," Abdrakhmanov said.

This year is the 26th anniversary of the establishment of bilateral diplomatic relations. Kazakhstan and Palestine have since cooperated on bilateral and multilateral levels within the United Nations, Organisation for Islamic Cooperation, the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia and the Islamic Organisation for Food Security, among others.

Palestinians have studied in Kazakh universities and Kazakhstan remains committed to fulfilling its annual pledge to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).

Malki thanked his counterpart for supporting Palestine at the regional and international levels and for Kazakhstan's efforts toward peace in the Middle East.

Palestine has also supported

Kazakh initiatives, including those at the UN and the First OIC Summit on Science and Technology in Kazakhstan.

Abdrakhmanov reiterated Kazakhstan's support for the two-state solution, saying it is necessary for long-term peace in the Middle East.

"The settlement of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict shall be based on the principle of Two States for Two Peoples, which provides for the establishment of the Palestinian State within the borders of 1967 with the capital in East Jerusalem, despite the existing difficulties, and the peace negotiation process must continue," he said.

He also reaffirmed that Kazakhstan, both currently as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council and in the future, will continue to support the Middle East peace process as a precondition for peace in the region and that Kazakhstan supports Palestine's peaceful aspirations.

Kazakh Foreign Ministry presents journalism awards

By Elya Altynsarina

ASTANA – The Ministry of Foreign Affairs awarded the winners of the fifth annual Kazakhstan through the Eyes of Foreign Media contest at an Aug. 6 ceremony.

The contest seeks to promote professional reporting on Kazakhstan in the foreign media by recognising the authors of the most objective journalistic reports, stories and analytical pieces. The winners, representing the Americas, Europe, Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and the Baltic States, Middle East and Africa and Asia, Australia and Oceania, received a trip to Kazakhstan to visit the capital, Almaty and Burabai resort area.

Welcoming the winners, partners and diplomats representing

their countries, Foreign Minister Kairat Abdrakhmanov noted the ministry will continue to support in every way the work of foreign journalists covering events in Kazakhstan.

"The openness of Kazakhstan's society, the open-mindedness, introducing Kazakh culture to the world – these are the essence of the Modernisation of Kazakhstan's Identity Programme of President Nursultan Nazarbayev," he said.

The National Information Agency of Uzbekistan (UzA) editorial team, which in 2017-2018 covered Kazakh-Uzbek relations, was the winner from the CIS and Baltic countries. Its article "Uzbekistan-Kazakhstan: dedication to the 25th anniversary of establishment of diplomatic relations," as well as publications on the bike tour of friendship and Days of the Almaty

Region in Uzbekistan, were specifically noted.

"Recently, the interest of the global community in Central Asia has increased significantly. President Nursultan Nazarbayev and the heads of all the states of the region are making a lot of efforts to enhance regional cooperation. It is not surprising that this year saw a great number of publications dedicated to the rapprochement and cooperation of the states of Central Asia. Last year, the trade turnover between Kazakhstan and all Central Asian countries increased by 18.4 per cent, with Uzbekistan by 32 percent," noted Abdrakhmanov.

U.S. journalists Stephan Rabimov and Alexander Lipovtsev, authors of the Forbes article "Seven Wonders of Kazakhstan: Why Fashion Tourism Is Booming in Central Asia," took the prize for the Americas.

The winner from the Middle East and Africa was Jordanian Ayman El-Zaben for a series of materials on Kazakhstan's non-permanent membership on the UN Security Council, the President's Five Social Initiatives, launch of the Astana International Financial Centre and the capital's 20th anniversary.

Approximately 300 publications in foreign media were devoted to the anniversary, most written by journalists who visited the city to learn about its development. One such publication called "Astana: the capital has its own charms and pleasures," written by Indian Inderver Singh and published in Business Central Asia, was selected as the winner from Asia, Australia and Oceania.

British journalist Gilly Pickup, with her articles "Destination-Kazakhstan" and "Kazakhstan:

One Steppe Beyond" published in Aberdeen Press&Journal and The People's Friend, was the European winner.

President of the Club of Chief Editors of Kazakhstan Yerlan Bekkhozhin, ambassadors Saidikram Niyazhodzhaev (Uzbekistan) and Prabhat Kumar (India) and diplomats from the American and Jordanian embassies spoke at the ceremony.

In addition to the winners, the ministry awarded special diplomas to dozens of journalists and media who will receive them at the respective Kazakh embassies.

This year's contest partners were three hotels, Rixos President Astana, Rixos Borovoe and Rixos Almaty, as well as Argyamak transportation company, WizzAir, Turkish Airlines and Kazakhstan Temir Zholy national railways company.

ECONOMY

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 15, 2018

Kazakh tenge hits record low, as NB says slide due to geopolitical tensions, emerging markets volatility

By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – The Kazakh tenge continued to lose its value against U.S. dollar as it hit its all-time low Aug. 13, valuing 363.15 per \$1. That number represented a 1.8 percent decrease overnight. Kazakh National Bank cited geopolitical tensions and U.S. protectionist policies and sanctions levied on neighbouring Russia as well as China and Turkey behind the weakening of the currency.

Weakening of Kazakh tenge comes amidst a broader weakness in other emerging markets, including South Africa, Turkey, Brazil, and Mexico.

The week between Aug. 3 and Aug. 10 delivered a two percent drop in the value of the Kazakh tenge, said a National Bank press statement on Aug. 13, while Turkish lira lost 26.6 percent of its value, Russian ruble dropped 6.9 percent and South African rand went down by 5.8 percent against dollar within the same period.

“This weakening of the tenge

is happening amidst the general weakening of currencies in developing countries. Main reasons are geopolitical tensions as well as the U.S. protectionism and sanction policies in regard to several developing countries [Russia, China, Turkey], which escalates diplomatic relations,” said the national bank statement.

The emerging markets witness a foreign capital outflow and expectations for U.S. base rate rise also strengthen the dollar, the Kazakh regulator said.

Exchange rate is also influenced

by “fundamental factors,” said the bank, which include oil prices,

The emerging markets witness a foreign capital outflow and expectations for U.S. base rate rise also strengthen the dollar, the Kazakh regulator said.

currency situation in countries that are Kazakhstan’s main trade partners, payment balance and inflation rate.

Price for oil also went down recently to \$72 per barrel after China announced it would introduce a 25 percent retaliatory tariff on American crude oil exports.

The National Bank that maintains a floating exchange rate regime said in a statement it is ready to make interventions to “mitigate significant and destabilising short-term volatility in the value of

ECONOMY NEWS IN BRIEF

The demand for Kazakh cement is growing in Uzbekistan, 24.kz reports, with consumers especially interested in goods produced in Shymkent, Karaganda and Taraz. According to construction market seller Kakhman Nasirov, they sell up to 300 tonnes of Kazakh construction materials per month. Considering the pace of development of construction in Uzbekistan, this figure could grow, the entrepreneur believes. According to the Ministry for Foreign Trade of Uzbekistan, trade turnover between the two countries from January to March exceeded \$543 million. In the first quarter, Uzbekistan imported 265,000 tonnes of Kazakh cement, three times more than in previous years.

Results of Kazakhstan’s Comprehensive Privatisation Plan for the first half of the year were announced during an Aug. 2 meeting at the Central Communications Service, 24.kz reports. Part of the state block of shares of the Khorgos International Centre of Boundary Cooperation will be put up for sale before the end of the year. Their value will be determined through an expert evaluation. However, Kazakhfilm can be excluded from the list of privatisation facilities. Out of 502 facilities, 421 were sold for 200 billion tenge (US\$573 million).

Kazakhstan’s transport and logistics industries are growing steadily, kazakh-tv.kz says. Last year, the infrastructure sector contributed 4.3 trillion tenge (US\$12.3 billion) to the country’s gross domestic product (GDP). The value makes up 8.2 percent of the economy. Within one year, investments in the sector increased by 37 percent. In total, 578.5 billion tenge (US\$1.66 billion) was invested in the transport and logistics industry in the first half of the year. According to energyprom.kz, the Astana, Atyrau and Mangistau regions make the largest investments volume. Today, a number of projects in the transport sector are being implemented in the country. They include modernising and expanding oil and gas pipelines, upgrading airport infrastructure, developing the Aktau seaport and Khorgos dry port and building highways and transport corridors, including the New Silk Road Pan-Eurasian project.

The volume of oil production in Kazakhstan will total 104 million tonnes a year by 2025, kazakh-tv.kz says. Most of this oil will be extracted at the three main Kazakh oil fields: Tengiz, Karachaganak and Kashagan. There are plans to construct a fourth compressor and a fifth infield pipeline. According to Director General of the Kazenergy Association Asset Magauov, the oil and gas industry remains an attractive sector for direct investments. Moreover, Kazakhstan’s new tax code and subsoil code will accelerate the attraction of foreign businesses to the oil sector, including to activities like offshore oil exploration and extraction. Astana also plans environmental legislation reform this year.

The share of non-cash in total card turnover grew from 16 to 26 percent, according to finprom.kz. A massive shift is underway in Kazakhstan to payments through cards. For the first half of the year, 193 million non-cash payments were made. For comparison, only 105 million transactions for payments through cards were recorded in 2016. In the first half of the year, the average amount per transaction was 11,200 tenge (US\$31.90). For the same period of 2017, the average amount of one purchase through a payment card exceeded 12,000 tenge (US\$34.43). During the year, the number of active payment cards increased by 22 percent to 10.5 million. The demand for credit cards is growing. Compared to the first half of last year, the number of active credit cards increased by more than 60 percent. The number of active credit cards in Kazakhstan reached 1.5 million.

This year, the generation of electricity by thermal power plants using environmentally dirty fossil fuels has grown from 79 percent to 82 percent, 24.kz said. Despite the development of green energy, energy generation by solar stations is only 0.1 percent of the country’s total. Wind power plants account for 0.4 percent of Kazakhstan’s generated energy.

EBRD President signs loan agreements, MoUs in Uzbekistan

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) President Sir Suma Chakrabarti travelled to Uzbekistan July 31-Aug. 1 to meet with President Shavkat Mirziyoyev and sign several loan agreements with private companies and memoranda of understanding with the government aimed at supporting energy and energy efficiency-related investments, privatisation and capital market development.

“We welcome the efforts of the Uzbek authorities to liberalise the economy and advance political reforms, which are opening the country to its neighbours and the international community. We also hope that the role of civil society in the country will grow,” said Chakrabarti.

Experts expect the visit will help prepare the bank’s new medium-term strategy, its investments in the country and key Uzbek reform efforts. After launching a broad reform programme in the country, EBRD enhanced its connection with the Central Asian nation and reopened its resident office in Tashkent in November 2017.

EBRD experts find Uzbekistan has a strong external position, as it has

\$27 billion in net international reserves (according to March data) and external debt of only approximately \$16 billion, which is 33 percent of its GDP. The exchange rate has remained stable at 8,000-8,100 sum per US dollar after the September 2017 devaluation. Average inflation accelerated from 8 percent year-on-year in 2016 to 12.5 percent in 2017, reaching 14.4 percent by end-2017.

EBRD is the largest institutional investor in the Central Asian region, with close to \$12.3 billion committed to projects in a variety of sectors, from infrastructure to agriculture, with a focus on private sector development.

The bank’s operation in the country is focused in the short term on advice and financing for small and medium-sized enterprises, a trade finance programme to support cross-border trade and cooperation and measures to improve the economic investment climate and competitiveness, including through attracting foreign direct investment that will result in transferring technology and know-how.

EBRD invested \$1.045 million in 54 Uzbek projects from 1992-2010. By the end of 2017, the bank had signed its first six new operations in the country since 2010, totalling more than \$179 million.

Privatisation on schedule, says committee chairperson

By Dilshat Zhussupova

ASTANA – Kazakhstan’s second privatisation wave is 77.4 percent complete. As of July 1, results show 502 of 887 state-owned enterprises were put up for sale and 421 sold for 216 billion tenge (US\$620.24 million).

“The bulk of the funds, approximately 65 percent, from the sale of objects is made up by the selling price of national companies and holdings. These are mostly proceeds, approximately 132 billion tenge (US\$378.99 million), from the sale of Samruk Kazyna assets.”

Fifteen of 63 top-ranking resources of the 2016-2020 Comprehensive Privatisation Plan were sold for 110.5 billion tenge



Minister of Finance Bakhyt Sultanov.

(US\$317.3 million), including two national company objects worth 11.5 billion tenge (US\$33.02 million) and 13 national holding objects worth 99 billion tenge (US\$284.25 million).

The selling prices exceeded estimated value by 1.4 percent. Twenty-nine national property objects were sold for 26 billion tenge (US\$74.65 million), 229 communal property objects for 49 billion tenge (US\$140.69 million) and 163 national holding and company objects for 141 billion tenge (US\$404.84 million).

“The bulk of the funds, approximately 65 percent, from the sale of objects is made up by the selling price of national companies and holdings. These are mostly proceeds, approximately 132 billion tenge (US\$378.99 million), from

the sale of Samruk Kazyna assets,” said Ministry of Finance State Property and Privatisation Committee Chairperson Kalymzhan Ibraimov at a recent Central Communications Service briefing.

Another 266 facilities are at the reorganisation and liquidation stage due to the economic in expediency of their sale and insolvency. One hundred and four objects were planned for privatisation in the first half of the year. Instead, 15 objects were reorganised and liquidated and 89 put up for sale, 39 of which were sold for 36 billion tenge (US\$103.36 million).

Twelve object-related violations have been recorded: four for delaying pre-sale preparation and evaluation, six for delaying liquidation measures and two for not yet including objects in the roadmap.

Despite these setbacks, the privatisation process is in accordance with the sales schedule. By year’s end, 87 more objects will be put up for sale, including 20 nationally-owned objects, 31 communal property objects and 36 quasi-public sector assets.

Minister of Finance Bakhyt Sultanov noted there is growing interest from private firms and the population in the available state assets. Privatisation decisions will be made on Air Astana, Kazakhtelecom and Kazatomprom in the coming year.

IT business leader emphasises fundamental role of talent in digitisation efforts

By Dilshat Zhussupova

ASTANA — Digitisation is occurring at an increasing pace across the world to improve labour productivity. These gains may result not only from rendering old processes more efficient, but also from inventing new business processes and even entirely new businesses.

Digital transformation allows creating new ways of working and reimagining our established business models, a priority for Eric Verniaut, SAP Executive Vice President of Industries and Chief Business Officer for Europe, the Middle East and Africa.

A graduate of INSEEC Business School and Anglia Polytechnic University, Verniaut has more than 20 years’ experience in international executive leadership in the information technology (IT) industry. In an exclusive interview with The Astana Times, he spoke about digitisation efforts undertaken worldwide and, closer to home, at the Astana International Financial Centre (AIFC).

AIFC, tasked by President Nursultan Nazarbayev with leading in new financial technology development and expertise, is one of the many platforms in Kazakhstan undergoing digital transformation. Within five years, the Digital Kazakhstan state programme aims to digitise parts of the economy, gov-



Eric Verniaut

ernment and human capital development and implement a Digital Silk Road and innovative ecosystem.

“Today, there are a good array of available options in the market for entrepreneurs to increase competitiveness and, more importantly, to accelerate growth,” said Verniaut. “One of the distinctive features of digitisation is that it can enable fast growth and improvement of profit margins in most industries.”

For instance, businesses may connect their different operations in real time via mobile technology and with partners and end-customers in new ways.

“Paper, disconnected processes, lack of information, slow decisions, lack of visibility of the business may be eradicated. Isn’t it beautiful?” he added.

Verniaut singles out the banking and insurance sectors as the key development areas for Kazakhstan’s first step in introducing digital technology, as they are central for the country’s economic future.

“We should also not forget the importance of education, health and government, because these are important for the medium and long term,” said Verniaut. “I am familiar with Kazakhstan’s major e-government efforts, which will hopefully be expanded across other government activities.”

He advocates promoting digitisation in all major, often inter-related economic areas, including oil and gas, agriculture, consumer-goods manufacturing and transportation.

“Of course, it will not happen instantly. It will take time, resources, incentives, clear plans and competent staff. Nevertheless, in my conversations I have observed a keen willingness to succeed in digitisation as a country – that is the most important thing,” he said.

People would be sorely mistaken in thinking digitisation is only about technology. Rather, human resources (HR) is key.

For businesses seeking to wholeheartedly embrace digitisation, HR’s responsibilities should include recruiting and nurturing technical talent, changing the company culture, generating incentives and bringing business and technol-

ogy departments closer together for innovation.

Such a vast transformation should be guided by the CEO, led by management in all departments and executed by HR.

“Imagine a hospital. Sure, you have a technical team that can perform sound data analysis. Management can produce reports suggesting ways to improve operations. But how do you actually transform the hospital’s operations for the better? Nurses and physicians will require training and closer collaboration between doctors and the data analytics team will be needed, too. It is HR that should lead these activities,” said Verniaut.

He identified several potential obstacles for Kazakhstan’s digitisation ambitions, beginning with building upon and improving the existing skills and talents of not just individuals, but entire companies and the government.

“Competent personnel in digital technology and knowledgeable management which understands how to use digital technology in business and government are needed everywhere, not just in Kazakhstan,” he added.

Here, education becomes important. One way to bring teams and companies’ competency to greater heights is to adopt leading digital solutions such as those produced by SAP. The European multinational software corporation, based in Germany, provides enterprise

software for business operations and customer relations management.

“I know that one of the directions of Digital Kazakhstan is connected to the development of human capital, which surely includes increasing digital literacy and an overall transformation in education. In my view, this would be the right thing to do,” he said.

“It is imperative that your government continues to work and fulfil its ambitious goals within the framework of the Kazakhstan 2050 strategy. Digital transformation is a big step on the way to becoming a top 30 global economy,” he added. “I hope that on your path you will feel supported by your international partners, along with the immense support from SAP.”

Since 2011, Verniaut has served as SAP General Manager, Executive Vice President and Senior Vice President. He challenges every Kazakh company to seriously consider how it may effectively advance and benefit from digitalisation.

“The question ‘Do we need digitisation?’ is no longer relevant. Rather, ‘How can it be properly implemented to effect positive economic and social change?’ is the question,” said Verniaut. “At SAP, we have been helping our customers to lead at the forefront of technology for over 40 years and will be most glad to help where needed.”

BUSINESS

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 15, 2018

BUSINESS NEWS IN BRIEF

Leroy Merlin, the largest French retailer selling home and interior products, building materials, and repair and garden products, opened its first supermarket in Kazakhstan in Almaty Aug. 1, according to informburo.kz. The company has invested approximately 8 billion tenge (US\$22.3 million) and plans to open 20 more shops across the country over the next 15 years. Its first shop in Kazakhstan, which provides jobs for 370 workers, offers more than 30,000 goods, which are 30 percent made in Kazakhstan. Prior to opening a store in Almaty, the company had more than 464 shops in 12 countries. Established in 1923, Leroy Merlin ranks first in Europe in terms of goods turnover.

An Almaty waste sorting plant currently in the final stage of construction has started working in a technical mode. The facility, with a production capacity of 550,000 tonnes of waste a year, is worth 5.4 billion tenge (US\$15 million) of private investments. "Taking into account the fact that the city produces around 600,000 tonnes of waste annually, we plan to provide solid waste sorting for all of Almaty," said Investment Company Director Dmitrii Danilchenko. The company intends to produce 50,000 tonnes of cardboard, cellophane, glass, plastic and metal to be sold as raw materials to other companies.

A camel and mare milk processing plant in the Turkestan region will be launched by the end of August, according to 24.kz. The facility, worth 7.5 billion tenge (US\$21 million), will employ 80 people, including 10 Chinese experts, and process up to 100 tonnes of milk each day. The plant will make milk powder, one tonne of which requires 15 tonnes of milk. The powder is ready for consumption after adding water. "Initially, we plan to export our product to China; then, we want to expand to Europe, the U.S. and Australia," says Zhazira Ozatkyzy, the plant's deputy director.

The Kazakh-British Technical University, located in Almaty, is slated for privatisation Nov. 6, reports kapital.kz. Currently, the school is 100 percent owned by Kazmunaygas, Kazakhstan's national oil and gas company. The reserve price is set at 11,364 million tenge (US\$32 million); the minimum payment required to participate in the auction is 72.1 million tenge (US\$201,500). Buyers are allowed to make payments in installments, however, they are obliged to maintain the profile of the institution and ensure at least a 50 percent share of Kazakh personnel in the university for 10 years. Established in 2001, the university occupies a 7,000 square metre building constructed in 1957. The total area of the land lot, however, is 33,700 square metres.

A copper cathode plant started functioning in testing mode in the Karaganda region and produced the first samples of its goods. The 14 billion tenge (US\$39.2 million) project is capable of producing 9,000 tonnes of copper cathode, all of which will be later exported. The plant, with equipment from France, Finland, Israel and Italy, employs 550 workers. The technology used at the facility allows ore with low copper concentrations to be processed and is one of the most environmentally friendly processes in metallurgy, noted for its minimal emission of harmful substances into the environment.

Composite Group, a Russian holding producing cooling radiators for automobiles and agricultural machinery and other agricultural equipment, has finished building its tractor manufacturing plant in Kostanai, reports abctv.kz. The facility, capable of producing 3,000 tractors under the brand name Belarus, as well as 100,000 heat exchangers, will be located in Kostanai's industrial zone and employ 150 local workers. The investment volume will total 2 billion tenge (US\$5.6 million). Another Russian company, Sibeko, intends to build a plant producing seats for different means of transport in the industrial zone. The 1.6 billion tenge (US\$4.5 million) project will be capable of manufacturing 170,000 seats annually.

Government officials, World Bank, Agro companies discuss increasing Kazakh agricultural exports

By Aidana Yergaliyeva

ASTANA – The Kazakh Ministry of Agriculture and representatives from the World Bank and several transnational agro companies discussed the nation's exports and new Silk Road food security July 3 during a conference at the Kazakhstan Global Investment Roundtable (KGIR).

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Agriculture Umirzak Shukreyev presented macroeconomic figures showing the potential of Kazakhstan's agro-industrial complex. He noted the government is seeking to increase the country's

exports, especially in agriculture, and is making efforts to provide a favourable growth environment.

The latest achievements include successful deals between Kazakhstan and countries including China, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The nation has also removed restrictions on live sheep and frozen and chilled lamb supplies to Iran, exporting 4,763 live sheep (129.5 tonnes) and 509.8 tonnes of lamb last year to the western Asian nation. Iran has also approved importing Kazakh eggs.

Other countries have established clear requirements on beef imports, as Saudi Arabia and the

UAE have removed their restrictions on large and small cattle. The latter also eliminated barriers on meat, meat products and eggs.

The Chinese market is now open to Kazakh products such as frozen beef and lamb, fish, honey and live horses, as well as wheat, bran, soybeans, alfalfa, rapeseed meal, flour and vegetable oil. Agricultural exports to China increased 34.3 percent last year, from \$134.5 million to \$180.6 million.

At present, 167 Kazakh enterprises are included on the Chinese and European Union (EU) registries and can legally export agricultural products to the participating countries. Approximately 150

companies are permitted to export to China, while 17 enterprises specialising in fish processing may send their goods to the EU.

Investors are also encouraged to consider Kazakhstan's location as a perfect transit country. Khorgos dry port on the border with China, Aktau sea port on the Caspian Sea and the Western Europe–Western China international transit corridor have been developing infrastructure specifically for this reason.

Kazakhstan believes it has high export potential. In order to maintain the agreements with the aforementioned countries and ensure further progress, the government revised its approach to agro-in-

dustrial state regulation, with emphasis on protecting the domestic market, expanding external sales markets, developing trade and logistics infrastructure and increasing available financing for agro-industrial complex entities.

The agrarian sector has received \$4.4 billion in investments in the last five years. Agro businesses attracted \$136 million in the first quarter of this year, a 25-percent increase compared to the same period in 2017.

Agricultural product exports have increased 47 percent in the first three months of the year, with processed product exports growing 26 percent.

Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan strengthen economic ties

Staff Report

ASTANA – An agreement between the Kazakh Chamber of Commerce and Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs to open a Kazakh trade house in Turkmenistan was reached during a trade and economic mission to Ashgabat.

The mission, set up with the assistance of the Kazakh Embassy in Turkmenistan, was attended by 16 machinery, construction, pharmaceutical and food companies, including Azia Auto, Bayan Sulu (confectioner), IT&M, KazAzot (research and investment), Kazakhstan Garysh Sapary (space agency), Kazphosphate, Kentau Transformer Plant, Kuryk port and Rakhat (confectioner).

Representatives of several ministries, including the National Aerospace Agency, Turkmenneft, Turkmenyuldary and other local businesses met with their Kazakh counterparts.

Certain difficulties arise in pay-

ing for goods made by Turkmen companies for their Kazakh counterparts due to limited opportunities to convert the manat, the currency of Turkmenistan. With the view of increasing cooperation, Kazakh Export negotiated with representatives of local banks, such as Halkbank and Turkmenistan Bank, as well as Ryzgal Commercial Bank.

As result of the visit, Dolce, a pharmaceuticals company, signed two memorandums of cooperation and Beles Agro concluded an agreement to supply three-four tonnes of flour and vegetable oil to Turkmenistan every month for one year.

Both parties also agreed to assist in obtaining visas for entrepreneurs travelling on business.

Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev is set to meet with Turkmen President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov Aug. 12 during the Caspian Summit in Aktau to discuss trade and economic cooperation, visa regime and security.

Merger of Kazkommertsbank, Halyk Bank complete

Staff Report

ASTANA – Kazkommertsbank's merger into Halyk Bank was completed July 27. The merger transfers all property, all rights and obligations of Kazkommertsbank to Halyk Bank.

"We have completed a large process that lasted for more than a year and a half, starting with the entering into discussions, due diligence procedures prior to the acquisition of Kazkommertsbank shares, completion of a transaction, and finally, the integration and merger of two banks. All the transition procedures of Halyk Bank and Kazkommertsbank to a single technological platform were completed in accordance with the schedule. Now comes a new stage in the history of Halyk Bank and the entire financial sector of Kazakhstan. Millions of customers trust Halyk Bank and

we will do our best to meet their expectations," said Halyk Bank CEO Umur Shayakhmetova.

Kazkommertsbank has now completed the process of transferring all its property, rights and obligations to Halyk Bank. Kazakh National Bank approved the execution of the transfer act.

Halyk Bank and Kazkommertsbank shareholders agreed to approve the transfer act July 26.

In accordance with the resolutions of shareholders, 758,687,723 common shares in Halyk Bank were issued to shareholders of Kazkommerts-

bank, excluding Halyk Bank in exchange for common shares in Kazkommertsbank.

Kazkommertsbank has now completed the process of transferring all its property, rights and obligations to Halyk Bank. Kazakh National Bank approved the execution of the transfer act.

The required technical preparations were also completed. The bank customers can receive services at all branches and offices of Halyk Bank. Kazkommertsbank's subsidiaries are now subsidiaries of Halyk Bank.

The banks started the process of combining the ATM network July 10. They cancelled additional commissions for cashing out money for cardholders of both banks. Now Kazkommertsbank customers can replenish their payment cards in tenge and US dollars in Halyk Bank's cash-in ATMs with no additional commission.

Chinese manufacturer to build display, TV set production plant

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – China's HKC Corporation Limited will be constructing a display and television assembly plant in the Kostanai region, the Kazakh Invest press service reported Aug. 2.

The company will announce the plant location within two months, said Vice President Li Jin at a meeting with the regional administration.

One of the top TV manufacturers in China, the company will invest \$20 million in the initial stage. The facility, with a planned capacity of three million units per year, will create 500 new jobs. It is expected to open in 2019.

"One of the advantages of Kostanai is its close location to Russia and other Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). We have big plans for this project and we want to study the issue before launching it. Our main objective now is to enter the international market. We have an assembly plant in the Netherlands, which produces two million TV sets per year," said Li.

Employees will be recruited from the local population. The company also intends to participate in a dual training programme for college students in the region.

Kostanai Region Akim (Governor) Arkhimed Mukhambetov said the region has previously launched joint projects with Chinese companies, including a car assembly plant and an integrated agricultural products processing project.

"We offer an industrial zone area for investors. We are already implementing 11 projects here. We have the same rates for corporate tax of 20 percent with Russia, but the VAT (value added tax) rate is lower by 6 percent. We are ready to collaborate with HKC Corporation Limited as we mainly import electronic equipment. We will provide equipment not only for the domestic market, but also for Russia. We are open to mutually beneficial cooperation and guarantee support," he said.

Engineering networks have been built and roads are under construction in the Kostanai industrial zone.

"The plants for tractor manufacturing and building materials production are under construction. The Chinese company invested in the plant on deep processing of grain for export to China," said Kostanai Region Deputy Akim (Deputy Governor) Meirzhan Myrzaliyev.

The parties will create a working group to develop a road map to implement the project.

Founded in 1997, HKC Corporation Limited produces a full range of liquid crystal displays from one to 60 inches, including LCD monitors and LCD TVs, and expanded the range of tools, plastic injection and LCD backlighting. The company's total sales have grown to \$500 million and exports amounted to approximately 40 percent in 2006. HKC built a new industrial park in Shenzhen and opened branches in Russia and India in 2007.



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human energy

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EDITORIAL & OPINION

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 15, 2018

Historic Caspian Sea convention caps decades of negotiation

Followers of international politics will know the complex challenges of negotiating to resolve issues affecting several countries, where each side is understandably looking to protect its national interest. Yet on Aug. 12, the world witnessed a major diplomatic breakthrough, when the leaders of Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Iran, Russia, and Turkmenistan signed the Convention on the Legal Status of the Caspian Sea in the Kazakh city of Aktau.

The significance of this agreement should not be underestimated. It follows more than two decades of discussions, with negotiations on the international legal status of the Caspian Sea taking place regularly since 1996. More than 50 working group meetings took place to prepare for the convention. After nu-

The agreement was also most needed from an ecological perspective, where we have a duty to work together to protect the natural environment. Hundreds of animal and plant species live in the Caspian Sea, including many that are unique to the region.

merous discussions and four previous summits at the heads of state level, the convention has been finally agreed upon.

This is most welcome news. It should be remembered that prior to this landmark agreement, the treaties on the Caspian's legal status dated back to 1921 and 1940. The lack of a new agreement on how to divide up the world's largest enclosed body of water caused occasional disputes in the region and prevented an enhancement of trade and economic cooperation between the five states bordering the sea.

This highlights just how important it was to reach a new agreement. The five sides have now agreed to establish a special legal status for the Caspian, which means the surface water will be in common usage, while the seabed will be divided up. As Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev stated after the summit, "We have established 15-mile-wide territorial waters whose borders become state borders. Adjacent to the territorial waters are 10

miles of fishing water where each state has exclusive fishing rights."

Of course, the negotiations do not stop here. The seabed boundaries are yet to be negotiated. Furthermore, President of Iran Hassan Rouhani stressed that further talks are needed to clarify obligations to the responsibilities of the littoral states for guaranteeing the environmental safety of the Caspian Sea.

The success of the summit should not be underestimated. The agreement reached will also contribute substantially to the development of regional cooperation in the areas of ecology, energy, transport and trade, as well as strengthen the security of the Caspian region. President Nazarbayev summarised the situation, by proclaiming: "Today, after 25 years, we can say we have made the Caspian Sea a place of cooperation in regards to its waters, soil, and aerospace."

This is undoubtedly positive news for the people and economy of Kazakhstan. As the country's Foreign Minister Kairat Abdrakhmanov noted, "The adoption of the convention grants transnational companies the right to conduct activities in the Caspian Sea which will boost transit projects and attract logistics companies and new investments in the region."

It is well known that Kazakhstan is already playing a key role in promoting trade and transit, especially as part of the New Silk Road project. The agreement on the Caspian Sea will provide further opportunities for Kazakhstan to contribute to the development of trade in the region and beyond, which will bring with it economic benefits.

The agreement was also most needed from an ecological perspective, where we have a duty to work together to protect the natural environment. Hundreds of animal and plant species live in the Caspian Sea, including many that are unique to the region. Unfortunately, pollution has had a negative effect on the ecology of the Caspian, especially on the famous sturgeon. The deal between the littoral states now means that the Caspian will be better protected from ecological disasters and potential incidents such as oil spills.

Kazakhstan should be proud to have hosted and participated in this historic event. The five-sided agreement has demonstrated that diplomacy remains the main vehicle to resolving disputes, irrespective of their complexities. Hopefully this meeting will act as motivation and give impetus to other world leaders to use diplomacy as the most effective means of resolving other outstanding global issues.

Regional, international cooperation key to preserving trans-boundary rivers, lakes

Whatever the extraordinary progress of the last century, it was also an era in which the reckless exploitation of natural resources and casual damage to the environment took place at an unprecedented speed and scale. Man's deliberate and accidental actions have altered our planet in ways which we are only now beginning to fully comprehend.

Given this background, it is an indication of the scale of the catastrophe that the destruction of the Aral Sea is widely viewed as one of the worst ecological disasters in history. What was one of the biggest lakes in the world shrank inside two generations to a tenth of its former size as the river water that replenished it was diverted for Soviet irrigation projects.

As the water disappeared so did the livelihood of countless communities around its shores. What little water was left became increasingly more saline and polluted, killing off its unique wildlife and the fishing industry which relied on it.

The damage goes far wider than once thriving ports now many kilometres from the shore. Contaminated dust from the dry lake bed is blown over hundreds of miles causing major health problems where it lands. Even the climate, denied the moderating effect of such a large body of water, has become harsher.

Stopping and, if possible, reversing this environmental disaster was always going to be difficult. But it was made far more challenging as the break-up of the Soviet Union left five newly independent countries – each with their own interests and priorities – directly involved in tackling this disaster.

Despite the obstacles still to be overcome, there has been significant progress. The Aral Sea Basin Programme has brought Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan together to find answers to this disaster. There is now high-level commitment and co-operation. The UN and other global institutions are backing these efforts, in which Kazakhstan, from the start, has taken the lead.

We have seen, too, remarkable improvements on

the ground. The decision to build the Kokaral dam, completed in 2005 with the support of the World Bank, and to improve irrigation systems to stop water wastage means the northern section of the sea is no longer shrinking but expanding. Faster than expected, the ecological damage in this section of the lake has been reversed. It shows that nature can recover if it is given a helping hand.

While this is hugely encouraging, it would be a colossal – perhaps impossible – task to restore the Aral Sea as a whole to its former size and glory. What is needed is collective action to prevent any more of the lake from drying out, to help it recover wherever possible and to support the communities affected to find new livelihoods and futures. It is these goals which must be at the heart of an improved regional and global effort.

But the tragedy of the Aral Sea is also a stark reminder that we need to be far more careful in how we use natural resources, particularly those already under severe pressure like water. This is difficult enough to achieve within countries, but when rivers cross national borders, as is often the case, it becomes even more complex.

There is an urgent need for agreed rules and better international cooperation on how water resources are shared in a sustainable and fair way. It is why the meeting of parties to the Helsinki Convention on the protection and use of trans-boundary rivers and lakes, which takes place in Astana in October, is important. It is the first time it has taken place outside Europe and is a measure of the Kazakhstan's high profile on the subject.

What has happened in the Aral Basin – and the difficulty of reversing the damage caused – should also reflect more broadly on the choices we are making and the need to act before we reach the point of no return. As much of the world endures extreme weather – with record temperatures and water shortages – this summer, it is a timely reminder of how man's activity can alter our environment, how quickly change can come and the terrible damage it causes.

Cooperation with EU is source of development for Kazakhstan

By Sain Borbasov

A partnership and cooperation agreement between Kazakhstan and the European Union was signed in Brussels in mid-1990s. More than 3,000 joint ventures were established in the country in the process of expanding relations with European states. Trade with EU countries reached 24.4 billion tenge (US\$67 million) in 2017 and accounted for 40 percent of Kazakhstan's foreign trade turnover. This is 23 percent higher than in 2016.

The strengthening of relations was facilitated by the signing in December 2015 of a new enhanced partnership and cooperation agreement between Kazakhstan and the EU. Kazakhstan is the only Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) country to have come to such an agreement with the EU. This instrument has been ratified by parliaments of 23 of the 28 EU countries.

As part of the Path to Europe programme, Kazakhstan became a member of the World Trade Organisation, combining the requirements of the WTO, the Customs Union and the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU). These measures required coordination and constant interaction with Brussels. Certainly, EU countries protect their interests. In the context of tense relations between Russia and Ukraine, strengthening of energy security, transportation of raw materials, and enhancement of continental security have become particularly relevant. By building a constructive relationship with the dynamically develop-



ing, open and politically stable Kazakhstan, the EU plans to expand its influence in Central Asia.

EU countries have assisted Kazakhstan in carrying out market reforms, deregulating the economy, improving healthcare, social protection and research. From 1992 to 2000, within the Technical Assistance to the Commonwealth of Independent States (TACIS) programme alone, technical assistance worth \$136.7 million was provided for environmental impact assessment. Kazakhstan was also interested in research related to the study and elimination of the consequences of testing at the Semipalatinsk Nuclear Test Site, studying environmental problems in the Aral Sea basin and reducing air pollution in Almaty.

The relationships have become stable. For example, a Kazakh-French radar engineering plant was opened in Almaty region in April 2016. In 2017, the Hungarian Eximbank allocated \$290.5 million to finance joint projects of small and medium businesses. The European Investment Bank has provided \$227.8 million for the development of the national agribusiness to the National Managing Holding KazAgro JSC. The European Bank for Reconstruction and

Development plans to finance 17 projects in the country worth \$500 million. Last year, Germany and Kazakhstan signed 20 documents worth 1 billion tenge (US\$2.7 million) to introduce advanced the German experience in the industry digitalisation under the Industry 4.0 programme.

It is important for the EU to use Kazakhstan's transit opportunities. The transcontinental transport route Urumqi (China) – Altyntkol (Kazakhstan) – Riga (Latvia) – Rotterdam (the Netherlands) facilitated Europe's relation with China's powerful economy. This route provides our country with great opportunities to increase trade turnover with European states. The container railway route Kouvola (Finland) – Buslovskaya (Russia) – Altyntkol (Kazakhstan) – Xian (China) started operating in the autumn of 2017. It is planned to transport more than 1 million tonnes of cargo annually along this route.

All this significantly helps to implement the fourth task of the President's state-of-the-nation address – the development of transport and logistics infrastructure. Our country will receive profit of several billion dollars from the transit of goods to Europe.

Improving relations with the EU will help to achieve the goals of the Fourth Industrial Revolution in Kazakhstan. Strengthening ties with the EU in science, education, culture, medicine will also increase Kazakhstan's competitiveness. We will be able to reach the level of developed countries only if we can correlate the benefits of European democracy, which is the achievement of world civilisation, to our national values.



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Caspian Sea legal status: from disassociation to collaboration

By Zulfya Amanzholova

The presidents of five littoral states met Aug. 12 at the Fifth Caspian Summit in Aktau.

The agenda of the meeting was to take stock of the negotiations on determining the legal status of the Caspian Sea lasting many years.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1992, there emerged four new states on the coast of the Caspian Sea, which are Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, the Russian Federation, and Turkmenistan. Since that time, the issue of the territorial allegiance of the sea became the point of dispute between five independent states, including Iran.

The Russian Federation was the only country that continued to be the party of the treaties as they didn't meet the interests of the rest of the newly emerged countries. Thus, the negotiation process was commenced with the aim to develop the new legal status of the Caspian Sea collaboratively. The determination of the legal status of the sea could be a benefit to better agreement between these littoral states in all the domains under mutually beneficial conditions.

In 1994, the meetings of the experts and the Deputy Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Caspian bordering countries took place. They were discussing the drafts of the collaboration agreements in the sphere of studying the water relationship and the protection of the littoral area of the Caspian Sea and also the Treaty on the Regional Cooperation in the Caspian Sea. At that time, Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan expressed their opinions about the necessity to determine the new legal status of the Caspian Sea; moreover, they stated the necessity to work on the project in conjunction with the considera-



standing mechanism of negotiations on determining the legal status of the Caspian Sea among the heads of the legal departments of the ministries of foreign affairs.

After several rounds of the negotiations among the heads of legal departments, deputy ministers of foreign affairs, ministers of foreign affairs, all the parties had realised the viability of changing the level of the representatives of the states in the negotiating process by the end of 1996. Thus, the ministers of foreign affairs formed the standing ad hoc working group for developing and further signing the convention on the legal status of the Caspian Sea and other related documents.

By that time, the states had already agreed on some principles of the activities of the parties in the sea and determined the main elements of the future legal status of the sea, such as maritime boundary delimitation, navigation areas, use of bioresources, use of mineral resources and ecology. They agreed that the legal status of the Caspian Sea should have been captured in the single document, which will serve as the basis for further agreements and treaties regulating the various activities in the Caspian Sea in the future.

security. There were also some difficulties concerning international law enforcement. Thus, the representatives of some parties thought that the Caspian Sea could not be under the norms of the International Maritime Law due to the lack of natural connection with the World Ocean.

Otherwise stated, some parties offered to divide the sea between the states into the sovereign territories, while the other parties offered to use the full shared five-nation "condominium" approach. This meant the Caspian Sea had to become the sea of the common use of all its natural resources. Every state could have had one ten-mile coastal zone for using the sea floor and its resources. In the opinions of other parties, there was no chance of defining the boundaries, and the sovereignty of the states would have been limited to their land territories.

The thing that could have assured some agreement among the states was the comparative similarity of the states' attitudes towards fishing industry, shipping industry and preservation of the marine environment.

As for us, achieving the consensus between all the parties on the development of the text of the joint draft of the convention on the legal status of the Caspian Sea in Almaty in 1997 was a big progress. The draft was based on the four drafts presented earlier by the parties, such as Azerbaijan in 1993, Kazakhstan in 1994, Russia in 1995 and Iran in 1996. Such a solution was conditioned by the wish to find the areas of common interests which could have facilitated the common understanding of the solution to the issue of the legal status of the Caspian Sea.

It is important to point out that, initially, Kazakhstan offered to use the separate provisions of the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea while developing the draft of the convention on the legal status of the Caspian Sea and to adapt these provisions to the peculiarities of the Caspian Sea.

The seabed and the resources were offered to be delimited between the Caspian states, which could be granted the rights to develop mineral resources, laying the pipes and cables within their areas. The external boundaries of such exclusive economic zones could have been drawn along the median line, which is equidistant from the coasts of the opposite states as it is done internationally and in accordance with the international technology. Development of fields within the economic zones of two or more Caspian States had to be the subject of production sharing agreements between the parties concerned.

According to the solution offered by Kazakhstan, the water

area should have been subjected to delimitation to maritime belts and national fishing zones of agreed widths. The remaining area of the sea would have been accessible for free navigation of the ships flying the flags of the littoral states. Exploitation of bioresources was assumed within the respective fishing zones and in the common water area upon the agreed quotas and through licensing the activity. The aerial domain over the sea was also accessible for flights on the agreed routes.

Hinterland states could have had the right to freedom of transit to the other seas and the World Ocean.

Later in October 1997, this position of the Republic of Kazakhstan was distributed as the official document of the UN. During the whole process of the negotiations despite their levels and format, Kazakhstan has been maintaining its attitude concerning the issue of the legal status of the Caspian Sea, which aligns with the principles, norms and experiences.

It should be noted that despite the complexity of the issue and some disparities in the interests of the littoral states, they have gradually realised the necessity of the package settlement of all the issues of the activities in the sea. Upon achieving consensus about a certain provision of the convention, the parties were launching a certain international treaty aimed at assuring cooperation in a specific area. The work has always been in progress.

The common understanding of creating the sound legal basis for ensuring mutually beneficial cooperation has produced some tangible results. Today, Kazakhstan is the party of 18 treaties and agreements concerning the Caspian Sea, nine of them are pentilateral agreements. The five littoral states are projecting to sign eight more agreements soon. The parties are still in the process of agreeing on other important documents. Thus, after signing the convention on the legal status of the Caspian Sea and its coming into operation, we will have a comprehensive legal basis that will enable us to operate mutually in various domains.

The Framework Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Caspian Sea should be noted as one of the most significant current documents which was signed in Teheran in 2003 by five littoral countries. Additionally, the parties signed the protocol of preserving the biodiversity of the sea. Under this Framework convention, the parties are obliged to protect the sea from the consequences of natural and man-made environmental emergencies, cooperate in setting up early warning systems and ensure the availability of adequate

equipment and qualified personnel for combatting environmental emergencies. It is projected to sign several more documents.

One more document that deals with the security in the Caspian Sea was signed in 2007 in Baku. The aim of the agreement on cooperation in the field of security

between Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan, our country will finish all legal arrangements in terms of its sovereign rights for the Caspian seabed subsoil use.

Russia and Azerbaijan have already signed such an agreement.

There are still ongoing negotiations on the delimitation process

With hope and optimism, we are expecting that the Fifth Caspian Summit on Aug. 12 will become a landmark. We are sure that the agreements between the presidents will increase the opportunities for the realisation of the strong potential of the littoral states that will give a momentum to their further collaboration. Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Iran, Russia, and Turkmenistan have enough potential to ensure the sustainable development of the Caspian region and peaceful life for their citizens.

at the Caspian Sea is to assure the collaboration between the littoral states in combatting the illegal actions in the Caspian Sea.

As a result of the Fourth Caspian Summit in Astrakhan in 2010, we have signed three more essential agreements. They are the agreements on preservation, restoration and sustainable and rational use of the biological resources of the Caspian Sea, agreement on taking preventive and response measures to protect the environment and human beings from consequences of natural and man-made environmental emergencies in the sea and the agreement on cooperation in the field of hydrometeorology.

Concerning the delimitation process of the Caspian seabed and its subsoil, we can see that by today the seabed and the seabed subsoil of the Caspian Sea have been delimited in its northern and central zones. Kazakhstan and Russia signed the agreement on delimitation in 1998. Additionally to this agreement, the protocol was signed in 2002.

The delimitation of the seabed and its subsoil is reflected in the agreement between Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan of 2001 and the protocol to the agreement in 2003. There is also an agreement between Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, and Russia on the point of junction of the demarcation line of their adjacent areas of the seabed in the Caspian Sea signed in 2003.

The agreement between Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan on the delimitation of the seabed of the Caspian Sea was signed in 2014.

After reaching the agreement on the junction point of the demarcation lines of the seabed

of the seabed of the southern part of the Caspian Sea between the parties concerned.

Without going into details of all the difficulties of negotiations, and some diplomatic efforts, we may conclude that we could observe how the littoral states were striving to reach a compromise and searching for mutually acceptable solutions in order to obtain consensus in all the issues occurred.

We have had the consolidated approaches in terms of the boundaries of sovereignty, sovereign and exclusive rights of the littoral states, the regime of navigation, the freedom of access of all the vessels from the Caspian Sea to the world's oceans and back and in terms of offshore pipeline installation. Moreover, the principles were agreed on the stable balance of armaments in the Caspian Sea, on following the agreed measures of ensuring mutual trust as well as on non-presence in the Caspian Sea of the armed forces of countries other than the five littoral states.

With hope and optimism, we are expecting that the Fifth Caspian Summit on Aug. 12 will become a landmark. We are sure that the agreements between the presidents will increase the opportunities for the realisation of the strong potential of the littoral states that will give a momentum to their further collaboration. Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Iran, Russia, and Turkmenistan have enough potential to ensure the sustainable development of the Caspian region and peaceful life for their citizens.

The author is Ambassador-at-large of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan.

Initially, Kazakhstan offered to use the separate provisions of the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea while developing the draft of the convention on the legal status of the Caspian Sea and to adapt these provisions to the peculiarities of the Caspian Sea. The seabed and the resources were offered to be delimited between the Caspian states, which could be granted the rights to develop mineral resources, laying the pipes and cables within their areas.

tion of the Convention on the legal status of the Caspian Sea.

Next, in 1995 in Almaty, the deputy ministers of foreign affairs of the Caspian bordering countries launched the first

Initially, the states had different views of the legal status of the Caspian Sea, namely the issues of maritime boundary delimitation, using mineral resources, demilitarisation, and

Protecting businesses and investment important to Kazakhstan

By Zhandos Sarsenov

Creating a favourable investment climate and increasing the confidence of businesses and investors in the institutions of state power is the most important factor in ensuring the competitiveness of the public administration system and Kazakhstan as a whole.

Over the years of independence, Kazakhstan has made progress in creating a favourable investment climate. Evidence of which is the evaluation of a number of international organisations. For example, according to Doing Business 2018 report, Kazakhstan ranks 36th in the overall rating of 190 countries, and first in the "Protection of minority investors" category (third a year earlier).

Kazakhstan takes an active part in integration associations such as the World Trade Organisation and the Eurasian Economic Union and became an associated member of the OECD Investment Committee, as well as joined the



Declaration on International Investment.

The effectiveness of investment decisions to a certain extent is based on the effectiveness of the anti-corruption policy, which due to the political will of the Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev, has gained a new vector of development.

Systemic and comprehensive measures to prevent corruption have improved Kazakhstan's position in the international rating agencies' evaluations, which affect share prices, credit availability, investment attractiveness and trust to states, firms and banks. In the Transparency International's 2017 Corruption Perceptions In-

dex, Kazakhstan was removed from the list of most corrupt countries, earning 31 points for the first time. These figures are the highest in the entire period of Kazakhstan's presence in this ranking (for instance, in 1999, Kazakhstan earned 23 points).

The Anti-Corruption Strategy and the "100 Concrete Steps" Plan of the Nation approved by the President lay the foundation of a fundamentally new model of a corruption-free state. It is based on early prevention and effective diagnosis. The struggle is not with the consequences, but with the elimination of the prerequisites for corruption. The main idea was the spread of the "Do not give or take bribes" principle – making corruption impossible and unprofitable for both officials and entrepreneurs.

At the same time, we have introduced prevention institutes, such as anti-corruption monitoring, identification, analysis and elimination of corruption risks. A number of measures are being taken to ensure anti-corruption education among the population

and to create an atmosphere of absolute rejection of corruption.

Unfortunately, there are still high risks remaining for businesses and investors related to their activities in Kazakhstan. The "Special Review on Corruption" sociological survey showed that from 2016 to 2017 the frequency of corruption schemes increased, while entrepreneurs noticed corruption growth in Zhambyl, Mangystau, Atyrau, Turkestan and Almaty regions.

Figures show that officials initiate every second corrupt transaction (54.5 percent); in five percent of cases, both parties are the initiators, while the entrepreneur is the initiator in the remaining 40.5 percent.

Entrepreneurs noted a large number of requirements and their unavailability, the complexity of procedures, long terms and the desire to escape responsibility as the main reasons behind corruption.

When doing business in Kazakhstan, foreign investors face various legal risks where imperfection of the legislation, corrup-

tion facts, lack of transparency in the activities of courts and regulatory state bodies, unpredictability of judicial acts are perhaps the greatest risks and a big uncertainty for businesses.

The project's main goal is to create a favourable investment climate and increase confidence of businesses and investors in the institutions of state power.

Therefore, our agency has started implementing a special project, the main purpose of which is to protect and support investors in order to prevent illegal actions against them. The "Protecting Business and Investments" project is aimed at creating an alternative scenario to this situation

through anti-corruption support of businesses and investors.

As previously noted, the project's main goal is to create a favourable investment climate and increase confidence of businesses and investors in the institutions of state power.

The task is to appraise and implement advanced preventive mechanisms of combating corruption in order to strengthen a favourable investment climate and stimulate entrepreneurial activity, as well as the further development of the institution of the investment ombudsman in Kazakhstan.

We want to protect businesses and investors from the state bodies' illegal actions by encouraging them to join the Anti-Corruption Agreement, where the only condition will be their consent to the good conduct of business and "zero tolerance" for any manifestation of corruption.

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

EURASIA&WORLD

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 15, 2018

Belgian envoy predicts 'interesting results' from combining Brussels' experience with Astana's potential

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – Small Belgium and large Kazakhstan have more to learn from each other than one might think – Belgium's long history of industrial development can help Kazakhstan on its development path, and Astana's recent stint on the UN Security Council can serve as an example for Brussels, Ambassador of Belgium to Kazakhstan Alexis de Crombrugge de Picquendaele told The Astana Times.

The Belgian economic mission scheduled for June 2019 will help Belgian and Kazakh businesses reach their full trade potential, benefiting both economies, he noted.

"Our regional trade and investment promotion agencies from Flanders, Wallonia and the Brussels capital region will together organise a trade and investment mission to Kazakhstan and to other countries of the region. This follows up on earlier economic missions, which occurred on a yearly basis till 2017... Kazakhstan is a huge country with a large potential for further development. Belgium is a small country with a huge experience in industrial and high-tech development. Combining both assets should produce interesting results," he said.

This year, Kazakhstan and Belgium are celebrating the 26th anniversary of their diplomatic relations.

"My aim is to seize all opportunities to develop relations between



Alexis de Crombrugge de Picquendaele.

Belgium and Kazakhstan, as well as with the other countries of my jurisdiction. There certainly is a tremendous potential. The best is to seize all opportunities arising out of the markets in both our countries, and building upon increasing ties between the peoples of both our countries... Tourism is also developing in both directions. The development of people-to-people contacts in the global age certainly is a trigger for developing our relations in the future. It is one of the priorities that I agreed to focus on with the new Kazakh ambassador in Brussels," he said.

Belgium was elected as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council for 2019-2020, a two-year role Kazakhstan is about to complete at the end of 2018.

"We hope to deserve the confidence accorded to us by other nations and take heed of the example

given by Kazakhstan, with whom we hope to cooperate in this context. Given the growing wealth and importance of Kazakhstan and of Central Asia in the world, our relations are set to develop in the future," said de Crombrugge.

The European Union (EU) is Kazakhstan's main trade and investment partner. Belgium's direct trade with Kazakhstan has increased, amounting to 300 million euros (US\$350 million) in 2017.

"Since the main thrust of our trade is within the EU, Belgium also indirectly benefits from the development of trade and investment ties between the EU and Kazakhstan. As most of our companies are small and medium enterprises, they often act as subcontractors for big European and international companies, and therefore benefit from the development of trade relations as a whole. European integration is from that point of view a real fact in the organisation of our economy. It is the European Commission which negotiates trade deals worldwide. By the way, and in spite of its complicated constitutional set up, Belgium was one of the first countries to ratify the Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between the EU and Kazakhstan," he said.

Chemicals and pharmaceuticals cover nearly half of Belgian exports, followed by machinery at 20 percent and optical instruments at 10 percent. Plastics, transport materials and minerals each share 5 percent of exports.

Agriculture and related products could be another promising area of development, said the envoy.

"Probably our food products and beverages – Belgian beers are world famous and already present on the Kazakh market – deserve to be better promoted, as the agro-industry in Belgium is very developed indeed. From the Kazakh side, I notice an increase of the revenue in the oil and gas industry, and other minerals to 50 percent. Kazakh agricultural and food products being exported to Belgium are on the increase with 40 percent, as are metals and textiles with each nearing 5 percent," he said.

Belgian companies specialising in software were present at the recent KADEX 2018 International Exhibition of Weapons Systems and Military Equipment and Aerospace Equipment in Astana.

"Smart cities are another field where Belgium has added value to offer. Our companies are active on every aspect of life and therefore all sectors offer a potential for development. From that point of view, Kazakhstan rightly aims at diversifying its economy," he said.

The Port of Antwerp recently inaugurated a monthly railway link between it and China – travelling, of course, through Kazakhstan – as part of Beijing's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

"Having recently visited the old Silk Road cities I cannot but be enthusiastic about this revival of ancient ties between Asia and Europe.

Kazakhstan's geography is particularly benefiting from the development of transport connections between our continents," he said.

"Since Belgium is mainly made out of small and medium enterprises, the attraction of investors is conditioned by the rule of law. What made the European Union such a prosperous bloc was the existence of a common market whose rules were implemented by an independent Court of Justice. Belgian business is mostly made out of small and medium enterprises. For them legal security, meaning independent courts and tribunals ensuring the respect of their contractual rights and duties, is an essential element before starting a trade or investment deal in another country. This is why the European integration was so beneficial to our country, as it is to other old and new member states of the European Union. Ensuring legal security of investment and trade deals is of paramount importance. It doesn't make sense to have trade and investment conditions being changed after a deal had been made," he added.

Approximately fifteen Belgian companies are represented in Kazakhstan, according to the envoy, and the Federation of Belgian Companies (FEB/VBO) and regional Federations of Chambers of Commerce and Industry closely cooperate with the Kazakh Embassy in Belgium.

To strengthen bilateral cooperation, the ambassador intends to encourage university cooperation.

"Some of our best Belgian academics are teaching and researching at Nazarbayev University. We will explore avenues to encourage students from both our countries to study in universities and educational institutes of the other country. Our embassy will look upon all opportunities to develop further academic links between both countries," he said.

Cultural cooperation is also of great importance for the Belgian Embassy. This year the embassy organised an exhibition dedicated to the Smurfs' 60th anniversary April 26-28 as part of the Francophonie Spring Festival.

"It was such a nice experience to see so many young Kazakh schoolchildren making themselves such beautiful drawings on the site of the exhibition. Comic strips are indeed a truly Belgian phenomenon in which we have a rich tradition to share. Kazakh performances of Astana ballet, opera and musical theatre have proven to be very successful with the Belgian public. I am proud that one of my compatriots is a star dancer at Astana ballet. At the diplomatic spouses' association 2017 charity bazaar, all our waffles, chocolates and beers were sold out," he said.

"It is one of my priorities to make a balance of what already exists and what could be further developed, depending of course on the goodwill and availability of the people and institutions concerned," he said.

Enhanced bilateral cooperation promotes security, says Afghan ambassador

Continued from Page A1

"Trade relations between the two countries are very promising. However, we seek to set the balance between import and export turnover. Afghanistan exports much less than it imports," said Shahim.

Kazakhstan's educational assistance has been significant.

"Fifty million dollars was allocated for 1,000 Afghan students to study in Kazakhstan. The country also provided 30 scholarships for Afghan students last year – 16 for bachelor, 12 for masters and two for doctoral degree programmes," he added.

Since January 2017, Kazakhstan has joined Japan and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to offer seminars and training for various staff workers in education, health and women's affairs.

"This year, for instance, Kazakhstan with the UNDP conducted a two-week workshop in maternal and child healthcare for public health professionals from Afghanistan held at Nazarbayev University," he said.

"Afghan women working in the health sectors, nurses and doctors, went to their villages to help Afghan people after attending the seminar. It was virtuous, as most of participants were women; they were not from cities, but from Afghan villages," he added.

Shahim noted his country has benefitted from Kazakhstan's UN Security Council presidency.

"[It] assisted in promoting stability in the region. This year in January, 15 members of the UN Security Council went to Kabul to overview the security situation in Afghanistan, including a delegation from Kazakhstan," he noted.

Augmenting bilateral cooperation between Kazakhstan and Afghanistan is an impetus to maintaining peace and security.

"The fundamentalists' movements within neighbouring countries, within Central Asia and Chechnya, seek to reach



Kadam Shah Shahim

Kazakhstan and Central Asia through Afghanistan and imperil security in the country. Afghanistan resists against these movements and it improves Kazakh-Afghan relations," he said.

Afghanistan seeks to ensure cooperation in tourism, especially medical tourism.

"There is an Afghan-Kazakh company that is working to bring Afghan tourists to Kazakhstan. However, the main problem is connected to visa issues. We approached the Kazakh government and the Kazakh embassy in Kabul to work out this issue," he noted.

Afghans see Kazakhstan as a more preferable healthcare partner due to the relatively affordable services and geographical proximity. Two-hour flights connect Almaty and Kabul and a once-a-week, Kabul-Almaty-Kabul charter flight resumed in January 2017.

Shahim added Central Asian and Afghanistan relations are friendly and close. Afghanistan also serves as a bridge connecting Central and South Asia.

"We have three trade ports between Afghanistan and Central Asia. One is Aqina port in Turkmenistan, the second is Hairatan in Uzbekistan and the last is Shirkhan Bandar in Tajikistan," he said.

"Last year, we decreased imports from Pakistan into the south of Afghanistan. Now, we seek to import more from Central Asia into the north of Afghanistan. With the new leadership of Shavkat Mirziyoyev in Uzbekistan, we have gotten closer to Central Asia," he added.

Eurasian Intergovernmental Council discusses trade, digitisation

By Almasbek Zhumadilov

ASTANA – Kazakh Prime Minister Bakyrtzhan Sagintayev participated in the July 27 meeting of the Eurasian Intergovernmental Council in St. Petersburg, Russia, reported primeminister.kz.

The meeting brought together the prime ministers of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan, Belarus Andrei Kobayakov, Kyrgyzstan Mukhammetkaly Abulgaziev, the Russian Federation Dmitry Medvedev and Chairman of the Board of the Eurasian Economic Commission Tigran Sargsyan.

The participants reviewed the implementation of the digital agenda of the Eurasian Economic Union and interaction in agriculture, energy and transport. They also discussed forming a common gas market, creating a unified system for the transit of goods across Union territory using technical means and interfacing state information systems.

The prime ministers also addressed customs cooperation, regulating integration cooperation and import substitutions in priority industries.

Sagintayev told his counterparts

the items discussed at the meeting would promote economic, political and social stability in the Eurasian region. The Kazakh head of government noted a correlation between inter-union cooperation and trade growth.

Trade within the Eurasian Economic Union in the first quarter of 2018 compared to 2017 grew by \$13.9 billion or 16.4 percent. Trade by union member states outside the union grew 23.8 percent or by \$172.3 billion. The union GDP is expected to grow 2.1 percent in 2019, according to Eurasian Development Bank forecasts.

Sagintayev addressed legislative regulation of inter-union cooperation. Member states have developed contractual and legal bases and adopted more than 600 acts in 2017.

"We are striving to improve the quality of products, while not creating unnecessary management tools and costs for business. Work is underway to introduce about 70 amendments to the treaty on the EAEU to improve the rule of law in the Union. Trade and economic agreements concluded with China, as well as agreements on a free trade zone with Vietnam and Iran have been concluded. We need to

continue to work on identifying partners in the conduct of foreign trade policy," said Sagintayev, stressing that important documents are also due to be adopted soon.

To date, negotiations on the conclusion of trade and economic agreements between the EAEU and other states have been intensified. At various levels of preparedness, there are arrangements of cooperation between the EAEU and Israel, India, Egypt, Singapore, Serbia and other countries.

"Kazakhstan has always been a supporter of attracting new players into the orbit of our integration. Here, I note that the President of Kazakhstan (Nursultan Nazarbayev) put emphasis on the need for cooperation of the EAEU with technologically successful and investment-attractive countries and integration blocs," said the Kazakh prime minister.

Sagintayev reminded the participants of the meeting about the strategic tasks adopted May 14 by the heads of member states at their Supreme Council meeting that need to be developed. At that Supreme Council meeting, Nazarbayev presented initiatives to create infrastructure mega-projects: high-speed railways and highways on

the China-Kazakhstan-Russia-Belarus-Europe route, a navigable canal through the Caspian and Black Seas, as well as a proposal to eliminate obstacles to inter-union trade.

Optimising infrastructure, said the Kazakh prime minister, will build a bridge between Asia and Europe, the East and West as well as the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans. Additional Supreme Council meetings will also help reduce economic barriers in the short term.

"For us, this is a priority foreign economic project. We created the EAEU as an open, equitable integration association. Building our relationships on the principles of seeking compromises and working out effective solutions will be a powerful incentive for strengthening the Union, increasing its attractiveness in the world community," Sagintayev said.

At the July 27 Eurasian Intergovernmental Council meeting, participants signed agreements to form a common EAEU gas market and a working group on integration cooperation and import substitution as well as other documents. The Eurasian Intergovernmental Council will meet next in Belarus in October.

Central Asian countries discuss transboundary water management issues

By Aidana Yergaliyeva

ASTANA – Central Asian and neighbouring countries discussed transboundary water management, maintenance and the possibilities for strengthening sustainable development during a July 12-13 regional meeting in Almaty.

Experts on energy, water, environment and health issues and official representatives of Afghanistan, China, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan attended the meeting.

The participants discussed the current state of transboundary water, especially the existing gaps in water resource management and ways to develop interregional co-

operation in achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals. They suggested integrating their proposals with the International Water Assessment Centre (IWAC) 2019-2021 programme as part of the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (the Water Convention) global strategy.

The unsustainable use of water resources in the region has over the years resulted in environmental disaster. The most notable example is the shrinking Aral Sea. Millions of people and livelihoods in the area have witnessed the grave consequences of overuse of the water from the two main rivers of the region, Amu Darya and Syr Darya, which used to feed the Aral Sea.

The collective efforts of countries in the region in water-related sectors such as agriculture, energy, environment and health are important, as they can mitigate the damage and prevent adverse effects on the economy and environment.

Promoting regional dialogue with increased adhesion to international conventions, legal principles governing the environment, transboundary resource management and the consequences of the disappearing Aral Sea are essential in dealing with the issue, according to the European Union (EU). At the same time, its representatives stressed the strategic interests of all Central Asian and neighbouring countries will be considered and respected.

The meeting was organised by

IWAC and the Kazakh Ministry of Agriculture with the support of the EU-funded project EU-Central Asia Enhanced Regional Cooperation on Environment, Climate Change and Water (WECOOP) and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

IWAC is an international centre for cooperation in integrated water resources management established in accordance with the decision of the parties to the Water Convention based on the memorandum of understanding between the Kazakh Government and the UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE). IWAC pays special attention to Central Asian countries, as well as to those within and beyond the UNECE region.

Nation&Capital

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Compassion and good neighbourliness define Ukrainian community's relations within Kazakhstan, says community leader



Taras Chernega (seated left) and members of the Ukrainian cultural centre Vatra.

By Dilshat Zhussupova

ASTANA – Vatra, the capital-based Ukrainian cultural centre founded in 1993, has contributed toward the educational and cultural development of Kazakhstan's ethnic Ukrainian community. It is among 26 such Ukrainian centres in the country.

According to Kazakhstan's 2009 population census, approximately 333,000 Ukrainians resided in the

country, composing 2 percent of the total population. The current figure is estimated at just under 300,000.

Despite the gradual decrease in numbers throughout the years, the Ukrainian community has been proactively reviving its cultural heritage, made possible by the Kazakh Constitution provision regarding the free development of ethnic groups' cultures.

Taras Chernega has been the Vatra head and council chairperson

since 1997. A candidate of philological sciences, he is also the editor-in-chief of "Ukrainian Noviny" ("Ukrainian News"), the national Ukrainian-language newspaper, and deputy chairperson of the Association of Ukrainians of Kazakhstan.

"The centre's name aptly reflects its community and activities," said Chernega. "In Ukrainian, 'vatra' refers to hearth, fire and bonfire."

In naming the centre, surgeon, scientist and maslikhat (city ad-

ministration) member Zinovia Gritulyak hoped to convey how it could come to gather and connect like-minded people and warm their hands and hearts over a symbolic campfire.

Vatra's main activities focus on education and culture. The centre has operated a Ukrainian Sunday school since 1992, which school students attend regularly to study language, culture and history.

Continued on Page B2

Contemporary dance company director on 'Falling Man', Central Asian Dance Festival

By Abira Kuandyk

ASTANA – Executive Director of Company E, contemporary repertory dance company, Paul Gordon Emerson, recently premiered the company's ballet performance of "Falling Man" as part of the International Central Asian Dance Festival (CADF) in Astana. Emerson shared his impressions about the capital, Astana Opera Ballet Theatre and CADF with bnews.kz.

The Central Asian Dance Festival (CADF) took place in two stages: the training of dancers July 2-Aug. 4 and the production of "Falling Man" that premiered Aug. 5. The training sessions gathered more than 100 young artists from Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. It is designed to become an advanced educational centre focused on developing neoclas-

sical and modern choreography throughout Central Asia.

"It is very pleasant to work with Kazakhstan. We usually say, we learn to dance before we learn to speak. The language of communication does not always help us understand each other like our movements. Cooperation with dancers and choreographers from Kazakhstan was one of the brightest moments in my professional career. It is not so much professionalism as the passion and desire of people to develop in this direction," said Emerson.

Emerson said the idea to realise CADF initiated in Karaganda while he conducted seminars with his colleagues and Astana Ballet Theatre.

"We expected to see 30 participants at a seminar and it eventually gathered 212 participants. It lasted for three days and gathered people from all over the country," he said.

Continued on Page B3

Fighting brain drain: Ukrainian investors envision innovation park in Astana

By Aidana Yergaliyeva

ASTANA – Ukrainian investment group Ufuture plans to build an "Innovation Park" in Astana with the help of the Kazakh government and local businesses. The park is intended to be a small "city within city" that creates an environment for innovation and development that will propel the region's economy forward, Ufuture founder Vasyl Khmelnytsky said as he shared details about the project.

During his visit to Astana, Khmelnytsky discussed with Kazakh Prime Minister Bakhytzhon Sagintayev his plans for developing the new space, which he envisions as similar to Ukraine's UNIT.city, a recently launched innovation park.

Although the businessman spent only one day in Kazakhstan's capital, he was satisfied with the general picture of the business environment in the young city. In

particular, he said, he appreciates that the Kazakh government not only expressed interest in the development of this project, but is ready to assist by allocating necessary resources, rooms and other incentives.

"What I think is good is that Kazakhstan is introducing a programme that the part of IT projects can be made with local companies. This should certainly give a push to the development of IT in Kazakhstan," Khmelnytsky said in an interview for this story.

According to him, this project without any support has already built 3 percent of the city. They include IT and Big Data schools with about 1,000 students, a 3D-laboratory and about 50 innovation companies, which create products themselves and keep developing them. The average growth of those companies in Ukraine is 30 percent, while in UNIT.city it is 50 percent.

Continued on Page B8

From small school class to public association, Society for Disabled Children offers extensive help

By Abira Kuandyk

ASTANA – Kamka Zhasanova, chair of the Society for Disabled

Children Public Association, has been promoting inclusive education in Kazakhstan since early 2000, before many had even heard of the concept.

Zhasanova initiated the first remedial classes for seven hearing-impaired and deaf children in a public school in Astana in 2000. Nearly 20 years later, her public

association has expanded its support services and now reaches children with disabilities of various kinds and their family members with the tools and assistance they need to integrate into Kazakhstan's society.

Zhasanova shared the history of her public association, from a single class to a national organisation, as well as her vision of inclusive education that enables every child, regardless of their needs and other circumstances, to realise their potential and the right to receive education, with The Astana Times.

Valuing diverse communities is essential, she says. This value begins at school, where all students learn to live alongside their peers.

"Once, school kids surrounded our deaf children, and we got scared and thought they were fighting. Then, we saw our kids got into the middle of the circle and it appeared those school students started to learn sign language," Zhasanova commented.

There were no educational institutions for deaf children in Astana in 1998, so Zhasanova brought her children to Taldykorgan to attend the school there for hearing-impaired children. She quit her job and turned instead to public activity.

Continued on Page B5



Photo credit: Aidana Mukhomergali.

THINGS TO WATCH & PLACES TO GO

NATIONAL MUSEUM

June 28 – Sept.30

Paul Sérusier and Brittany: The Magic of Legends, exhibition

July 6 – Oct. 3

Artists of 19th and 20th centuries from private collections, exhibition

ETHNOAUL NATIONAL CULTURAL COMPLEX

Aug.16-19, 23-26 at 7.30 p.m.

Alpamys, theatrical and circus show

ASTANA OPERA

Aug.19 at 6 p.m.

Concert of Aktobe Region Chamber Choir

Aug.25 at 6 p.m.

Vocal music of romantic period, concert

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 15, 2018

Evangelical Lutheran Archbishop: Religious harmony in Kazakhstan means respecting our faith, respecting others'

By Meruyert Abugaliyeva

ASTANA – Yuri Novgorodov, Archbishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kazakhstan and representative of the World Lutheran Association, discussed church activities, the role of the Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions and relations with the other confessions in Kazakhstan with The Astana Times.

"The mission of the church is the proclamation of the Gospel; in other words, spreading the news about reconciliation with God, forgiveness and salvation. People gather in temples to listen and pray together," he said.

Among the other activities run by the church is diaconal service; in other words, social service and charity work.

"For many years with the Roman Catholic Church, we were running a project under the slogan 'Every child should have a family,' meant to help mothers who'd recently delivered to keep their children. This entails not mere persuasion, but also provision of accommodation, food, goods necessary for both the mother and child. The most impor-

tant, however, is helping the mother rebuild her relationship with her family," Novgorodov added.

For more than 15 years, the Lutheran Church has provided food for the homeless in Kokshetau with the help of rural societies that provide agricultural products.

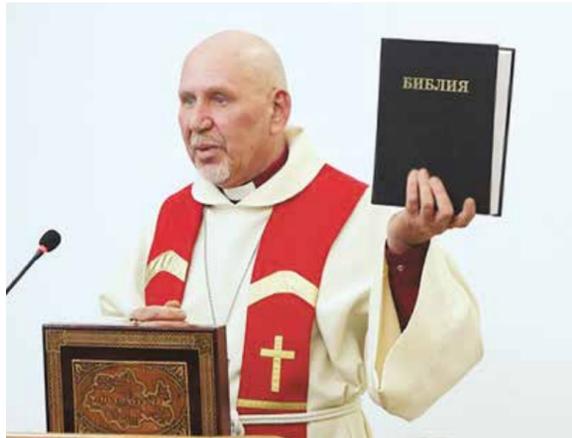
There is also a project meant to support single-parent families and people with disabilities. When one young girl needed medical treatment, two charity fairs and a concert were organised by the church to raise money for her.

"We do not provide assistance as a method to attract new members to our community, we help according to the needs and our capabilities regardless of nationality or religious views," he said.

The church also pays special attention to the upbringing of the country's youth.

"We have a lot of young people among our community members and our main aim is to help the young become true citizens of the country, people with good virtues, with clear moral guidelines and understanding of what is good and what is bad," Novgorodov explained.

September 2017 marked one of



Yuri Novgorodov.

Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kazakhstan," he added.

Novgorodov also praised the work of the Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions and believes this year it will run as smoothly as ever.

"I participated in the preparations for and activities of the first Congress in 2003 and have been a member of the Congress Secretariat since 2004. It is a great honour for me to represent the World Lutheran Federation, uniting more than 70 million Lutherans in the world," he said.

"Without a doubt, the Congress is a good platform for dialogue. It is important that parties that might have confrontations with each other take part in its work; they sit at the same table, express their views and hopefully listen to each other. They could exchange their views through social media; however, it is more useful to see each other in person. It is also great that Kazakhstan once again acts as an initiator of a dialogue promoting peace, mutual respect and security," he added.

The Congress allows the leaders of religious communities to convey thoughts and put forward

suggestions to the world community and national leadership, he believes.

"On behalf of the World Lutheran Association, I would like to once more express gratitude to Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev, government institutions and religious communities for such an opportunity to regularly meet with the leaders of religious communities with a view of making our lives better and more secure," said Novgorodov.

The bishop also noted that religious communities and confessions in Kazakhstan have formed positive relations with each other. "We have formed good relations, based on mutual respect, with the other confessions. The most important is that we all understand that God has placed us in one boat regardless of our differences and we cannot survive separately. We need to take care of our country. We can live happily and preserve our identity but we need to respect to the identity of the other and acknowledge their rights," he noted.

"Kazakhstan is my home and Kazakh people are my family. I wish them to stay kind, hospitable and bright people."

most important milestones in the history of the Lutheran community in Kazakhstan. The first Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kazakhstan for over than a two-century presence of the community was opened in Astana. The church is part of the World Lutheran Association.

"The dream of many Kazakh Lutherans came true in 2017.

Prior to that, we were using existing facilities as a church," said Novgorodov.

To date, there are 10 legal entities uniting around 50 communities registered with the Lutheran Church.

"Although we do not keep a written record of our members, I believe there are approximately 70,000 people belonging to the

100 New Face's Suleimenov supports and trains programmers

By Dilshat Zhussupova

ASTANA – Arman Suleimenov, one of Kazakhstan's 100 New Faces, is a leading information technology (IT) specialist. He is the founder and CEO of mobile app studio Zero To One Labs and educational programme nFactorial Incubator, where numerous products have been launched and mobile app developers trained.

Suleimenov's background reflects his commitment to theory and real-world application. A computer science graduate of Purdue and Princeton universities, he was a finalist in the ACM International Collegiate Programming Contest World Championship in 2009 and 2011. He worked in Silicon Valley upon graduation and prior to his return to Kazakhstan, gave an IT project pitch to President Nursultan Nazarbayev.

Zero To One Labs' and nFactorial Incubator's staff consists of individuals and teams of programmers, designers and marketers. Many are students at International Information Technology University, Kazakh-British Technical University and Nazarbayev University (NU).

Programming since the age of 15, Suleimenov doesn't shy away from expressing his objectives in quantitative terms. Zero To One Labs and nFactorial Incubator plan to train 100,000 world-class programmers and garner one billion dollars per annum for Kazakhstan's economy through IT outsourcing services. In this way, Suleimenov seeks to address Nazarbayev's call to meet the country's massive demand for software development specialists.

Such an ambitious approach is

well founded, given the projects' outcomes to date. Zero To One Labs' portfolio contains more than 40 mobile apps, and in excess of 200 mobile apps were developed and 300 participants trained at nFactorial Incubator.

Kelin, the most popular app developed by NU student Didara Pernebayeva, may be one you already have on your phone. The anonymous women's social network is available on iOS and Android devices and has approximately 30,000 users per month. In order to support the app's explosive growth, Zero To One Labs extended its technical support to Pernebayeva free of charge.

"The idea that mobile products should not remain at the idea stage is very important," said Suleimenov. "Everyone has ideas, but it is incremental to realise them into functioning, usable products."

He also takes pride in the fact that many participants continue their app development skills beyond his educational platforms. Former participant Anuar Serikov interned at Google and now works as a software developer in its London office.

"Our school is becoming a launching pad for the further development of Kazakh programmers, after which they carry on to make a meaningful impact in the world," he added.

Suleimenov advises Kazakhstan's aspiring mobile app developers to simply consider an interesting problem and start programming. True to his own words, he is currently applying his computer science and entrepreneurial skills to make credit cards accessible to the masses as the co-founder and Chief Technical Officer (CTO) of India's credit engine HORA.



Arman Suleimenov

Singer Daneliya Tuleshova participates in Junior Eurovision auditions

By Meruert Abugaliyeva

ASTANA – Kazakh singer Daneliya Tuleshova, winner of The Voice Kids 2017 in Ukraine, will take part in national auditions for the Junior Eurovision Song contest.

"I understand how serious the competition is and I am extremely concerned. There are a lot of talented young singers in our country, I know many of them and, therefore, I will support whoever makes it to the final stage of the auditions and will have the honour of representing Kazakhstan," said Tuleshova.

A 12-year-old singer was born in Almaty, she lives and attends school there. Before the age of eight, she only attended collective vocal lessons, however, after winning Ayalagan Astana national contest, she started training individually.

Tuleshova gained popularity after winning The Voice Kids talent show in Ukraine in 2017, the year after she received People's

Favourite national award in Kazakhstan and Bravo music award in Russia.

The video of Daneliya performing "Stone Cold" during the Voice Kids has reached 24 million views on Youtube.

"Fortunately, we have decided on the songs, which will suit the contest and Daneliya's vocal capabilities. Currently we are preparing an application and getting ready for the auditions despite the tight performance schedule," said Daneliya's trainer Nataliya Churakova.

National auditions are held by the Khabar Agency. The application process will run through Aug. 31 and the finalists will be announced Sept. 7. The selected performers will then perform during a Sept. 23 concert broadcasted on Khabar TV Channel, and the winner will be determined by way of an audience vote.

The Youth Eurovision contest will be Nov. 25 in Minsk, Belarus. This year junior vocalists aged 9 to 14 years from 18 countries, such as

Albania, Armenia, Australia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, France, Georgia, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Macedonia, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Russia, Serbia and the Netherlands, will compete for the prize. Kazakhstan and Wales will debut this year.

Although Kazakhstan will participate in Junior Eurovision for the first time, Tuleshova was among Kazakh children performing last year at Euroclub, the contest's out-of-competition programme.



Daneliya Tuleshova

Compassion and good neighbourliness define Ukrainian community's relations...

Continued from Page B1

The centre hosts celebrations of Ukrainian and Kazakh public holidays and customs. Chervona Kalina, a Ukrainian vocal ensemble, is a regular performing act and its rich repertoire includes more than 100 songs in Ukrainian, Russian and Kazakh. Vetryanochka, a Ukrainian dance ensemble led by choreographer Yuliya Amirova, has been performing since 2008.

Vatra has published "Ukrainian Noviny" for more than 24 years. When the first issue was circulated in 1994, President Nursultan Nazarbayev congratulated the Ukrainian community on its timely release, as strengthening peace and harmony in a diverse society has always been a key priority. The newspaper remains the only weekly Ukrainian-language publication in Asia.

The importance and presence of the centre's current work is tied to the history of Ukrainians in Kazakhstan. Individual Ukrainian settlements on present-day Kazakh territory appeared as early as the 15th Century, when individual

explorers gained a better grasp of the Trans-Urals, Siberia, northern and eastern Kazakhstan and the Far East.

Another migration flow occurred during the more violent context of the early 18th century, when participants in the 1768 Koliivshchyna uprising and Zaporozhye Cossacks of the 1775 Zaporozhian Sich destruction were sent to the Kazakh steppes along the valleys of the Ilek, Irtysh, Ural Tobol and Yessil rivers.

In the second half of the 19th century, the resettlement flow to Kazakhstan increased significantly following the Russian Empire's 1861 abolition of serfdom and the 1894 Siberian railway opening. Immigrants from Chernigov, Ekaterinoslav, Kharkov, Kherson, Kiev, Poltava and Tauride settled primarily in present-day Akmola, Kostanai and East, West and North Kazakhstan regions.

The greatest immigrant flow came at the turn of the 19th century, when the foundation of Kazakhstan's Ukrainian community was established. Still, the term 'flow' conceals the rather complex settlement timeline and its socio-

economic characteristics. The resettlement occurred concurrently with movement from Ukraine to Siberia and only then eastward to Kazakhstan.

"If we talk about 'waves' of Ukrainian migration to Kazakhstan, the first of them should be attributed to the end of the 19th century," said Chernega. "The second resettlement wave is associated with the Stolypin land reform in 1906-1917. The next, most significant wave of migrations was repressive in nature, during the period of the forced collectivisation of peasant farms."

Subsequent mass migration flows include the Great Patriotic War military evacuation relocations, post-war relocations of Soviet repression victims and political prisoners and resettlements associated with work on the Virgin Lands Campaign.

"The help of Kazakhs to Soviet repression victims and political prisoners, who were branded as the 'enemies of the state' and with whom they shared their last pieces of bread, was immense. This page in our common history deserves separate discussion and apprecia-

tion," he added. "No matter how paradoxical it may seem, it is in the years of grave misfortunes and mass repression when a solid foundation of tolerance and mutual compassion for each other as representatives of various ethnic groups, bound by a common misfortune and fate on shared ground, was laid."

The difficult common times firmly united Kazakhstan's indigenous and non-indigenous inhabitants towards shared aspirations to survive and thrive, no matter the circumstances.

"The best human qualities which were crystallised then, such as compassion, good neighbourliness and a lack of selfishness, came to define the character of Kazakhstan's nationalities for decades to come," said Chernega.

Ukrainian ethno-cultural associations also operate in Aktau, Aktobe, Almaty, Karaganda, Kostanai, Pavlodar, Semipalatinsk and Ust-Kamenogorsk.

"As you can see, the descendants of Ukrainian immigrants continue to cherish the culture and traditions of their people on the Kazakh steppes," he added.

CULTURE

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 15, 2018

Sociologist studies contemporary art across Central Asia

By Dilshat Zhussupova

ASTANA – Diana Kudaibergenova, a Cambridge University PhD graduate and Lund University post-doctoral fellow, is a political and cultural sociologist studying the ways in which contemporary art serves as an alternative platform for discussion in Central Asia, reports voicesoncentralasia.org. She authored “Rewriting the Nation in Modern Kazakh literature” and her upcoming book centres on the rise of nationalising regimes in the post-Soviet space.

“I was fascinated by an old Central Asian carpet that depicted Alexander Pushkin. The carpet was done in an old technique and was exhibited in a 19th-century madrasah-turned-museum to help demonstrate the continuity of local traditions through time. To me, this is a perfect example of contemporary art,” she said.

Kudaibergenova sees contemporary Central Asian art as a reflection of society’s issues and its effort to engage in dialogue. For contemporary artists themselves, it has meant freedom from top-down control, censorship and funding.

“Who are we? Where are we go-



Photo credit: Saule Suleimenova.com

ing? Is the transition over? How shall we protect the rights of our people? All of these questions find answers in the works of local contemporary artists,” she said.

Kudaibergenova points toward the period of perestroika and structural changes in Central Asia in the mid-1980s as a time of “cultural awakening” among artists. Here, contemporary art as a new conceptual tool emerged.

“When these groups of artists started revolting against the socialist realist canon in different parts of

Central Asia, they inevitably also revolted against the political order of how things ought to be done, and consequently, they revolted against their own position and identity as Soviet citizens. This was both a collective experience of being part of that movement but also a very individual and private transformation into a new type of artist,” she said.

Kudaibergenova characterises Central Asian artists as those with powerful voices in social and cultural discussions on gender roles, national identity and traditions. They

are often able to find an audience, resonance and support much more easily than slogans or programmes.

She singles out the Kazakh contemporary artist Saule Suleimenova, who referenced 19th-century archival photos of Central Asian natives in her art to explore identity. In juxtaposing traditional faces, figures and attire against a contemporary urban backdrop, Suleimenova evokes the complex and layered nature of the past, present and future Kazakhstan.

“To me, Suleimenova’s works are very philosophical because they reflect the ongoing obsession with and search for the ‘authentic’ national idea in Kazakhstan,” said Kudaibergenova.

Suleimenova makes use of non-decomposable material, such as plastic bags, to capture often recognisable depictions of humanity and culture as factory subjects.

“Multiple layers of meanings, cultures, visual images, plastic bags help me to find the way to my ‘Kazakhness’ and, finally, to myself,” writes Suleimenova.

Conventionally, art is an elite domain. In Central Asia, with no strong local markets for or state institutionalisation of contemporary art, it is public and accessible. If

not free, admission to Astana galleries costs less than \$2. Exhibitions now share space with lectures, film screenings and kids’ activities to promote greater inclusivity and participation.

“The artists I interview agree that if someone enters the field of contemporary art, rather than any other field or genre (e.g. applied art, decorative, ‘beautiful’ art or official, state-sponsored art), then it means that the artist has also chosen a very specific role for themselves and that role is a socially responsible one,” said Kudaibergenova.

Social media often serves as platform for artists themselves to engage with their audiences and each other. A positive trend is that contemporary art also develops across the Central Asian region, as opposed to exclusively in major cities or circles.

“Interestingly, these groups [of contemporary artists] are not formed based on citizenship or country of residence but rather are oriented around common interests, sympathies and shared values, genres or forms,” said Kudaibergenova.

“I have often witnessed artists from Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Russia, Turkmenistan, France, Italy and elsewhere quickly

finding a common language of art while at a party in the mountains, in someone’s studio, in an exhibit hall, in an independent gallery or on the road.”

As a sociologist, she seeks to understand why certain art practices emerge and how. She observes a variety of movements and schools of thought in Central Asian art and identifies time, identity, state and self as major themes.

“One of my favourite themes is how new state-sponsored, ‘official’ artists try to conceptualise the past by making it very contemporary. What I mean by this is that they focus on depicting the 19th century in the brightest shades of colours, which only became available ten years ago, or they imagine our great ancestors in textiles and fabrics so modern that the line between past and present is completely blurred,” she added.

In referring to contemporary Central Asian art as a movement, Kudaibergenova suggests that it is united only by some ideas. Artists often hold very different ideas on Kazakhstan’s development.

“Central Asian artists have a lot to say and I really hope there will be more opportunities to hear them out,” she added.

Film ‘Road to Mother’ to be released in American theatres

By Abira Kuandyk

ASTANA – “Road to Mother,” by Kazakh director Akan Satayev, will be released in U.S. theatres this fall. World Wide Motion Pictures Corporation (WWMP) announced July 10 it had acquired the North American distribution rights.

The movie will be released in select theatres, including major metropolitan areas, with many Kazakh and Asian American organisations offering their support, reported the WWMP press service.

Satayev and the film’s producers are proud of the movie’s American theatrical release.

“I am very happy that WWMP’s marketing and distribution team could see that the film’s heart-

warming story was truly universal and could be enjoyed by audiences anywhere in the world,” he said.

WWMP CEO Paul Hancock noted the company’s highly regard for the historical drama.

“World Wide is very proud to be releasing a meaningful multigenerational drama that also carries with it the high prestige of being Kazakhstan’s official foreign language entry for the Oscars. Families throughout the United States, especially mothers, will surely embrace this heartwarming story,” he said.

The Kazakh Embassy in Washington D.C. recently screened the film. The main characters, Kazakh actor Adil Akhmetov (son Iliyay) and actress Altynai Nogherbek (mother Miriam), visited the mission.

“Road to Mother” premiered to critical acclaim at the 38th Moscow International Film Festival and has been screened at numerous other festivals. It won the Best Foreign Film, Best Film and Best Feature Film awards at the New York Eurasian Film Festival in the U.S., Marco Polo Film Festival in Croatia and WeLink International Film Festival in the U.S.

The film, set during one of the most tragic periods in the history of the former USSR, is the story of the power of a mother’s love enduring the challenges of turbulent times. The storyline covers the period from the 1930s to the present day and the effects of enforced collectivisation (1928-1940), the Second World War and the postwar years on the Kazakh people.

Contemporary dance company...

Continued from Page B1

“After the seminar, young coaches and choreographers started to approach us and asked for help with developing the direction of American dance, particularly, the technical details of contemporary dance, hip-hop and jazz styles. They can acquire necessary skills to accomplish their ideas and at the same time, support themselves and their families through their favourite hobby,” added Emerson.

During CADF, the leading dance professional held master classes in the neoclassical ballet, contemporary dance, modern dance, Broadway, improvisation, jazz and hip hop styles.

“We have been very lucky to teach all around the world, and there are only a few countries that we single out. We call them

‘dancing countries’ because they are of such high level of ability that it’s very motivating for us to come and work and share. Because the talent is extraordinary and dancers from Central Asian countries have amazing dancing skills,” said Emerson.

“I have been to many countries, but I have never seen such impressive buildings as Astana Opera and Astana Ballet Theatre,” he added.

Emerson also noted Astana Opera is the dream of many choreographers and dancers.

“The premiere of the ‘Falling Man’ performance can only take place in Astana Ballet Theatre, as it is technically the only theatre that is suitable for it. For us, it is the greatest opportunity – to use all the technical equipment and make this performance the way it was intended,” he added.

“Falling Man” is the story about New York and how it can always play tricks on people. The world premiere took place in Astana Ballet Theatre. CADF participants performed on stage.

“New York is my hometown. I wanted to show how diverse it can be. Despite setbacks that can happen there, New York has the ability to recover. ‘Falling Man’ is about how a city can overcome difficulties,” said Emerson.

Lance Erickson, Assistant Cultural Affairs Officer of the U.S. Embassy, thanked the festival partners, Kazakh Ministry of Culture and Sports, National Academy of Choreography and all participants.

The U.S. Embassy in Astana and the Kazakh National Academy of Choreography organised CADF.

Astana Opera’s fifth season ends with fanfares

By Dilshat Zhussupova

ASTANA – Astana Opera’s fifth season coincided this summer with the capital’s 20th anniversary, and world opera and ballet masterpieces filled the halls of Kazakhstan’s largest opera house. The theatrical season saw 126,217 visitors.

Grand premieres included operas (Georges Bizet’s “Carmen,” Giacomo Puccini’s “Turandot” and Mukan Tulebayev’s “Birzhan – Sara”), Adolphe Adam’s ballet “Le Corsaire,” British composer Karl Jenkins’ ode “Shine Astana” and the Evening of Contemporary Choreography featuring Raimondo Rebeck’s “How Long is Now?” and Ksenia Zvereva’s “Sounds of Time.”

The opera house is no rookie to the city’s entertainment scene, but still had many firsts. While its repertoire usually consist of classical works, The Evening of Contemporary Choreography surprised audiences with its exclusive and atypical performances.

“I studied a lot of national culture and was inspired by the nomadic people’s traditions. This helped me stage the ballet ‘Sounds of Time,’ which has an unconventional plastic and style. We took the action to modern times, which allowed everyone to recognise themselves in the performance. There were many magical details, but the production also reflected modern life, its current problems, relationships, different segments of society and their values. The audiences saw an intertwining of myth and reality,” said Zvereva.

Tickets to “Carmen” sold out at record speed and a day of performance was added due to popular demand. It

remains one of the highest grossing productions in Astana Opera’s repertoire to date.

“‘Carmen’ is one of the most popular operas in the world, so it is no surprise that Astana residents and guests have shown such genuine interest in this bright, exciting production. It is customary to include two premiere days in the repertoire, but we made an exception to the rule and added another day,” said the opera’s administration.

The Paris Opera Ballet’s dancers blew audiences away at the Gala de Paris concert where the Astana Opera’s symphony orchestra was guided by Russian-American conductor Vladimir Lande.

The “Shine Astana” premiere proved memorable not only for its performances, but for its sheer scale.

Jenkins’ music directed by famed Kazakh conductor Alan Buribayev delighted audiences, who gazed at an orchestra of more than 1,000 musicians from Austria, Belarus, Croatia, Germany, Greece, Italy, Kazakhstan, the Netherlands, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Listeners were also treated to performances by Kazakh tenor Medet Chotabayev, American soprano Angel Blue and Kazakh soloists Meir Baines, Maira Mukhamedkyzy and Talgat Musabayev.

“The Astana Opera has a wonderful symphony orchestra,” said Buribayev. “As you may know, the opera house’s artists underwent a rigorous audition process. Despite the fact that the group encountered this music for the first time, they were very skilled at it. After one

performance of a composition at a morning rehearsal, in the evening the sound of the orchestra was completely different. This concert allowed us to reach a different level of professionalism.”

Astana Opera expands its tour every year. Its opera and ballet performances were sold out hits in Budapest and Pécs. The ballet company also performed at Italy’s Teatro Carlo Felice, where the Genoese audience gave a long, standing ovation to the dancers of Roland Petit’s “Notre Dame de Paris” accompanied by Jean-Michel Jarre’s music. Likewise, Almaty audiences at Abai Opera House were treated to Akhmet Zhubanov and Latif Khamidi’s opera “Abai,” Kenneth MacMillan’s ballet “Manon” and “Notre Dame de Paris.”

“Performing at Abai Opera House was a big responsibility, as there were friendly but demanding viewers and our teachers were present in the auditorium,” said principal dancer Madina Basbayeva.

“The choreography of the ballet ‘Manon’ is rather difficult to perform. It is a well-known fact that when MacMillan staged this ballet, he went to the Winter Olympic Games, where figure skating made a very strong impression on him. This ballet was an endurance test, which we passed, because the choreography was very complex yet incredibly beautiful.”

“My wife and I often attended the Abai Opera House’s performance of the opera ‘Abai,’ but we will remember this particular performance for a long time,” noted theatre visitor Azamat Salikov. “This production may be seen as the pinnacle of national classics interpretations. It is truly amazing that the opera retained key elements of the author’s tale. In the scene where the stunningly gorgeous library is revealed, there was an awestruck silence among the audience and we were thoroughly surprised!”

Astana Opera’s new project Theatrical Lesson, targeting the younger generation, included a lecture on the evening’s performance, behind-the-scenes tour and the presentation of a ballet or opera. Additional youth-oriented initiatives included premieres of the children’s musical “Samuryk Kelgen Tan,” The Journey of Peer Gynt concert and Astana Opera Children’s Studio choir and ballet performances.

“Awakening the interest of children and teenagers in the theatre and classical music and instilling a love

for art are the main goals of the Theatrical Lesson project,” said literature and music department director Marzhan Zhakenova. “Today’s children are our future viewers. Art and culture shape the nation in a sense, so this project may also be seen as a practical implementation of the Ruhani Zhandyru (Modernisation of Kazakhstan’s Identity) programme.”

The opera’s continued efforts in popularising national cultural heritage as part of the programme is most evident in its contribution to the Modern Kazakh Culture in the Global World project, which was presented at the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) headquarters in Paris.

Astana Opera also honoured its charity concert tradition this season, hosting New Year’s children’s matinees and the Diversity of Musical Voices concert for more than 400 youngsters. Raising awareness about youth with disabilities was also part of a unique concert initiative, Music in the Dark, with the proceeds donated to the Light in the Darkness fund.

Open-air performances were also held for the first time this summer beyond the capital. Under the starry skies, “Birzhan – Sara” was played out on the shores of Lake Burabai.

With the conclusion of an eventful season, Astana Opera visitors have much to anticipate in the sixth season, which will begin in late September. The premiere of Gioacchino Rossini’s “Il Barbiere di Siviglia” will introduce audiences to its lively and musical humour. Additional premieres include Tles Kazhaliyev’s ballet “Kozy-Korepesh – Bayansulu,” the story of tragic young love accompanied by the composer’s music conducted by Russian Valery Gergiev, and Pyotr Tchaikovsky’s opera “Eugene Onegin.”



Astana Opera’s Gala de Paris concert.

Photo credit: astanopera.kz

COUNTRY

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 15, 2018

Schoolchildren to learn physics with comic books

By Dilshat Zhussupova

ASTANA – Kazakh comic books will be produced and published to introduce school students to the basics of physics as part of a collaboration between Shakhmardan Yessenov Scientific and Educational Foundation and Khan Comics.

Until recently, Kazakh comics were predominantly produced and consumed for entertainment purposes. Yessenov Foundation, established in 2013, seeks to change that. A series of science-oriented comic books will now be used to teach introductory physics, familiarise students with the concepts they will study in upper classes and foster their interest in the natural sciences.

The story revolves around the adventures of four friends stumbling across unusual situations and, together, solving their way through various tests. The first issue features exploring Kazakhstan's Charyn Canyon, where they become acquainted with physics. They will continue visiting the nation's noteworthy places in upcoming issues, exposing young readers to information about their homeland.

The factual content and style are based on "Physics for Entertainment" by Yakov Perelman, a Russian and Soviet science writer and author of popular science books. He popularised physics, astronomy and mathematics among young readers in the 20th century, with many of his works translated into English.

"Comics in the Kazakh and Russian languages, written in an accessible form, will explain the laws of physics to children aged 10 or above, also

showing them that they come across these concepts in their daily lives, which they may not have noticed," said project manager and Yessenov Foundation coordinator Nursultan Nurmukhanov. "We want more Kazakh children to develop their intellectual abilities, including through the familiar medium of a comic book."

The series was created by a team of three Kazakh artists and a Khan Comics screenwriter and published at a local printing house.

Khan Comics, an Almaty-based art studio founded in 2010, caters to Kazakh-speaking readers in addition to its Russian-speaking customers. Kazakh-language comic book circulation ranges from 500-1,000 copies and Russian-language circulation averages 2,000 copies. Its comic books, typically depicting Kazakh nomadic tribes, monsters and witches from ancient legends as well as batyrs, are available at major bookstores Meloman and Knizhnyi Gorod (Book City).

"Our studio has published more than 50 comic books, which are distributed in Kazakhstan and abroad. Still, this project has become an interesting challenge for us. Conveying applied physics through action in comics is an unusual and tricky task," said Khan Comics co-founder Orazkhan Zhakup. "We are sure that the final product will be a dynamic one, which children will read with interest and look forward to with every new release."

The comics will be distributed throughout the regions in early 2019 and a portion of the circulated issues will also reach school libraries free of charge.

Veterinary vaccine plant to be built in Zhambyl region

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – BioVetKZ will be constructing a veterinary vaccine plant in the Zhambyl region, the regional press service reported July 30. The two billion tenge (US\$5 million), Kordai district-based bio-factory has a design capacity of 25 million doses per year, with future capacity expected to increase almost three-fold.

The enterprise will produce and sell vaccines according to good laboratory practice (GLP) and good manufacturing practice (GMP) regulations for preventing, diagnosing and treating animal diseases. The

company plans to expand vaccine production to 11 species.

"The region annually allocates funds for purchasing vaccines for farm animals. Imported vaccines, mostly from Russia, are used to maintain the normal immune function of animals," said the press service.

Vaccines protect against common diseases including brucellosis, anthrax as well as foot and mouth disease. BioVetKZ is planning to expand its sales markets by exporting to Central Asian countries, China and Turkey.

Eight projects worth more than 16 billion tenge (US\$45 million) will be implemented this year as part of Zhambyl's industrial and innova-

tive development state programme. They will create 947 jobs.

Forty-two investment projects providing more than 6,000 jobs are being executed as part of the second five-year period of regional industrialisation. In the first two years, 23 projects and 1,500 employment opportunities have been implemented. The remaining 19 projects will be launched through 2025.

The press service reported agricultural investments doubled in 12 months. This year, 15.7 billion tenge (US\$44 million) was allocated to develop the region's agro-industrial sector. Investments in fixed capital were approximately 3.7 billion tenge (US\$10 million).

In 2017, the region's gross agricultural output exceeded 30.6 billion tenge (US\$87 million) due to 4.8-percent growth in meat production, 3.9 percent in milk and 1.4 percent in eggs. All livestock categories have increased, exporting more than 783 tonnes of beef and mutton.

Crops increased by 20,000 hectares to 650,000 hectares.

Zhambyl region is focusing on water conservation and expanding drip irrigation areas, and an agricultural land use map will be adopted to introduce innovative technologies. The website monitors vacant areas, and the pilot project will be introduced in other regions in the future.

Citizens' foreign bank account, property information to be made available starting in 2020

Staff Report

ASTANA – A multilateral agreement was signed 26 June by the Kazakh Ministry of Finance's State Revenue Committee Chairman Ardak Tengebayev, granting Kazakhstan the opportunity to exchange financial account information and jurisdictions in 102 countries starting in 2020.

The agreement was made possible by the adoption of a single standard for the provision of information among participating countries.

The standard was developed by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and G20 countries to address issues concerning tax evasion, reduction and compliance.

"We will receive information from all of the OECD countries, including the European Union countries, the United Kingdom, Israel, Iceland, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Japan, Argentina and other states cooperating in the implementation of international tax standards," said Kazakh Ministry of Finance's Taxation Methodology of the State Revenue Committee Department Director Kairat Zholmukhambetov at Astana's Central Communications Service press conference.

The information received would allow the government to administer Kazakh citizens' incomes and prevent capital outflow from the country in a more informed and effective manner.

In 2018, more than 27,000 Kazakh residents declared money

in foreign bank accounts of 108 countries, worth 820.9 billion tenge (US\$2.34 billion). The main countries of the bank account origin include Singapore, Switzerland, Lebanon, South Korea and Russia.

Kazakh citizens also report holding more than 12,000 real estate objects in 69 countries. At 9,567 units or 77 percent of the total, the highest number of registered property among Kazakh citizens is in Russia. The rest is in Bulgaria, Turkey, Spain, the United Kingdom, the United States and France.

"According to the French authorities, 60 property objects are owned by Kazakh residents, all of which have been declared by 54 residents in their tax forms," said Zholmukhambetov, addressing

concerns over the \$76.5 million apartment purchase in Paris by an undisclosed Kazakh government official earlier this year.

In turn, Kazakh banks will be requested to provide information on non-residents' bank accounts to the tax authorities of their state of residency. The information exchange will now occur on an automatic and regular basis.

"The laws on personal data protection will be observed by Kazakh banks," added Zholmukhambetov, addressing privacy concerns.

The information transferred to other states will include the account holder's name and tax number and information on income from deposits, dividends, sales of assets and certain types of insurance.

Childhood cancer rate rising, a result of better diagnostics

By Meruyert Abugaliyeva

ASTANA – The nation's childhood cancer rate increased 9.3 percent in 2016-2017, as the number of detected cases rose from 558 to 610 per year.

"Every year, on average 600 new cases of malignant tumours are detected and approximately 40 percent of them are cases of leukaemia. We believe that the increase in childhood cancer is associated with improvements in quality of diagnostics in the regions," said Riza Boranbayeva, Director of the Scientific Centre for Paediatrics and Paediatric Surgery of the Ministry of Healthcare.

According to ministry data, malignant tumours were identified in 12.5 percent of children last year, compared to 11.5 percent in 2016. Slightly more than one-third of the patients were under age three, 55 percent ages 3-15 and 9 percent older than 15.

The majority of such children live in the South Kazakhstan region, the most populous in the country. High cancer rates were also registered in the Aktobe, Mangystau, North Kazakh-

stan and West Kazakhstan regions, as well as in Almaty and the capital.

The primary diagnosis is completed in the regions and intensive chemotherapy provided in two state oncological hospitals, the Scientific Centre of Paediatrics and Paediatric Surgery in Almaty and National Research Centre for Maternal and Child Health in the capital, where diagnostics and treatment are provided free of charge.

"More than 5,000 children undergo treatment in these two centres each year. On average, the state allocates 10-12 million tenge (US\$28,900-\$34,700) for a course of cancer treatment," Boranbayeva added.

Approximately 4,000 children with cancer are under supervision in the regions, 300 of whom receive supportive therapy.

The most widespread type of cancer is acute leukaemia (34 percent), followed by brain tumours (16 percent) and neuroblastoma (nervous system tumours, 12 percent). Almost half of childhood cancer incidents are congenital, resulting from cell mutations before birth. The effectiveness of local cancer treatment among children is 70-90 percent.

Astana bus passengers adjust to new fares and rules

By Dilshat Zhussupova

ASTANA – Capital bus passengers are now wielding transport cards. Differentiated fares and new enter-and-exit rules began operating July 21.

For urban routes, the non-cash fare is 90 tenge (US\$0.26); cash fare, 180 tenge (US\$0.52). The non-cash fare for express routes is 180 tenge (US\$0.52); the cash fare, 250 tenge (US\$0.72). For suburban routes, the non-cash fare is 8 tenge (US\$0.02) per kilometre; the cash fare, approximately 12 tenge (US\$0.03).

Children's fares on urban routes are 40 tenge (US\$0.11) when paying by card, 90 tenge (US\$0.26) with cash. For express routes, the fee is 90 tenge (US\$0.26) by card, 125 tenge (US\$0.36) with cash.

The fare changes will not affect the category of citizens including Great Patriotic War veterans, pensioners, mothers and families with many children and individuals with disabilities and one of their parents or guardians.

Passengers receive a free transfer within an hour of validating their transport card. Those evading payment are charged 4,810 tenge (US\$13.80).

"Having introduced differentiated fares, we will now conduct an analysis and come to a better understanding of the suitability of the current fares," said Astana Light Rail Transport (LRT) Chairperson Bekmyrza Igenberdinov. "We will also determine to what extent the Akimat (city administration) may garner subsidies, so as to not increase the fares further."

Cards may be purchased for 400 tenge (US\$1.15) at 30 terminals throughout the city and refilled at designated offices and terminals, QIWI terminals and on the Transcard website. In September, the options of bank card and SMS message payments will be introduced.

At the beginning of the year, five percent of passengers were transport card holders. Now, they constitute more than 87 percent. In excess of 200,000 cards were purchased in July alone.

"The city is ready for differentiated fares, as may be judged by the increased sales of transport cards," he added.

To accommodate the system, passengers must enter through the front door to validate their cards. Senior citizens and those with disabilities,

wheelchairs or luggage are exempt and may enter via the middle doors using the lowered platform. Passengers may exit through any door.

"Before introducing the new rules, international best practices were taken into consideration. In many large metropolitan areas, the front door functions as the entrance in city shuttle buses," said Igenberdinov.

Passengers, conductors and drivers alike are becoming accustomed to the new system. To help passengers adjust to the procedures, bus conductors now consult on the payment system.

Introducing differentiated fares resulted in some drivers resisting the newly prescribed programme. A driver shortage has ensued, with only 80 percent of busses currently operating and causing increased intervals between runs.

As part of an accompanying incentive scheme, bus driver bonuses will be conditional on the number of card validations on a given route. Financial rewards may also be provided in the absence of complaints and schedule violations.

**IF NOT YOU, WHO?
IF NOT NOW, WHEN?**

#BECAUSEHUMANITY

AFTER A NUCLEAR BLAST, SOME SAY ALL THAT'S LEFT OF WHO OR WHAT WAS THERE BEFORE IS DUST AND SHADOWS. TODAY, OUR PLANET AND ITS PEOPLE LIVE WITH THE DARK SHADOW OF THE NUCLEAR THREAT. IT FOLLOWS US WHEREVER WE GO. THE ATOM PROJECT AIMS TO SHINE A LIGHT ON THIS PROBLEM—AND THE SOLUTION.

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WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 15, 2018

Kazakh headwear manufacturer to export innovative products

By Dilshat Zhussupova

ASTANA – Kazakh headwear company Elegant creates tailor-made hats from velvet, felt, leather, furs and straw, employing high-quality raw materials and innovative technology. In addition to producing uniforms for the military, industrial enterprises, medical institutions and commercial firms, their unique and fashion-forward designs satisfy the most demanding customers.

Director and founder Bakyt Alimbekova is seeking to prepare the brand for export by participating in Kazakh fashion designer Ayazhan Zhaksybai's business incubator for national brands.

The first in the country and financed by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the incubator aims to equip and propel rising fashion businesses to compete locally and globally. Zhaksybai, a certified international marketing consultant and director of fashion brand Aika Alemi, works closely with participants in applying to and presenting at foreign showrooms and major fashion week presentations.



Photo credit: experonline.kz

"This is an excellent opportunity to improve our marketing, branding, technology, finances and strategy for entering international markets," said Alimbekova. "We plan to present our headwear collection internationally at next year's White Milano exhibition."

The company's production process starts with design development and construction and ends with tailoring and sales. The progression occurs in facilities with 30 manufacturing staff and an annual capacity of 300 million tenge (US\$866,651).

Raw materials, with the exception of sheepskin, are purchased overseas biannually as they cannot be obtained in the Kazakh market.

Velvet hats are usually bought in the Czech Republic, felt caps in Russia and karakul hats in Uzbekistan.

Pricing starts at 12,000 tenge (US\$34.67) for boaters, 15,000 tenge (US\$43.33) for exclusive designs and 25,000 tenge (US\$72.22) for wide-brimmed hats.

"We do our best to make our products accessible," said Alimbekova. "That is why retail sales are doing well – an average of 170 hat models are realised per year. We receive individual orders from Kazakhstan, Japan, Russia and Germany."

The Kazakh headwear market is currently dominated by imported goods of varying quality, including inexpensive Chinese-made and high-end Western-produced brands. Certain local hat manufacturers focus on state tenders, but experimental, design-oriented workshops are nonexistent.

Such business orientations require substantial investment and experienced sewing and manufacturing technology professionals, which are also lacking in the domestic market.

"There are no specialisations in Kazakh educational institutions for sewing headwear," said Alimbekova. "Given that we want to focus on headwear production for retail, knowledge on international best practices can render our production process less time consuming and our products lighter and more modern."

Creating headwear has been Al-

imbekova's lifework. A graduate of Zhambyl Technological Institute of Light and Food Industry, she started her career as an inspector and later became chief engineer at Almaty's headwear factory. In 1997, she opened a national headwear business with fashion designers Natalia Bogdanova, Lyudmila Roo, Nina Shilo and Lyubov Vedmedieva.

Their \$3,000 startup capital covered raw materials, sewing equipment and rent.

"At first, we had to reach out to potential clients ourselves. Over time, we began participating in tenders for producing hats for law enforcement bodies and, with growing confidence in our abilities, we pursued larger-scale tenders," she said.

In 2002, the entrepreneurs' efforts were rewarded when hat demand grew and they were able to purchase their own premises and more sewing equipment.

"We sewed exclusive, tailor-made hat collections for clients who sought us by recommendation," she added.

Despite significant setbacks in 2006-2008 due to building demolition, Alimbekova's business

continued to experience long-term growth. Opening Astana and Almaty retail outlets in 2012 and 2015, respectively, was made possible by its continued participation in contracts with law enforcement bodies.

"Defence procurement facilitated the development of our business. Still, I seek to gradually step away from tenders and begin producing more hats for retail," she said. "This transition is feasible within a five-year period, when freer working capital will allow us to increase production capacity with the purchase of more equipment, technology and raw materials."

The business currently directs all resources towards development as part of its long-term modernisation strategy. Twenty million tenge (US\$57,777) from Damu Entrepreneurship Fund's Business Roadmap 2020 programme was allocated towards equipment in 2016 and another 20 million tenge (US\$57,777) was invested in additional equipment two years later. The investments will be used to drive the company's competitiveness and future production of a women's clothing line.

From small school class to public association...

Continued from Page B1

Her initial goal was to enroll her children with hearing impairment in school, to give them the opportunity to study along with other children. Now, the organisation has expanded and services are offered for more families.

"Currently, there are three organisations located within our building: the Society for Disabled Children Public Association, the Balamai Public Fund and the ZhasNur Public Association," she said.

The Society for Disabled Children Public Association, launched in 1999, supports children with disabilities and their family members, assists with their social rehabilitation and helps them integrate into daily life in the communities around them. It seeks to help children build self-help and communication skills and expand their opportunities for personal and professional development. More than 300 families are supported by the association, added Zhasanova.

The Balamai Public Fund provides a daycare centre where parents can leave their children for four to ten hours to spend time job hunting, handling the administrative business of life or just taking some time for themselves. There are three such centres operating in Astana in different locations, said Zhasanova.

The ZhasNur Public Association of the Deaf, launched in 2008, provides services for people with hearing impairments. Last year, youth from ZhasNur made felt items to sell as souvenirs during EXPO 2017. Now, there is a deal with the AkZhaiak organisation to prepare 3,000 handicrafts to sell, she added.

"In addition, there is a dispatch service working through the ZhasNur Public Association to offer remote assistance. If, for example, a hearing-impaired or deaf person arrives at the hospital or a service centre that lacks sign language interpreters, they can immediately connect online to our sign language interpreters and communicate with managers," said Zhasanova.

She said over the years, she's met many people who supported and helped the development of her association.

"In 1998, I made a request to the Centre for Civil Society operating within USAID and shared my thoughts on opening a school for deaf children. They taught me how to interact with the government, how to attract sponsors and

resources to the organisation. I thought I'd graduated with another degree – I completed training programmes and attended as part of a leading group for a year. The only thing I needed to do was to open public organisation," she added.

In 2000, remedial classes for seven children were launched. Zhasanova had volunteers, team healing groups and foreign assistants – but she lacked teachers and tutors.

"Then, we ran our first city festival. Deaf children have a special feature, they spread information about the festival in a very quick manner without telephones in 2000. It turned out that our festival was conducted on a national level. We covered the whole of Kazakhstan, with people from Taldykorgan, Karaganda, Atbasar, Ust-Kamenogorsk attending. Here, we found teachers for our school," shared Zhasanova.

The Singing Hands Festival for Disabled Children is intended to showcase talented children with hearing disorders who can draw, dance, put on theatrical performances, and sing songs. Deaf and hearing-impaired children from all regions of the country usually take part in the festival. They perform through gestures, mimicry and facial expressions. This year, the festival took place July 20 at Astana's ZhasNur Palace.

Zhasanova also noted that they have received a lot of help from international organisations and companies such as UNICEF Kazakhstan and BG Kazakhstan, as well as the Astana akimat (city administration) and government institutions. Foreign philanthropists donated equipment and machinery, for which she says she is very thankful.

"In 2007, we received a call from one organisation that asked whether we need any kind of help," Zhasanova explained. "Our staff worker expressed appreciation and said we'd be glad even to simply welcome and meet them at our organisation. A group of three to five people paid a visit then. They witnessed our activities and decided to give us a bus. It turned out they had contacted various nonprofit organisations and some of them were willing to receive help in money but doubted about whether they would be able to look after the car. The organisation was pleased by our response and it influenced their decision. Thus, we are always thankful for any kind of attention and assistance."

Asay Júrek resale shop offers luxury, vintage and mass-market clothing

By Dana Omirgazy

ASTANA – Asay Júrek, a resale shop opened in April in Almaty, offers high quality and select clothes and accessories. Founder and city resident Marina Anichkina sells mass-market, luxury, vintage and other styles.

"We do not order containers with clothes from the prosperous countries of Europe... We accept clothes from people with a similar vision of the world and fashion. We want our city to start dressing a bit better and people to consume more responsibly and to treat things easier. I think

everyone can find something here to his or her liking," she said, according to the-village.kz.

The idea of a progressive resale shop came to Anichkina two years ago, but the business was suspended due to new job and later, a long trip to Sri Lanka, according to buro247.kz.

"I have been interested in second hand and vintage shops for a long time, since my student years. I was always embarrassed and frustrated with our market; there was no big, well-thought second hand store with good clothes in the city. So, after returning to Almaty, I decided to do it myself, and

Asay Júrek appeared," she said.

Asay Júrek is designed for all ages. Anichkina followed the example of Wasteland, an American network of second hand and vintage stores that offer quality clothes from Topshop and Tom Ford to vintage. She initially collected items from friends and acquaintances, then expanded to city residents who sell their clothes to the store. Garments should be without significant defects and Asay Júrek also accepts a limited number of shoes.

The team relies on its own taste to determine whether the clothes

will be sold in the store, where shoppers can find items by Acne, Balenciaga, COS, Dior, Dolce & Gabbana, Kenzo and even Kazakhstan designers.

"It's impossible to leave the shop empty-handed. Asay Júrek is not only a store, but a venue for those who sell vintage clothes. We are open to various kinds of collaborations," she said. "We make a contract with everyone who brings us clothes. A person can take the agreed amount of money or donate money to charity; we will work with specific [charities] and transparent funds that we want to support, for example, a children's hospice."

Open-air art exhibit practices urbanism while promoting Kazakh culture

By Abira Kuandyk

ASTANA – The façade of a three-story residential building in the capital's Saryarka district turned into an art object with the conclusion of Urban Street Art Fest July 16 to 30. The open-air gallery includes the works of classics of Kazakh art from the collection of Kasteyev State Museum of Arts.

"Urban Street Art Fest presented eight outstanding murals of Kazakh and foreign artists. Astana residents have already seen many of them, but today we are pleased to present the big piece of art," announced Akim (Mayor) of the Saryarka District Arman Turlubek in an Aug. 6 Facebook post.

The house represents an entire gallery in the open-air. The house with paintings is located at 5 Mambetova Street, on the continuing part of the so called Arbat, on the stretch from the Kenessary Avenue to Abai Street, said Turlubek.

"Reproduction of classics of Kazakh art decorate the building's first floor facade. The works of young Kazakh artist, Alexandra Kalacheva, are presented in the building's second and third floors, imitating the gallery space," Olga Veselova, Urban Street Art Fest organiser and deputy director of the Eurasian Cultural Alliance, told The Astana Times.

"One of the main tasks of a modern city is to return residents into their streets, activate public space and provide quality cultural recreation. As famous urbanist

Riccardo Marini points out, the human brain needs stimulation with a frequency of a few seconds to keep it entertained. This has to be taken into account while designing the streets. The open-air gallery project is initiated in order to increase the concern for the urban environment," added Veselova.

People can enjoy the works of famous artists such as Abilkhan

Kasteyev, Tursun Abuov, Gulfairus Ismailova, Shaimardan Sariyev, Gani Bayanov, Maria Lizogub and Aisha Galimbayeva, said Turlubek.

"I think, soon, it will become the famous house with paintings. It is located in a quieter part of the street, containing mostly office blocks. With no doubts, it will be a must visit place for residents and tourists," added Turlubek.

The presented reproduction of artists' works is made of the materials for facade works that are designed for such various temperature changes and weather conditions as rain, snow, sun and wind, added Veselova.

"The project promotes the popularisation of Kazakh culture, which is one of the main priorities of the Rukhani Zhanjyru programme," she added.



Photo credit: Facebook page Arman Turlubek

TOURISM

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 15, 2018

American businessman boosts tourist flow to Kazakhstan



By Dana Omirgazy

ASTANA – American businessperson David Valera seeks to develop tourism in Kazakhstan by opening the country as a cultural and tourist destination for foreign visitors. “I am proud to say that I am the only New Yorker, the only American, who has his company 100 percent dedicated to promoting tourism in Kazakhstan. That was a project which I started sort of as a side project, because I have other things I am doing in this country.

To my surprise, Americans have responded very well to that project. So now, I am busier with the tourism project than all my other projects,” he told The Astana Times.

The 8-10 day tour includes interesting ways to experience Kazakhstan. Guests visit modern cities like Almaty and the capital, as well as appreciate authentic life in villages.

“Astana is the representation of Kazakhstan’s modernisation. The city is just 20 years old; the architecture here is modern, beautiful and up-to-date,” said Valera.

Becoming culturally acquainted with Kazakhstan involves local families hosting American visitors in their homes, where guests are exposed to some of the richest and most traditional habits and practices.

“We went to a small village outside of Merke at the Kazakhstan-Kyrgyzstan border. In that village, we met a 12th-generation farmer who lives with his wife and six children, and we experienced what it is like to cook beshbarmak and we tried horse milk and camel milk. We also learned how

to do eagle hunting, and we slept in traditional Kazakh yurts. A lot of these traditions and habits are very well preserved both in modern cities like Astana and Almaty and also they are very richly felt in small villages,” he added.

Valera has found considerable interest. By summer’s end, he expects to accommodate 24 guests, including visitors from many parts of the world.

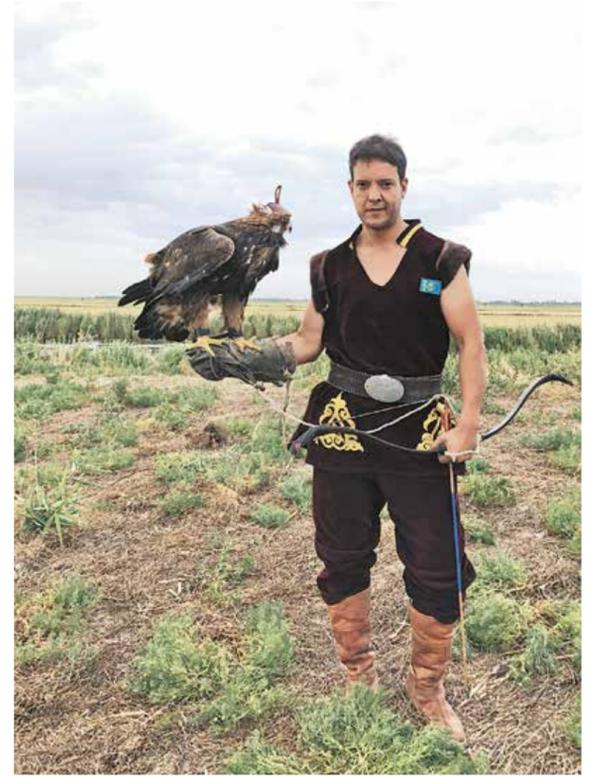
“I am acting both as an American in the U.S. as well as an unofficial Kazakh citizen, because I am talking to them about traditions and experiences in Kazakhstan that I personally had and that I think will be beneficial to them and they are responding very positively,” he said.

In starting the campaign, Valera wanted to do it in a way that makes Kazakhstan unique and special from typical American vacations.

“Having been to over 60 countries in my lifetime for various reasons, Kazakhstan is unlike any other part of the world. People’s welcoming nature, people’s culture and your country have really rich and beautiful traditions. This is something that attracted me six years ago when I first came here and continues to attract me to this day,” he added.

During a recent trip, Valera offered his support to Assemgul Urazayeva, one of Kazakhstan’s 100 New Faces. As head of the International Association of Women in Central Asia, Urazayeva is a well-known women’s rights advocate in the region.

“She represents some part of strong, independent women who



are not afraid of speaking on behalf of other women, single mothers. I think any woman that is trying to ensure that they are treated equally should be supported,” he said.

“When you love a country, you are never going to be 100 percent satisfied. The biggest thing, the disappointment for

me working in Kazakhstan, is how wrong people view this country [outside of it]. People of this country are something to really be admired and respected and the culture, the tradition and the beauty of the Kazakh people is really unlike anything you can find in the world,” he added.

Archaeologists find Saka burial mound, later graves near Astana

By Dana Omirgazy

ASTANA – Archaeologists have begun excavating a Saka burial mound found 10 kilometres from Astana, in the course of their work discovering seven other graves dating to the much more recent past (to the 15th and 16th centuries), two of which held women’s jewellery.

“A female copper ring was found in one of the graves. More like a wedding ring. Another burial featured a bronze earring. Also, there was a silver buckle,” archaeologist Diana Duiskeyeva told Almaty.tv.

The funerary practices and positions of the graves indicate that they belonged to Muslim people. Muslim rites hold that a grave should be at a right angle to the Qibla (the direction to the holy Kaaba in Mecca) so that the body, which is placed into its grave lying on its right side, without a coffin, faces the Qibla.

“Islam became the state religion on the territory of the central regions of Kazakhstan in the 14th century; naturally, before that period, these Muslim burials could not arise, so they belong to the 15th to 16th centuries,” the head of the research institute explained.



The burial mound, however, belongs to an earlier period. It is 4 metres in height and 60 metres in diameter. The mound is covered with a stone shell. Archaeologists think the mound belonged to Saka tribes. Granite slabs for burial are known to have been taken from the banks of Nura River. According to another hypothesis, Saka tribes could live on the territory of the modern day capital. The excavation

will continue to search for evidence.

“Peoples who lived here, in Sarayka, were riders and mounted soldiers. They guarded the territory and this was their main wealth and dignity. It is also known that local people took part even in the battle against Cyrus II. This is written in all textbooks,” Maral Khabdulina, Akishev Research Institute of Archaeology Director, said.

The Astana akimat (mayor’s office) has been coordinating the excavation, which is being carried out through the Sacred Kazakhstan project.

“This year we plan to hold four more excavations. This is the first one. We will hand over all the jewellery found to the National Museum,” Askar Kalabayev, head of Astana’s Culture and Sports Department, said.

Burabai CityPASS boxes save up to 50 percent on travel expenses

By Aidana Yergaliyeva

ASTANA – Beginning Aug. 1, Burabai National Park will offer Burabai CityPASS boxes that can save tourists up to 50 percent at local restaurants, hotels and museums and on entrance fees for cultural sites and excursions, said Marat Igaliyev, tourism advisor to the Akmola region Akim (Mayor).

CityPASS boxes include a tourist card, plastic smart card, guidebook in Kazakh, Russian, and English, CityPASS maps and Beeline

sim card with welcome tariff. The CityPASS e-version, which can be ordered online, provides discounts up to 30 percent.

The card system is not new for Kazakhstan, as it has been used by tourists in the capital since last year and introduced in Almaty in April. Igaliyev noted 50,000 Astana CityPASS packages have been sold.

“I found the card very useful and it saved me some money. I have no complaints,” said a capital cardholder.

“Yes, the card works; it saved time and money, which is very

good and convenient! My friends also took advantage and are just as happy,” said another user.

Tourists may select any sights they wish to visit. The discount is activated only once for each location and within 30 days of purchase. The available spots include the Burabai visitors centre and excursion programmes with intriguing names such as Burabai – The Pearl of Kazakhstan, Into the Depth of History – Kenesary’s Cave, Baikal Road, Ukili Ybyrai Trail and On a Visit to Nature, as well as museums (nature

museum, Abylai Khan Historical and Local History Museums and Kazakh Lapland Museum), Burabai Zoo, Extreme Rope Park, hotels and bicycle, catamaran and scooter rentals.

“In the future, we plan to increase the number of services that can be obtained through Burabai CityPASS,” said Igaliyev.

Introducing a single tourist card is the result of a memorandum of cooperation signed in February by CROCUS, the Akmola region Tourist Information Centre and central tourist operator Kazhstanskaya Laplandiya.

Lack of healthy competition inhibits mountain tourism

By Aidana Yergaliyeva

ASTANA – The Shymbulak Ski Resort hosted the third international Almaty Mount Forum July 20, where experts discussed the challenges of developing mountain tourism.

One-fifth of tourists in Kazakhstan visit Almaty. In the past three years, the number has grown 14 percent, according to city Deputy Akim (Mayor) Assel Zhunussova.

A survey among visitors showed the majority of foreign tourists visit Almaty for ecotourism, travelling to its pristine natural areas, while the more than half of Kazakh guests come for entertainment and activities, she noted.

Although Zhunussova presented many positive signs of the area’s growing tourism, forum speakers identified tourism as underdeveloped. The experts, including Yerzhan Yerkinbayev, who as Shymbulak director heads the only ski resort in the area, agreed the main problem is simply the lack of proper competitors. They noted the existing monopoly decreases the need to improve the quality of service and infrastructure, because tourists have no other choice.

“We can do nothing; the number of visitors grows and will grow. We are spoiled by the lack of competitors – we will always have customers,” he said.

Approximately 15,000 guests visit Shymbulak Peak on weekends and the figure is constant regardless of the season. Last year, the total number of visitors was estimated at 600,000.

Shymbulak became a place of perpetual pandemonium, with tourists mainly coming from Kazakh towns and regions. Yerkinbayev noted this creates constant traffic jams and congestion, making the area less attractive to foreign tourists and resulting in a lack of possible development.

“We are sure that if we have neighbours, then we will become attractive to foreign tourists. If there are several resorts and easy

accessible routes, it will attract foreign tourists,” he said.

Lucas Marchand, general director of French ski resort Les Portes du Mont-Blanc, recalled his first experience in ski resort management when he was afraid of competitors.

“One wise Arab told me: one park is a monopoly, two are competition and three create a destination. Therefore, in order to make a mountain business a destination, a good operator is needed,” he said.

Yerkinbayev noted the lack of mountain tourism competition can be explained by people discouraged to enter the business due to environmental damage or lack of economic effect. Yet, he thinks these should not be problems and the issue is only “due to lack of information.”

Swedish traveller Johan Nilsson, who has visited 169 countries, spoke about his plans to travel around Kazakhstan on electric bikes next year with the involvement of Kazakh stars. They expect the expedition should attract more foreign attention to the resort and the country as a whole.

“One wise Arab told me: one park is a monopoly, two are competition and three create a destination. Therefore, in order to make a mountain business a destination, a good operator is needed.”

He makes such expeditions to promote travelling with little damage to the environment and even the possibility of mitigating certain disasters. After his trip to Everest, for instance, he organised a project to clear the mountain of debris. In three years, the team removed 15 tonnes of waste.

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 15, 2018

Kazakhstan to host Short Track World Cup Stage for first time



Photo credit: soadim.ru

By Anuar Abdrakhmanov

ASTANA – Almaty will host for the first time in Kazakhstan a stage of the Short Track Speed Skating World Cup Dec. 7-9, according to a recent announcement by the International Skating Union (ISU). The Almaty event will be the third of six stages in the 2018/19 World Cup and include participants from the Winter Universiade 2017 and 2011 Asian Winter Games. Kazakh team skaters Abzal Azh-

galiyev and Nurbergen Zhumagazyev are expected to be among the top Kazakh participants. Over the past two seasons, Azhgaliyev finished second in the World Cup in the 500 metres and Zhumagazyev took third in the 1,000 metres. Almaty's sports facilities and the public turnout during the city's hosting of the 2017 Universiade are believed to have contributed to the ISU's decision to grant Almaty the event. The Short Track International season begins Nov. 2 in Calgary, Canada.

Astana-Paris bike ride involves cyclists with visual impairments

By Dana Omirgazy

ASTANA – The Blind Race 2018 Astana-Paris bike marathon for cyclists who are blind or visually impaired kicked off Aug. 4 from Mangilik El monument. Kazakh and foreign athletes will pass through six countries and pedal 5,000 kilometres.

"This year, we have organised our third marathon. The first was Almaty-Astana and then Almaty – Issyk-Kul in 2017. Our mission is to integrate people with limited abilities into society through sports. They should understand that their possibilities are unlimited. Thus, the line between society and people with limited abilities is blurred and society understands their needs better," said Sports without Borders head Bakhtiyar Bazarbekov in an interview for this story.

Eleven bike riders accompanied by five volunteers will cross 30 cities in Kazakhstan, Russia, Belarus, Poland, Germany and France. Organisers are planning to finish Sept. 8 in Paris.

Bazarbekov noted the importance of the project, which is supported mainly through private resources and sponsors. Organisers will rely on state support in the future.



"Such initiatives need state support. They should not stand aside. We want more attention from the state. We have organised a marathon almost without state support. Officials only had to deal with an administrative resource under the Ruhani Zhanghyru (Modernisation of Kazakhstan's Identity) programme. We attracted private resources and sponsorship," he said. Bazarbekov initiated the project to change public stereotypes toward people with limited visual abilities, creating a platform for in-

clusive interaction and motivation. The bike ride promotes a healthy and active lifestyle, encouraging passive citizens to action instead of complaining and remaining dependent. The unique campaign keeps extending its length. In August 2016, a team of nine bike riders travelled the 1,200 kilometres from Almaty to the capital. Last year, 15 cyclists were accompanied by volunteers and traffic police to cover the Almaty – Issyk-Kul route. "We want to develop social and

ecotourism, as well as popularise bicycles as a pollution-free mode of transport. Also, our project promotes sport among people with limited abilities in general and the tandem as a Paralympic sport in particular," he said. Tandem is a para-cycling classification requiring a sighted pilot for a non-sighted rider. Track tandem races debuted at the Atlanta 1996 Paralympic Games and tandem road races were officially introduced two years later at the Seoul Games.

Roller skiers pay tribute to Denis Ten

Staff Report

More than 150 athletes competed July 29 in the Roller Ski Cup in Astana dedicated to the memory of Kazakh figure skater Denis Ten. Amateur and professional athletes took to the start across eight categories. A minute of silence preceded the start of the race in the capital's central park, mourning the recent tragic death of the Olympic figure skater. "We all knew Denis as a talented athlete who loved the sport and our country. His death is a national tragedy, he was not only a gifted figure skater, he was the ambassador of winter sports in Kazakhstan. We could not start the competition without paying tribute to Denis. We usually position these events as a ski holiday, and try to make the entertainment programme, but today our athletes went to the start

in a completely different mood, the races that we conducted paid tribute to an amazing athlete and a wonderful person," said Nikita Devyatkin, the vice-president of Kazakh cross-country skiing federation. This year the Astana cup was held for the sixth time and was given the status of an international



competition. Professional athletes with active International Ski Federation (FIS) licenses competed in male and female categories. "We are very pleased that there is an opportunity to hold such high-level competition in Kazakhstan. Organisers of the Astana Cup completed a big work this year, and I would also like to express

my gratitude to the partners and sponsors of the cross-country skiing federation," said Alexander Batyaykin, the national team manager. Vitaly Puhkalo showed the best result among the 44 elite male skiers. Konstantin Bortsov crossed the finish line with the second best result and Olzhas Klimin finished in third. In the elite female category, the strongest was Valeriya Tyuleneva, Ksenia Shalygina finished in second place and Elmira Mutagarova came in third. "For us, athletes and coaches of the national team, the Astana Cup is an opportunity to conduct an analysis of the summer training and adjust the training process. Of course, today was not the usual holiday mood, we are all still shocked by the death of Denis Ten. I think that such a real and bright person, like no other, deserves to be honoured by dedicating to him the most prestigious international competitions," said Kazakh National Team Member Nikolai Chebotko.

Youth judo team wins bronze, individuals win gold at European Championships

By Anuar Abdrakhmanov

ASTANA – Kazakhstan's youth judo team placed third at the recent European Judo Championships in Berlin. Individual team members also two gold medals and five medals total. Damir Bolatbekov and Zhanbolat Bakytbergenov won gold in the 55kg and 73kg categories. Arslan Yesengel and Galiya Tynbayeva won silver medals and a bronze was won by Anarbek Gainullin. "I am satisfied with my result, because it is a new level of judo in Kazakhstan. Of course, I hoped for the first place. The opponents were the hard ones from the first bout, but

the final was the hardest one. The opponent was very strong. She has won several competitions in a row. I faced her for the first time. In the future, I plan to beat her and take the first place," said Tynbayeva. "In my opinion, the results are decent. We arrived at the tournament to win. We have won two gold medals among all Europeans. In my opinion, it is really good. All of them are physically and morally trained. They have fought well. They have lived up to our expectations, proved that they have a huge potential for growth," said Kazakhstan's team coach Batyr Mashikov. More than 500 judo competitors took part in the tournament, including 29 athletes from the Kazakh team.



Boxer Roy Jones meets with Kazakh national team boxers

By Anuar Abdrakhmanov

ASTANA – Legendary boxer Roy Jones, 1988 Olympic Games silver medalist and many times world champion, recently met with boxers from the national boxing team of Kazakhstan in Astana. Jones's visit was a surprise. He

had been attending an event in a region and knew the national team was training and wanted to visit. He toured the team's training facility, spoke with Head Trainer Myrzagal Aitghanov, chatted with boxers and wished them luck at the Asian Games. "I am aware that the programme of competitions has been changed,

several weight classes were removed, in which you could win medals, but, I believe that your team will win several gold medals. I am well acquainted with history of Kazakhstan's boxing and believe that it is one of the leading ones in the world. Kazakh boxers have proven many times their dominance both in non-professional

and professional boxing. So, your team is a very strong team and I believe in your victory," said Jones. The Summer Asian Games start Aug. 18 in Jakarta, Indonesia. Some events will also take place in Palembang. Kazakhstan will send 440 athletes, of which 404 will compete for medals in 25 Olympic sports. Asian Games athletes will stay in athletes' villages in Jakarta and Palembang. A total of 462 of medals will be awarded, of which 363 will be in Olympic sports. Competitions in shooting and trapshooting, and heavyweights in boxing (81kg, 91kg, +91kg) have been excluded from these Asian Games.

World-class ski jumping complex opens in Shchuchinsk

By Dilshat Zhussupova

ASTANA – A ski jumping complex recently opened at Burabai Ski Resort in Shchuchinsk, the country's traditional location for ski training. The 125-hectare facility, at an altitude of 400 metres above sea level, is one of the few of its kind in the world. It features biathlon tracks, a stadium, shooting range and indoor sports complex with swimming pool and training halls. The ski-biathlon track measures 4,584 metres; the biathlon roller track, 7,071 metres. The centre is equipped with the right conditions for year-round training. "The complex may compete with its European equivalents. Perhaps,

in the future, there will be no need for our athletes to leave to travel abroad for training, since the complex is entirely focused on their needs and all of it is in one place," said Kazakh national biathlon team coach Nikolai Vydrin. The most recent addition is a ski trampoline. It includes K-90 and K-125 launch platforms, an 82-metre tower, judging tower with panoramic view, 10,000-spectator arena, cable car rail, doping control centre and medical centre. The trampoline is available for use in all weather conditions and for competitions. The complex is planning to host a continental cup in mid-2019. Kazakh skier Sergei Tkachenko

set the trampoline's first record on opening day, reaching the 151-metre mark. Slovenian skiers, who also tested the unit, and World Cup



Photo credit: informburo.kz

Race Director Walter Hofer provided positive feedback, said complex construction director Mirko Gornik. President Nursultan Nazarbayev,

First Deputy Prime Minister Askar Mamin, Akmola region Akim (Governor) Malik Murzalin and Minister of Culture and Sport Arystanbek Mukhamediuly visited the complex the same day, July 11. Construction was completed in two phases of 18.6 billion tenge (US\$53.72 million) and 19.9 billion tenge (US\$57.48 million). The safety of the trampoline construction was one of Mukhamediuly's key concerns throughout the project. "The object was built with the involvement of major international experts. Without their evaluation and recommendations, construction would not have continued," he said. He added the ski complex will

significantly enhance the resort area's sports and entertainment infrastructure, similar to Jurmala (Latvia) and Sochi (Russia). The primary goal of the project is to increase tourism's contribution to the Kazakh economy from the current 1.9 percent to 8 percent by 2023. The latter figure is comparable to the tourism share of the gross domestic product (GDP) in most developed countries, noted Mamin. Kazakhstan's tourist inflow is expected to increase from 750,000 to two million people per year by 2023. "Our aim is to show Kazakhstan's possibilities, how beautiful our country is and to develop tourism," said Nazarbayev.

CAPITAL

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 15, 2018

Moskva Business Centre – unique multifunctional complex in heart of Astana

By Meruyert Abugaliyeva

ASTANA – Moskva Business Centre, a multifunctional complex containing offices, conference halls, a shopping area, restaurants and sports clubs, is a landmark project symbolising friendship between Moscow and the Kazakh capital.

Its construction, combining the innovations and traditions of European and Asian capitals, was completed by the company owned by international entrepreneur and philanthropist Elena Baturina as part of the international agreement between Kazakhstan and Russia “On Cooperation in Trade, Economics, Science and Culture.”

The opening ceremony was held July 4, 2010 on the eve of Astana

City Day, with a symbolic key presented to Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev.

“While constructing this building we felt colossal responsibility, as we were not just erecting a contemporary and comfortable business centre in the capital of Kazakhstan but creating a symbol of friendship between the two cities, Moscow and Astana. And today, looking at what we have achieved, I am sincerely glad that we have successfully fulfilled this honorable mission,” said Baturina at the time.

The 25-floor facility resembling a huge ocean liner complements the capital’s architectural style. Its futuristic silhouette creates the impression of a ship with a sail, with the panoramic elevator serving as the mast and the restaurants as an

observation desk. Lights illuminating the business centre at night add to the view of the city’s left bank.

The elevator carries guests and visitors to restaurants on the 24th and 25th floors. The eateries provide a 360-degree angle of the city and bird’s eye view of its main sites – Akorda Presidential Palace, Baiterek Monument, Hazret Sultan Mosque, Nur Zhol Boulevard and the Palace of Peace and Harmony.

Moskva’s mission is to promote a comfortable business environment for the Kazakh national market in a contemporary, safe business space. The centre became one of the first in the city to implement the business park concept with a well-designed infrastructure.

Tenants include major national and international companies rep-

resenting strategically and socially-significant sectors of Kazakhstan’s economy, including oil and gas companies, national postal operators and state institutions in manufacturing, education, healthcare, transport and logistics research.

Several significant events within the last year have highlighted the centre’s role in developing the city’s entrepreneurship, economics, public life and international tourism:

- The Moskva business centre image was placed on new 500 tenge banknotes issued into circulation in 2017.

- The centre is now included in the sightseeing tour of hop-on/hop-off double-decker buses routed through the city’s most prominent locations.



- The head office of Kazpost, Kazakhstan’s national postal operator, has leased the last vacant offices.

- A fifth sports facility, the city’s first children’s gymnastics centre, will open in August.

“We are grateful to our tenants and partners for their trust and cooperation and to the citizens and guests for their favouring our business centre as a venue for their recreation. Within a short time, the centre has become a landmark of

the capital and one of the most recognisable business centres in Kazakhstan. We have set up a commercial centre of a next generation here in Astana – a cutting-edge, multifunctional space that complies with the highest world standards,” said project manager Sergey Kozin.

Moskva Business Centre, the largest commercial complex in the city, has been recognised by CRE Awards, the professional competition for commercial real estate.

Astana Around Us: city through eyes of photo artists

By Dana Omirgazy

ASTANA – Astana Around Us depicts the capital and its residents from an unusual perspective. The photo exhibit, composed of approximately 120 works of the best photographers from Belarus, France, Germany, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Slovakia, Turkey and Uzbekistan, is on display through July 31 along Nurzhol Boulevard (also known as Green Water Boulevard) near the Baiterek.

“Astana is a new capital city, a fast-growing city in Kazakhstan – like a diamond in Eurasia that always shines with lots of new, modern buildings. However, like other big cities in the world, they try very hard to preserve its cultural heritage as well as the family value. That’s the key I wanted to visualise for this assignment from Astana Art Company last May as part of the photo exhibition Astana Around Us, which is taking place in the heart of the city,” Indonesian photographer Rarindra Prakarsa

wrote on his Instagram account.

The festival participants typically show their works at the largest international exhibitions.

“Every photographer has his own direction, his genre. In general, the photos are great. Some photos feature computer graphics,” said Kazakh photographer Tural Kazangapov.

Andrei Pugach, a photographer from Belarus, exhibited works shot from a bird’s eyes view.

“Astana left positive impressions. In this city, one can find everything that a soul needs. For example, if you want to feel small and lonely, but part of something big and beautiful, you go and walk on the left bank [of the Yessil River]. If the soul wants some kind of cosiness and home atmosphere, you stroll through the lovely streets of the right bank. Astana not only has beautiful, unusual and modern architecture, which I like very much, but also sincere people who make a good impression, whether it is the owner of a big company or just a pretty salesperson in a store. I visited this city

in both summer and winter and it is always interesting and beautiful. It’s a pity that during severe cold in winter, the desire to get to a warm place overcomes the desire to enjoy the beauty around,” he said in an interview for this story.

Born and raised in Minsk where he graduated from high school, Pugach worked in the area for a while, then moved to Moscow 10 years ago. Photography has been his passion for a very long time.

“My first camera was a Smena 8M [an all-manual, scale-focus camera made in the Soviet Union], which my parents presented me for my birthday. There was everything: films, powder, fixers, rooms with a red lantern and, undoubtedly, magic, which is now much less. There was a break in my work for several years, but then I resumed it. Two years ago, I began practicing photographing from the quadcopter after my friend offered me a flight. The first flight impressed me very much and I could not stop. The world from the height, of course, is very different and this is what charms me,” he said.

New gastronomic market to open in 2019

Staff Report

ASTANA – Capital residents: get your appetites ready. Construction has begun on Keruen Global gastronomic market in the city’s Saryarka district, reported abctv.kz.

The 7,900-square metre mall, to be built on 3.14 hectares, will devote approximately 6,400 square metres to commerce and food courts and the remaining space to warehouses, refrigerators and a terrace, according to the district akimat (administration) press service.

Keruen Global operates in Moscow as Danilovsky Market, focusing on fresh food complemented

by bistro concepts, seasonal fairs and gourmet festivals. Capital residents will find products from regions in Kazakhstan and Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) countries.

“The project implies the construction of a gastronomic market, combining a variety of cuisines and a farmer’s market. There are also plans for a children’s entertainment centre. The new facility will become a modern shopping centre and provide wholesale and retail sellers with comfortable job places,” noted the release.

A construction agreement was signed April 27 among the Saryarka district akimat, Astana Social Entrepreneurial Corporation and Keruen Global. The project

has attracted private investments. Keruen Global is main investor, although the value of investment has not yet been disclosed. The market is expected to open in 2019.

The capital development plan also shows construction this year of a Magnum Cash & Carry grocery shopping centre on the left bank of Yessil River. The new facility will be a time saver for residents in nearby districts, who currently are forced to drive to the other end of the city for groceries. The centre will increase the demand for goods produced in the city and other regions.

The akimat is also modernising the capital’s existing markets, with reconstruction and expansion to be completed by 2021.

Fighting brain drain...

Continued from Page B1

“We estimate that in two and three years these companies will be big and powerful. Some [businesses] will fail. But this is life, and we [only] create an environment,” said Khmelnsky. Kazakhstan, he says, seems to offer the possibility of even faster development for the same project.

“I met young people with sparkles in their eyes who want to do something. Therefore, I think that it can succeed. They have already started it. They have Astana Hub, a beautiful place downtown with enough people,” the businessman said.

There may be the possibility of cooperation with Astana Hub after some research, he noted.

Only some six months of deep qualitative and quantitative research into education, human resources, companies and start-ups should inform any new project decisions, Khmelnsky said. After six months, the idea for the project in Astana could change slightly, to not exactly match the Ukrainian model underway.

But at any rate, such cities within cities are intended to solve a problem common in developing countries: brain drain. There will be little economic growth for a country with talented youth constantly leaving for better opportunities and education abroad.

“This is our task – to build a good ecosystem in Ukraine so that those talented people would want to stay in our country; so that they would get new knowledge, attract investment and get mentorship. Most importantly, by communicating with each other they can get new ideas and ways of doing things, open new companies and start-ups,” said Khmelnsky.

Kazakhstan and Ukraine are countries that provide free education, but that investment doesn’t matter if the educated sector of society keeps leaving and developing foreign companies instead



Vasyl Khmelnsky in UNIT.city

of local ones. Khmelnsky wants to see economic growth everywhere; in Kazakhstan, Ukraine and their neighbours. He believes that this development will be possible only when these countries work together.

UNIT.city is a unique project and not a prototype of Silicon Valley, the investor explained. It aims to bring all the brightest minds in one place, fostering faster, more connected development of technology, research and every single sphere of economy.

“Let them bump into each other, greet and discuss new ideas. Our aim is that they would work close to each other. This is not my idea. I saw it from how the world is working. The more revolutionary teams and ideas are concentrated in one place, the more they will generate new, innovative products,” said Khmelnsky.

UNIT.city in Kyiv will have everything that a regular city has. There will be everything starting with kindergartens, universities, shops and hospitals. Also, he notes, security is a major factor. A company from Israel is working on UNIT.city’s security, because as Khmelnsky noted, “Israel is not a country of innovation only, but their security systems are in a very high level as they are constantly at war.” At the same time, heightened security does not imply isolation. The city will be open, without a fence.

In Ukraine, UNIT.city opened

two years ago, but the company has been working on it for 10 years. They were studying the experiences of countries such as China, India, Belarus, Kazakhstan, and the U.S. in order to create a favourable ecosystem for economic growth, minimising chances of errors.

On the other hand, while the idea of such a city carries the intention of pushing economic growth, it could also increase the socio-economic gap between a city’s intellectual elite and its working class, creating conflicts. A huge income inequality problem came with boom in technological industry of Silicon Valley, where the sky-high salaries of tech experts working for giants such as Google, Apple and Facebook resulted in unaffordable housing, subsequently increasing the number of homeless people. The founders are working to keep UNIT.city from falling into that trap with plans to include all sectors of the economy, such as agriculture, medicine and more.

Yet Khmelnsky thinks it’s impossible to avoid an intellectual gap between people. He believes there is a big difference between a person who invests his time in educating himself and a person who wastes it on leisure alone. He thinks the least a country can do for its own growth is try to retain its own intellectuals.

Khmelnsky also thinks that Kazakhstan should not only focus on keeping its own talented youth in the country, but develop programmes that will attract talents from neighbouring countries.

One such space for catalysing economic development is forums with experts. Thus, the businessman invited Kazakh business people to Kyiv Oct. 18 to participate in the fifth Kyiv International Economic forum, where business people and analysts, investors can share experience and find new ways of creating valuable products and technology.

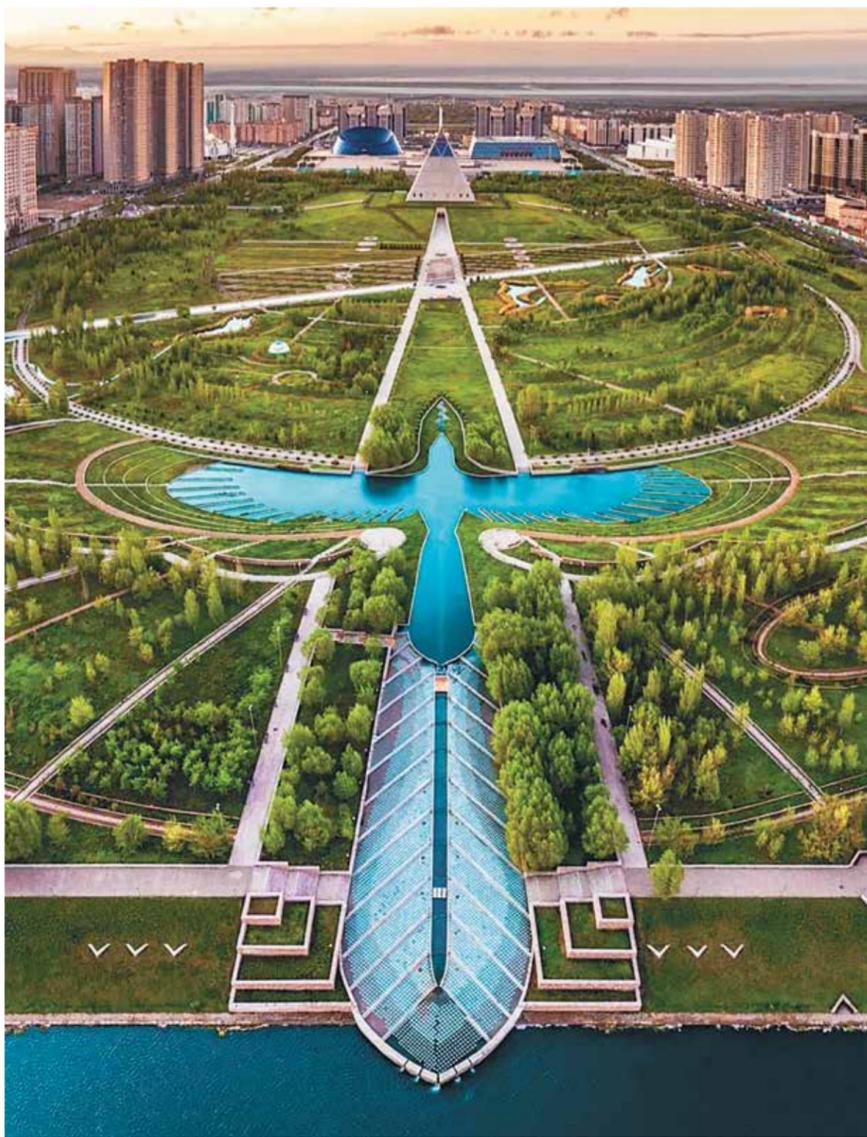


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