



Kazakh President meets with Turkish President, business leaders in Ankara



By Elya Altynsarina

ASTANA – Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev held bilateral talks with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, participated in the Third Meeting of the High-Level Strategic Cooperation Council and met with Turkish business leaders during a Sept. 13 official visit to Turkey.

“Relations between Kazakhstan and Turkey are developing in the spirit of strategic partnership, an important component of which is trade and economic interaction,” Nazarbayev said during the visit.

Turkey is among Kazakhstan’s top 10 trading partners and trade between the two countries grew 27 percent in 2017.

Nazarbayev said Kazakhstan should utilise the intergovernmental commission between Kazakhstan and Turkey, develop new conditions for investment partnership and optimise Kazakhstan’s transit potential under the Nurlı Zhól infrastructure programme to make Kazakhstan a leading logistic hub in Central Asia.

Following a visit to the Kuliye presidential complex in Ankara and meeting with his Turkish counterpart, the two leaders, Kazakh and Turkish delegations sat for the Strategic Cooperation Council meeting.

The council with the heads of state and government ministers reviewed cooperation in oil and gas, military industries, transit and education and agreed to develop closer agricultural, tourism, science and technology cooperation.

At a joint press briefing, both leaders praised Kazakh-Turkish relations rooted in common history and shared values.

“Kazakhstan is one of Turkey’s most important strategic partners,” Erdogan said. Calling Nazarbayev a ‘patriarch of the Turkic world,’ he said relations would grow in all sectors after the visit.

Nazarbayev congratulated Erdogan on his reelection in June.

“When Kazakhstan declared its independence on Dec. 16, 1991, late President of Turkey Turgut Ozal was the first to call me, just two hours after the announcement,

to inform me Turkey recognises our sovereignty,” Nazarbayev recalled. “Since that day, our relationship is only growing.”

Nazarbayev also praised the discussions with Erdogan.

“Astana and Ankara are open to each other in discussing the regional and international topics, our positions are similar,” he said. He said both countries want to strengthen the political dialogue and friendship between the fraternal peoples.

Nazarbayev also met during his trip with Turkish business leaders and noted that 1,800 businesses operating in Kazakhstan with Turkish capital, and annual trade volume has reached \$2 billion. He said the sides agreed on a new goal of \$5 billion.

Nazarbayev met with CEO of Oyak Holding Suleiman Erdem, Board Chairman of Yildirim Group Robert Yüksel Yildirim and Board Chairman of Koc Holdings Ali Yildirim Koc, among other business persons.

The Kazakh President and Turkish industry leaders reviewed the interim results of New Synergy

Joint Programme, which supports entrepreneurs. The programme has helped launch 23 projects totaling \$800 million and created 3,000 jobs.

Nazarbayev also invited Turkish companies to invest in transportation and logistics businesses at Kazakhstan’s Aktau and Kuryk ports.

One day before Nazarbayev’s visit, a Kazakh delegation led by Deputy Prime Minister Askar Mamin participated in the Kazakh-Turkish Investment Forum and signed 24 commercial agreements totaling \$1.7 billion. The agreements are in the non-resource sector of Kazakhstan’s economy and are expected to create 3,000 jobs.

The agreements involve chemical industries in Zhambyl region, real estate projects to develop Almaty’s downtown, as well as a large greenhouse project in Turkestan region.

Turkish companies expressed interest in exploring opportunities offered by Kazakhstan’s political stability, growing infrastructural capacity in conjunction with China’s Belt and Road Initiative and the opportunities of the Astana International Financial Centre.

All conditions created for increasing oil and gas extraction in Kazakhstan, says industry official

By Elya Altynsarina

ASTANA – As the Kazakh capital is preparing to host the World Petroleum Council Oct. 1-3, The Astana Times talked to Asset Magauov, Director General of KAZENERGY, the Association of Oil and Gas and Energy Sector Organisations of Kazakhstan, about the event as well as the trends in the industry, the association’s work to create a better legislative framework and the longer term outlook for oil and gas production in the country.

What are the goals, objectives and expected outcome of the upcoming World Petroleum Council Meeting in Astana?

Kazakhstan joined the World Petroleum Council (WPC) in 1997. Then we established the Kazakhstan National Committee (KNC) –

represented by the KAZENERGY Association, which over the years has implemented several projects to strengthen ties between the organisation members.

The KNC has initiated a cycle of expert seminars of the World Petroleum Council aimed at studying advanced expertise and international practices of developing local content. We received strong support among the members of the organisation and presented our results at the special sections of the World Petroleum Congresses in Moscow and Istanbul.

The upcoming meeting in Kazakhstan on Oct. 1-3 is not the first of its kind. In 2012, we already hosted a WPC meeting in Astana, where more than 50 national committees’ representatives took part. But for us, it is an honour to bring back the WPC to the capital of Kazakhstan after six years.

Continued on Page A6

Supreme Mufti: care for peace is moral, civic duty of every Muslim

By Meruyert Abugaliyeva

ASTANA – Kazakhstan is home to more than 130 ethnic groups and the nation’s prosperity is only possible when there is peace and harmony, said Serikbay kazhy Oraz, Chairperson of the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Kazakhstan (SAMK) and the Kazakh Supreme Mufti, in a

recent interview with The Astana Times.

“Surely, Islam is a religion of kindness and peace. There is one saying by Prophet Muhammad, ‘The Muslim ummah (community) is like one body: if one organ complains, the rest of the body develops a fever.’ Therefore, special attention is paid to helping the people around, especially those in need.” he said.

Continued on Page B2

President appoints new finance minister, security council secretary, economic aide

By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev appointed Sept. 19 Alikhan Smailov new Minister of Finance and Gabit Baizhanov the Assistant to the President – Secretary of the Security Council.

Smailov had served as the Aide to the President for economic affairs since December 2015. He replaced Bakhyt Sultanov in the position.

Baizhanov became the Security Council secretary. Previously, he served as head of the country’s Syrbar Foreign Intelligence Service since May 2015.

The Security Council is a consultative deliberative body formed and chaired by the Kazakh President.

In June, the new law granted Nazarbayev a life long right to head the body. The recent law also expanded the role of the security council by providing it with the status of a constitutional body.

The document said the council is now responsible for coordinating the implementation of a unified

state policy in ensuring national security and defence capabilities to maintain domestic political stability, protect the constitutional order, state independence, territorial integrity and the national interests of Kazakhstan.

In a related development, on Sept. 21, Nazarbayev appointed Timur Zhaksylykov, until recently the Member of the Collegium (Minister) for Economy and Financial Policy of the Eurasian Economic Commission, the intergovernmental body coordinating policies within the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), as his Aide for economic affairs.

Nazarbayev had earlier signed a decree Sept. 10 dismissing Adilbek Dzhaksybekov, 64, from his position as the head of the presidential administration, where he worked since June 2016, stating he had reached the retirement age.

The same day, Nazarbayev relieved then Astana Akim Asset Issekeshov of his position and appointed him the head of the presidential administration. Bakhyt Sultanov, a long-time finance minister, was appointed the new mayor of the Kazakh capital.

Kazakhstan hopes to reach 4 percent GDP growth despite sluggish start in some sectors, says minister

By Aidana Yergaliyeva

ASTANA – Kazakh government officials hope to reach 4 percent gross domestic product (GDP) growth for 2018, despite only 3.8 percent growth between January and August, Minister of National Economy Timur Suleimenov told at Sept. 11 government meeting.

“Given the GDP growth rate from the beginning of the year, the 4 percent target remains achievable. However, it is possible the target growth rates will not be fulfilled in sectors such as pharmaceuticals, food and beverage production, oil refining and agriculture,” said Suleimenov.

Suleimenov noted several sectors where growth has been sluggish since the beginning of the year. Agricultural production has



Minister of National Economy Timur Suleimenov.

grown by 2.4 percent rather than the targeted 3.5 percent. The construction sector grew by only 0.8 percent rather than the targeted 3.6 percent. And production services

have experienced a 3.7 percent growth as opposed to the 4.1 percent predicted.

Growth from agricultural products decreased 1.5 percent due to a poor harvest in the four major crop producing regions of Ak-mola, Pavlodar, North Kazakhstan and East Kazakhstan, the minister reported.

The production of industrial products declined in the North Kazakhstan, West Kazakhstan, Turkestan and Kyzylorda regions.

In general, eight regions and cities of national importance performed below the national average of 4.7 percent.

Suleimenov also pointed to positive signs of growth, including a 4.8 percent increase in transport and 5.8 percent growth in trade that exceeded the expected growth of 3.9 percent. Also, the invest-

ment in fixed capital increased 21.4 percent.

Foreign trade turnover has also grown steadily. In the last seven months, it increased by 20.1 percent or \$51.9 billion. Exports increased by 26 percent or \$34 billion.

The labour market also remains stable with 297,100 people being employed. Wages have been growing at a moderate pace. Average monthly salaries increased 2.3 percent between January and July.

Suleimenov said the 4 percent GDP growth target remains achievable but faces challenges from international economic factors.

“To achieve annual targets, there are four months left... This is not an easy task given the growing international trade conflicts and volatility in the financial market,” he said.

INSIDE

NATION

President notes challenges of relocating regional centre to Turkestan **A2**
Regional, city administrations gain increased control over buildings and elevators **A2**

ECONOMY&BUSINESS

Major international oil, gas industry players to gather in Almaty for KIOGE 2018 **A4**
Tsin-Kaz witnesses tremendous breakthrough over 20 years, and offers reasonably priced, high quality products **A5**

EDITORIAL

Kazakhstan’s ever-growing global and regional role as country near 27th anniversary **A6**

OPINIONS

NAKAMITSU: Advancing disarmament within the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development **A7**
VASSILENKO: Kazakhstan’s assistance to Afghanistan helps strengthen regional and global security **A7**

NATION&CAPITAL

Three-part exhibit displays works of young Kazakh, international artists **B1**
Outdoor adventure, cycling tours in Kazakhstan have great potential, says bicycle adventure club founder **B6**

NATION

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 26, 2018

President notes challenges of relocating regional centre to Turkestan



By Staff Report

ASTANA – Relocation of a regional centre from Shymkent to Turkestan is a difficult process in every respect, said Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev during a meeting at the Akorda presidential residence focusing on Turkestan's development.

Nazarbayev declared the establishment of the Turkestan region June 19, when he changed the status of Shymkent city, previously centre of the South Kazakhstan region, to a city of "national significance" joining Astana and Almaty. The administrative centre was then relocated to Turkestan, a city 150 kilometres north of Shymkent.

"Everyone knows that a new region, Turkestan region, was established in our country. I believe this was a right decision. The regional centre is being relocated to Turkestan and this is a challenging process in all aspects," said the President.

He noted a special historical and spiritual significance of the

city for Kazakhstan and the entire Turkic world. Turkestan, revered among Muslim pilgrims, boasts more than 1,500 years of rich history with numerous cultural and sacred sites preserved to this day.

"This is a sacred place for all Turkic people, that is why many people come to visit it. Many fa-

mous people are buried here," he said.

Also at the Akorda meeting, First Deputy Prime Minister Askar Mamin and Turkestan region Akim (Governor) Zhansait Tuimebayev reported on the territorial development of the city and the progress of the relocation of administrative bodies to Turkestan.

Ministers report progress in digital literacy training among population

By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – Kazakh Minister of Education and Science Yerlan Sagadiyev, Minister of Labour and Social Protection Madina Abylkassymova, Ministry of Healthcare Yelzhan Birtanov and First Vice Minister of Agriculture Arman Yevniyev reported on progress in digital literacy training among the country's population during a Sept. 11 government meeting.

The ministries are responsible for training professionals and the country's population in using information technologies in daily life and work, which is the central aspect of the Digital Kazakhstan programme that seeks to reach 83 percent digital literacy level by 2022.

Digital literacy encompasses a wide range of skills and Kazakh ministries specify several levels of digital literacy, where the basic level refers to one's skill in using computer and mobile gadgets and getting information from the internet.

The second level denotes the ability to use e-government services and make payments, while the third level allows a person to engage in e-commerce – buy, sell and promote goods online. The fourth level entails use of digital solutions, mobile applications and synchronising several gadgets and the advanced level means a person is capable of programming on his or her own.

Sagadiyev said his ministry's plan encompasses both teachers and parents.

"The courses include training teachers to improve content of classes taking into account digital technologies and their practical use, training them using different education systems, mobile apps and digital education resources," said Sagadiyev.

To facilitate the effort, teachers can also communicate within a single information network.

"Introducing information systems and automatization in the school learning process trains teachers and equally parents. This

year, we organised a national gathering of parents where more than 1.6 million parents were taught the use of educational information systems. This is also done through creation of parents' chat, mobile apps and automatization of public services," he said.

Digital literacy is also reinforced among healthcare workers, said Birtanov, with more than 182,000 people currently employed at 740 medical organisations.

"Within eight months, the number of doctors that were trained in the use of information systems of the ministry reached 44,869 and also 118,035 nurses. A total of 46,282 doctors and 125,729 nurses attended digital literacy courses," said the minister, emphasising the ministry's goal to train all healthcare workers until the end of 2018.

The ministry also conducts work to reach out to the other side of health sector, patients. Birtanov said to date 5,093,257 people, accounting for 28.2 percent of the total contractual population, received training.

Digital literacy training facilities, 471 to date, are also installed in healthcare organisations, where specialists demonstrate patients how to install mobile apps and use health services with the apps.

Abylkassymova believes electronic labour exchange, the country's recent initiative launched in January, is one of the important channels to enhance digital literacy of the population.

She said training at employment centres and electronic labour exchanges have reached out to 535,695 people.

Agriculture sector workers, noted Yevniyev, had four tracks in their digital literacy training that included electronic public services, filling electronic field maps, working with digital technologies and using automated information system for identifying farm animals.

"We trained farmers on how to use electronic government services when they submit applications for subsidies of fertilisers. We had a task to train 40,000 farmers and to date, the figure is 29,623," said Yevniyev.

Influenza vaccination begins in October

Staff Report

ASTANA – Influenza vaccination will be conducted in Kazakhstan starting Oct. 1. Nearly 1.5 million doses were purchased for approximately one billion tenge (US\$2.76 million), according to the Healthcare Ministry's public health protection committee chairperson Zhandarbek Bekshin.

The cost of a flu shot will vary from 1,600 tenge (US\$4.42) to 3,500 tenge (US\$9.67).

"Anyone may receive a paid influenza vaccination provided in private vaccination centres and clinics' vaccination rooms at places of residence, given that they are authorised by the appropriate body," he said.

Bekshin emphasised the basic guidelines for influenza preven-

tion. The most effective measure is the vaccination itself, which should be received in the pre-epidemic season, usually October-November.

Other measures include restricting time spent and wearing disposable masks in congested areas, washing hands thoroughly with soap, regularly cleaning and ventilating rooms, consuming foods containing vitamin C, using drugs only at the recommendation of a doctor and exercising regularly.

Ten percent of the Kazakh population is vaccinated annually, according to the committee. Bekshin noted the optimal time to be vaccinated is October, rather than November or the first half of December.

"The winter season will arrive sooner in the northern regions and

we must take this into account," he said.

The public health protection committee monitors viruses and threats across all regions annually through 57 sentinel surveillance centres. The gathered data is then sent to the World Health Organisation (WHO) national centre, where it is analysed and used for forecasts.

"According to the WHO forecast, three strains will be circulating this season – type A (H1N1) Michigan, type A (H3N2) Singapore and type B Colorado. In previous seasons, the viruses' antigenic structure did not change because the same sorts of viruses circulated. This year, there will likely be circulation of these two new types of viruses, type A Singapore and type B Colorado," said Bekshin.

Regional, city administrations gain increased control over buildings and elevators

By Yerbolat Uatkanov

ASTANA – The Kazakh government recently approved a draft law empowering regional and city administrations to repair façades and roofs, increase housing stability in flood zones, repair and replace elevators and manage gas supply infrastructure.

Local executive bodies will be required to replace elevators at their budget's expense, then residents will return the money to the budget, said Vice Minister for Investments and Development Kairbek Uskenbayev.

"At present, we have about 16 normative acts that regulate the operation of elevator-maintaining organisations. Together with the Association of Elevator Maintaining Companies of Kazakhstan and Atameken Scientific and Production Association, we have created a working group and developed common standards that determine which elevators should be produced in the country, which ones should be imported into the territo-



Kairbek Uskenbayev

ry of the state and how they should be maintained and operated," he said.

"The entire mechanism from the beginning of the delivery and production to its operation is prescribed in the standards," he added.

The regulations have been submitted for public discussion and published on the technical regulation committee website. After

receiving all the comments, the standards will be approved.

"It is clear that we can do the normative documents, but the residents of the houses are not able to collect [all the] money at once and replace the elevators. For example, if there is a problem in a five-porch house, then you need to replace five elevators at the same time. On average, an elevator costs \$50,000 and five elevators will cost \$250,000. Probably, it is unrealistic for residents to collect and replace elevators and replacing one elevator this year, and the next in five years, is also abnormal. All residents should equally receive all services," said Uskenbayev.

The new draft law on housing and communal services has expanded the powers of the city and regional administrations to use their budgets. Once elevators are replaced, residents will reimburse the cost over eight to fifteen years, for example, by paying 2,500 tenge (US\$6.60) per month. The same repayment currently takes eight to eighteen years.

NATIONAL NEWS IN BRIEF

The Nur Otan Party has organised free English language elective courses for 9th-11th grade students in 84 rural districts and centres as part of the English for Jastar (Youth) project. The project was developed to support the programme introducing trilingualism across the country. Students can improve their English as well as enhance their communication skills. The pilot project, to be conducted September-November, includes native English speakers and local specialists among its instructors. A total of 141 volunteers have expressed their willingness to contribute, 75 of whom are Kazakh university students.

Kazakh Tourism plans to implement quest games on sacred places around Kazakhstan as a way to develop domestic tourism. The expedition will be based on Pokemon Go, Deputy Chairperson of the company Kairat Saduakasov told inform.kz. "First, we will create an electronic version of all sacred places. Players can gain points on a quest. For example, one can get points for a trip to Ulytau or other sacred place. As the quest travel expands, the number of points will increase. The conventional name for the points is Altyn (gold). Altyns can be exchanged for various discounts, such as exchanged for business class instead of economy class on the airline or free luggage delivery. In addition to points, each player will have a personal status. At the beginning, players will be 'ulan,' then advance to 'sultan' and finally to 'khan.' Such players will be given special discounts," he said.

Almaty youngsters can learn robotics for free at the children's technopark recently opened in the city's Palace of Schoolchildren, reported inform.kz. "We installed microblocks, unique equipment with which we will prepare children for international competitions. The technopark will work for free with 20 children in each group. If there is greater interest, we will invite more teachers," said Aigul Bolatbekova, deputy director of the Centre for New Technologies in Education in Almaty. The programme will involve three groups – initial training in Legos, 3D modelling and an English section for children in advanced robotics.

The nation's cinematography is on the rise, as a number of Kazakh films will soon be released, said Deputy Minister for Culture and Sports Aktoty Raimkulova. Historical movies such as "Baluan Sholak," "Kazakh Eli" (Nation) and "Tomiris," the feature "Zhenimpaz" (Winner) and animated pictures "Kultegin" and "Muzbalak," as well as "Kunanbai" and "Oralman," will be shown on the big screen. Kazakh films were previously limited to one-time showings at international festivals and competitions. Due to co-production by two or more countries, however, the movies are gaining more worldwide recognition, such as the Russian-Kazakh film "28 Panfilov's Rifleman" which became the leader in Russian rolled products, said Raimkulova.

Astana's Paralympic training centre has launched Invaservice, a unique self-service corner designed for people with disabilities that enables them to clean their own wheelchairs. The system was invented by Ardak Otorbayev, a member of the Kazakh national wheelchair dance team. "It was hard to invent this device, as there were no previous examples. We did it through errors and various attempts. There was a need not only to make pilot equipment, but also to install and run it. I personally tested the equipment and showed how to use it. Now, people are using it willingly, and it pleases me," said Otorbayev. Invaservice's equipment is the first domestic system invented based on the needs of those who use wheelchairs.

EURASIA&WORLD

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 26, 2018

EXTERNAL NEWS IN BRIEF

A delegation of Kazakh Supreme Court judges and representatives of the country's judicial board and economic courts led by Deputy Minister of Economy Serik Zhumangarin met in Berlin with representatives of the German Federal Ministries of Economy and Justice and Berlin trade and industry chamber to study the latter nation's methods of developing anti-trust legislation. The agenda included business mergers, protecting consumer rights and investigating antitrust law violations. Zhumangarin said Kazakhstan has introduced "very serious changes in legislation." "They [the German side] are interested, because courts are a continuation of the investment climate. They are also interested in our Astana International Financial Centre that is based on English common law," he added.

Abai State Academic Opera and Ballet Theatre received standing ovations during its three-day gala programme at Tbilisi's Zakaria Paliashvili Opera and Ballet Theatre. The ballet dancers, soloists, symphonic orchestra and choir performed Akhmet Zhubanov and Latif Khamidi's opera "Abai," "The Fountain of Bakhchisaray" and works of European, Georgian and Kazakh composers, including "Daisi," written by Georgian Zacharia Paliashvili, and "Song about Tbilisi."

Tashkent recently hosted a business forum focusing on the role of women in economic development and gathering Kazakh and Uzbek businesswomen in a joint effort by both countries to support female entrepreneurship. Opening the forum, Secretary of State Gulshara Abdykalikova briefed the participants about Kazakhstan's initiatives in the area and called for strengthening partnerships. "Regular business forums might serve as a powerful platform for expanding business contacts between businesswomen. Second, development of inclusive trade with a focus on digital technologies can advance our efforts in reaching a \$5 billion trade turnover by 2020," she said.

The "Post Nomadic Horizons" exhibition opened Sept. 18 in London displaying the works of 32 Kazakh artists who present postmodernism art through different methods, including fine art, photography, sculpture, installations and video. British artists and culturists and representatives of the political and academic communities attended the opening ceremony. The exhibit, which will continue through Oct. 16, demonstrates the "roots and course to the future," said Kazakh Ambassador to the United Kingdom Erlan Idrissov. "I am particularly proud that more than 30 Kazakh contemporary artists came to London and brought these wonderful pieces of art. They are here to show how our ancestors lived and perceived the world," he added.

Kazakhstan presented the nation's tourism potential at the Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) Travel Mart Sept. 12-14 on the Malaysian island of Langkawi. The event gathered more than 1,400 delegates from 70 countries. Kazakh tourism companies displayed the country's culture, nature, historic sites, national cuisine and popular destinations. The delegation, headed by Kazakh Tourism Deputy Chair Kairat Sadvakassov, met with PATA's top management and signed an agreement making the company an association member.

Astana will host the 2019 Senior Wrestling World Championship, the first qualification event for the 2020 Olympic Games in Tokyo, reported United World Wrestling press service. The international governing body for amateur wrestling said in a Sept. 24 statement the Kazakh capital was chosen to host the event Sept. 14-22 at the Daulet Arena. It also noted Astana's experience in hosting international wrestling events, including the 2014 Senior Asian Wrestling Championships, 2016 Asian Olympic Qualifier and the 2018 Grappling World Championships. "With our recent success at the championships last year in Paris, and the upcoming championships in Budapest, I have every confidence that Astana will deliver an excellent event for our athletes, coaches, and fans," said United World Wrestling president Nenad Lalovic.

Kazakh delegation participates in OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting in Warsaw

Staff Report

WARSAW, Sept. 14 – The annual meeting of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe's (OSCE) Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights in Warsaw on Sept. 10-21 focused on topical human rights issues such as the provision of basic human rights and freedoms, rule of law, independence of the judiciary, freedom of speech and the media, freedom of assembly, religious and national minorities, democratic elections, gender equality and combating human trafficking.

The Kazakh delegation led by Ministry of Foreign Affairs Ambassador-at-Large Zhalgas Adilbayev was composed of representatives of the Assembly of People of Kazakhstan, Central Election Commission, Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Information and Communication, Internal Affairs and Social Development, the Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights and the Prosecutor General's Office.

The Warsaw meeting is the largest and most representative event within the organisation's humani-

tarian dimension, with approximately 1,000 non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and national delegations from 57 OSCE member states participating every year.

The first two days focused on the role of democratic institutions, including at the national, regional and local levels, holding democratic and open elections in the OSCE area and ensuring freedom of the media. The participants discussed relevant issues related to the topics, becoming acquainted with partner countries' experience on the topic.

Speaking at the meeting, Adilbayev noted Kazakhstan is committed to observing the rule of law at the national and international levels, especially in keeping international peace and security. He noted Kazakhstan has become fully engaged in international law as a participant in more than 60 multilateral, universal international human rights treaties, including seven of the United Nations' main universal human rights conventions known as international instruments for the protection of human rights.

Adilbayev also stressed the role of non-governmental human rights organisations that play a key role in the national system for the pro-

tection of human rights. He noted the nation's state policy is aimed at developing and supporting the activities of civil society institutions.

The Dialogue Platform on Human Dimension, a consultative and advisory body, has been permanently operating since 2013 at Kazakhstan's Foreign Ministry and was cited as an example of the work carried out by the ministry in cooperating with NGOs. The body's main participants are the leaders of human rights NGOs and heads of state agencies. In this context, Adilbayev said since its inception, more than 20 meetings have been held, more than 100 recommendations developed and adopted for implementation and another 50 recommendations of international human rights organisations and civil society representatives selected by the government to improve national legislation and law enforcement practice, resulting in developing 50 road maps.

Central Election Commission member Zauresh Baimoldina spoke about modernising Kazakhstan's electoral legislation in accordance with international standards, which is primarily aimed at "further improving certain legal norms and in-

stitutions of the electoral process, including based on the OSCE/ODIHR (Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights) recommendations," she said.

Mikhail Komissarov, a representative of Kazakhstan's Ministry of Information and Communication, noted the country is taking steps under its international commitments to ensure respecting citizens' rights to freedom of speech and expression. Large-scale work is being carried out to modernise the national media landscape, develop a strong and competitive national media and develop dialogue among the state, society and professional participants in the media market.

Kazakhstan's civil society also participated in the meeting, initiating a number of events devoted to various topics in accordance with the agenda. A discussion organised by Kazakh human rights activists was attended by representatives of the nation's delegation, U.S. State Department and U.S. Embassy in Kazakhstan and human rights defenders and representatives of civil society, including Arsen Aubakirov, Ruslan Issenov and Natalya Kovlyagina.

Aubakirov described the meeting as non-standard, but consistent and held regularly to discuss current issues of Kazakhstan's political development in line with international platform standards. He noted the recommendations developed as part of the event will be discussed in working groups with representatives of state bodies.

A representative of the Kazakhstan International Human Rights Bureau, Issenov presented statistical data on revealed and eliminated violations in the penitentiary system and made a comparative analysis of activities against the background of other Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) countries and Central Asia.

Gulmira Aukasheva, a representative of the National Centre for Human Rights, presented the Model National Preventive Mechanism (NPM) in Kazakhstan theme in detail. She talked about the structure and basis of NPM activities, measures used to develop the institution and training human rights defenders in monitoring penitentiary institutions, as well as plans to extend the seats that are being considered in the Kazakh Parliament.

Kazakh diplomats participate in Astana Marathon 2018

Staff Report

The capital hosted the annual international Astana Marathon 2018 Sept. 16 with approximately 5,000 runners from nearly 20 countries, including Australia, France, Georgia, Germany, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Russia, Turkey, the U.K. and Uzbekistan.

The host country's Ministry of Foreign Affairs team was represented by Aibek Amrin, Tursynkali Espanov, Murat Rustemov, Anuar Sarmantai, Aibek Smadiyarov, Makhambet Yensegenov and Yer-

lan Utegenov, who ran distances of 10 kilometers and 42.2 kilometres. Each participant noted his reasons for running.

"Running gives me a great opportunity to be alone, to think about some questions, to prepare a solution. In addition, running helps a person to observe a strong discipline and maintain good physical condition. Participation in marathons trains people's endurance and strength of mind. We formed a team of the Foreign Ministry and thereby reaffirmed our diplomats' commitment to active participation in the mass sports that are held

in our capital," said Smadiyarov, head of the press service.

"Every start is a challenge, first of all, to myself. The Astana Marathon is a great opportunity to feel it to the full extent. This is a major chance to enjoy the unique views of our capital in the early morning hours," noted Sarmantai, division head, multilateral co-operation department.

"If you want to change the world, first change yourself. The greatest victory is a victory over yourself. This is a unique chance to check your strength and endurance and a good reason to get eve-

ryone involved in mass sports," said Rustemov, division head, foreign economic policy department.

"This marathon was a good occasion to test your physical and psychological preparedness. Knowing my result of the race will work on its improvement in the next start. I hope that this event will attract the attention of city residents to a healthy lifestyle and take part in the next race. The Astana Marathon should become a sports attraction of Astana," noted Yensegenov, second secretary of the international information committee.

"Running for me is not just a sport, but a key to self-development and family happiness. Participation in long distance races strengthens the will to win over yourself," said Utegenov, second secretary, department of American.

"I participated in the marathon for the first time. This is an unforgettable impression. I think the number of runners will increase and more and more people will be involved in the development of mass sport in Kazakhstan," noted Espanov, second secretary, control and administration department.

Kazakh FM, German Minister of State discuss partnership in Astana

Staff Report

ASTANA – Minister of Foreign Affairs Kairat Abdrakhmanov and German Minister of State of the Federal Foreign Office Niels Annen discussed bilateral cooperation during their Sept. 17 meeting in Astana.

According to the Kazakh foreign ministry, the officials discussed the Kazakh – German strategic partnership in trade, economics and politics with a particular focus on the high-tech industry and education. "Cooperation between Kazakh-



stan and Germany has become sustained on the whole range of relations. And regular contacts at the highest level between President

of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev, Federal President Frank-Walter Steinmeier and Federal Chancellor Angela Merkel are of paramount importance," Minister Abdrakhmanov noted.

The Kazakh foreign minister said the countries have the potential to increase trade, economic and investment cooperation.

The German side noted Kazakhstan is a priority for Germany's foreign policy and economic agenda in Central Asia and thanked Kazakhstan for supporting Germany's candidacy for a non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council for 2019-2020.

Kazakh-German trade reached \$4.9 billion in 2017. In 2017, the gross inflow of German direct investment in Kazakhstan's economy was more than \$345 million. From January 2005 to January 2018, the gross inflow of direct investment from Germany to Kazakhstan exceeded \$4.2 billion.

It was emphasised that more than 90 percent of German investment in Kazakhstan's economy is outside the energy sector, particularly, in the manufacturing and chemicals, building material production, transport and agribusiness. The sides noted the importance of cooperating in these areas, especially given the achievements of Germany in implementing Industry 4.0 technologies.

The sides also discussed international issues, including Syria and the DPRK.

Kazakhstan supports settlement of intra-Syrian conflict by peaceful means

Staff Report

ASTANA – Permanent Representative of Kazakhstan to the United Nations Kairat Umarov reiterated at the Sept. 11 United Nations Security Council meeting on Syrian conflict Kazakhstan's endorsement of a peaceful settlement of intra-Syrian conflict.

Umarov welcomed the joint declaration emanating from the Sept. 7 trilateral summit (Iran, Russia, Turkey), noting that it includes a common understanding that provocations are unacceptable and a reconfirmed commitment to preserving Syria's independence, sov-



ereignty and territorial integrity, reported un.org. At the same time, Umarov said the world community should di-

rect its joint efforts at creating the conditions needed for the settlement of the intra-Syrian conflict exclusively by peaceful means. He

added that the UN must contribute to rebuilding the country and addressing its complex humanitarian situation. "We also need to support the creation of conditions for the return of numerous Syrian refugees. In this regard, the idea of convening an international conference on Syrian refugees can be the first step towards solving the problem," he said.

Umarov also noted the importance of international cooperation against terrorist groups, such as ISIS, Nusra Front and Al-Qaida, as well as the importance of distinguishing between terrorists and armed opposition groups participating in the ceasefire.

During the session, the head of the Kazakh delegation emphasised that a political solution will contribute to the final formation of a constitutional committee and have a positive impact in helping Syria to hold free elections.

Country representatives of the Netherlands, France, China, Sweden, Côte d'Ivoire, Kuwait, Peru, Bolivia, Equatorial Guinea and Ethiopia also presented statements.

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani hosted President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Russian President Vladimir Putin Sept. 7 in their third summit as part of the Astana Process in Tehran, which sought to bring an end to the violence in the seven-year civil war.

ECONOMY

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 26, 2018

Major international oil, gas industry players to gather in Almaty for KIOGE 2018

By Dilshat Zhussupova

ASTANA – KIOGE (Kazakhstan International Oil and Gas Exhibition) 2018, an oil and gas industry exhibition and conference, will assemble major industry players from Kazakhstan and abroad Sept. 26-28 at Almaty's Atakent Exhibition Centre.

The event will review topical issues in Kazakhstan's oil and gas industry, such as introducing smart technologies and digitising oil production processes. The latest technological, engineering and software developments will be presented by the leading oil, gas and oilfield service companies.

More than 500 firms from 20 countries will attend this year's event. Companies present will include the Caspian Pipeline Consortium, EmbaMunayGas, KazMunayGas, North Caspian Operating Company, the Russian Export Centre, State Oil Company of the Azerbaijan Republic, Tatneft, Tengizchevroil, Transneft and Uzbekneftgaz.

The programme will feature demonstrations and seminars with the support of EmbaMunayGas, which is working to digitise Kazakhstan's oil and gas industry. Presenters will include Dow Chemical Company, EmbaMunayGas, the European Association of Geoscientists

and Engineers, KIMEP University, North Caspian Operating Company, Prosoft-Systems, Tengizchevroil, Tien-Shan Engineering and Wonderware. Participants will also have the opportunity to meet business-to-business (B2B) with representatives of the Karachaganak and Tengiz Field expansion projects, made possible by ITECA and KazService.

This year's panelists and participants are key players in large state companies, heads of industry associations and specialists in the national and international oil and gas industry.

On the first day, invited speakers and participants will discuss a sustainable future through innovation and cooperation, the implications of the new subsoil use and tax code for upstream industry and investors and the main digital trends in the oil and gas industry. Panels will include representatives of Atyrau University of Oil and Gas, EmbaMunayGas, the Institute for Energy and Finance, Kazakh Ministry of Energy, Kazakhstan Petroleum Lawyers Association, KAZENERGY Association, KazMunayGas, North Caspian Operating Company, Rystad Energy, Shell, Tengizchevroil and Uzbekneftgaz.

On day two, they will discuss human resources in the digital transformation era and development prospects for oil and gas transportation and oilfield services. Panels

will include representatives of the Caspian Pipeline Consortium, Dow Chemical Company, ExpoEffect, ILF Consulting Engineers, Kazakhstan Industry Development Institute, ROSEN Group and Samruk Kazyna Sovereign Wealth Fund.

The organisers of this year's KIOGE are ITECA and its international partner ITE Group, with official supporters the Almaty akimat (city administration), Kazakh Ministry of Energy, Kazakhstan Society of Petroleum Geologists (KSPG), KAZENERGY Association, KazMunayGas, KazService and the diplomatic missions of participating countries.

This year's gold partners are the Caspian Pipeline Consortium, Dow Chemical Company, North Caspian Operating Company and Tengizchevroil. Silver partners are Control Seal, EmbaMunayGas, Komplekt Armatura and the Russian Export Centre. Bronze partners are Fluor Kazakhstan, HMS Group and WABAG.

KAZENERGY Association and ITECA signed a memorandum of cooperation in early March. As per the agreement, KIOGE and the KAZENERGY Eurasian Forum will be organised on even and odd-numbered years, respectively. The next KIOGE is slated for October 2020.

Further information on the exhibition and conference may be found at www.kioge.kz.

New ADB Kazakhstan report identifies economic growth opportunities

By Aidana Yergaliyeva

ASTANA – A new Asian Development Bank (ADB) country analysis identifies diversification, manufacturing and agriculture among Kazakhstan's opportunities for economic growth.

Diversification of the economy and introducing reforms favourable to its development will help Kazakhstan realise its growth potential, according to the ADB report.

The study estimated that a good business climate and recommended reforms in key sectors should result in 1.2 percentage growth per year, increasing Kazakhstan's GDP growth to 3.5 percent. Kazakhstan has set a goal of annual growth of 5 percent by 2025.

The ADB analysis also determined that agriculture, manufacturing and trade have high growth potential.

The vast Kazakh land offers good agricultural potential. According to ADB's analysis, there is enough financial and political interest to achieve its sustainable development. To optimise that potential, ADB recommends state support for water resource management, rural road improvement and agricultural scientific research. The government should also encourage private

investment through flexible land markets, stable and transparent policies and streamlined management.

In manufacturing, the report recommends collaboration between the private sector and the government to identify economic opportunities and eliminate obstacles. It also recommends a focus on vocational and workplace training. The report also recommends the encouragement of small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) networks and improvements in transport infrastructure, logistics and energy systems. Such transport and logistics improvements, according to the report, would help diversify exports.

Given global oil prices and the World Bank's expected 1.6 percent oil price growth in Kazakhstan, the ADB analysis points to diversification as necessary to achieve Kazakhstan's GDP goals.

The ADB's recommendations are similar to Kazakhstan's existing goals to diversify its economy beyond oil and gas and create a favourable business climate to grow other sectors of its economy.

The bank's mission is to reduce poverty in the Asia-Pacific region through inclusive economic and environmentally sustainable growth, as well as regional integration.

ECONOMY NEWS IN BRIEF

The US dollar exchange rate fell by 7.6 tenge Sept. 21 relative to similar trades the previous day. The weighted average US dollar rate was 352.09 tenge per dollar with T+1 in tenge (USDKZT_TOM, next day's settlements after the deal) after the morning trading session at the Kazakhstan Stock Exchange (KASE), reported inform.kz, with reference to KASE. The minimum dollar rate was at 350.1 tenge per dollar during the session; the maximum, 357 tenge. The total volume of trading was \$147.4 million.

Kazakh household income increased by 7.9 percent in the second quarter, with the average income approximated at 520,000 tenge (US\$1,466.20), reported finprom.kz. Average household income was 480,000 tenge (US\$1,353.40) during the same period last year. The main source of income for the majority of households is hired labour, representing approximately 335,000 tenge (US\$944.50). Pensions comprise 91,000 tenge (US\$256.60), or 19.7 percent of all household income. Income from self-employment and entrepreneurial activity averaged 57,000 tenge (US\$160.70). Material aid from relatives and acquaintances, alimony, allowances and other social transfers make up only 7.7 percent (40,000 tenge or US\$112.80).

Kazakh budget revenues decreased 1 percent so far this year. Budget transfers provided more than half (1.4 trillion tenge or US\$3.95 billion) of all income, while the remainder came mainly from taxes (1.2 trillion tenge or US\$3.38 billion). Income to local budgets was 2.66 trillion tenge (US\$7.49 billion) from January-July. In the last five years, local budget revenue in the corresponding period increased by 779.7 billion tenge, or 41.6 percent. The highest local budget revenue among the regions was in the South Kazakhstan region, which recorded approximately 342 billion tenge (US\$964.28 million).

Kazakhs purchased 36,191 new cars for 304.6 billion tenge (US\$858.83 million) in January-August, with the average cost per vehicle growing by 7 percent to 8,429,926 tenge (US\$23,768.36). More than one-third of customers (37.1 percent) preferred cars priced at less than five million tenge (US\$14,097.60). Business and premium-class cars represented 16.1 percent (5,822 units) and 10.7 percent (3,881 units), respectively. Sales growth is connected to the renewal of an available line of business-class sedans.

Investment in housing construction increased significantly from January-August. Approximately 702 billion tenge (US\$1.98 billion) was raised, a 31-percent hike compared to last year due to the launch of concessional lending for citizens and the Nurly Zher housing programme. The Ministry for Investment and Development reported 7.7 million square metres of housing have been put into operation, 112 percent compared to 2017. The annual plan of 12.1 million square metres has been 64 percent fulfilled and 67,055 housing units, including 26,665 individual houses, were commissioned.

More than 253 unemployed and self-employed individuals opened businesses this year in the North Kazakhstan region, reported inform.kz. The launches were made possible by the Bastau project, the training course on disciplines such as marketing, tax and judicial legislation, according to the regional chamber of entrepreneurs. The programme trained 937 people in 2017, 160 of whom received funding and opened businesses. This year's plan is to train at least 2,000 people. The bulk of the projects are in agriculture, such as livestock, meat and dairy products and greenhouse fruit and vegetable production.

Kazakh e-commerce market reaches \$422.9 million

By Abira Kuandyk

ASTANA – Kazakhstan's e-commerce market volume has reached 159 billion tenge (US\$422.9 million) since the beginning of the year. The figure refers to the concept of the draft law on amendments and additions to certain legislative acts on developing the business environment and regulating trade activities.

E-commerce, the activity of buying or selling products online, is highly competitive in the country. Services market represents 71.2

billion tenge (US\$189.38 million), while the commodity market figure is 88.4 billion tenge (US\$ 235.13), reported Infomuro.kz.

The number of newly-registered e-commerce entities has reached 226, with approximately 1,700 online stores. The number of customers has climbed to 1.5 million.

According to the concept of the draft act, implementing services on the Internet does not apply to e-commerce and falls out of its accounting volume.

"The current legislation in the field of electronic commerce extends to

small and medium-sized businesses that sell only goods. E-commerce does not include services; thus, it fell out of the e-commerce volume records," states the draft law.

The draft law also highlights the need to change the method of collecting statistical information in order to accurately reflect the state of Kazakh e-commerce.

"A survey of businesses engaged in the e-commerce sector reflects that the turnover in e-commerce exceeds the available statistical data," it notes.

"There is a need to establish a reg-

ister of local commodity producers that will unite all business entities. Registering will involve the specification of activities, sold goods, works and services. This will increase public and business trust in electronic commerce," according to the bill. "There is a need to divide subjects and purposes of creating electronic trading platforms by law, with a clear division of their functions," it added.

The draft act is available for public discussion through Sept. 24.

Electronic commerce turnover through online stores totals 98.5 billion tenge (US\$261.98 million);

electronic trading platforms, 57.2 billion tenge (US\$152.14 million) and information and advertising electronic platforms, 3.9 billion tenge (US\$10.37 million).

Every Kazakh user spent approximately 54,000 tenge (US\$143) in 2017, making an average of four purchases, according to the Feb. 8 survey.

E-commerce worldwide is growing at a fast pace. The ten countries with the highest volume are China, the U.S., the U.K., Japan, Germany, France, South Korea, Canada, Russia and Brazil.

Kazakh Invest increases foreign investment inflow, creates jobs, says board member

By Abira Kuandyk

ASTANA – François Bernard, an independent member of the Board of Directors of the Kazakh Invest national company and the chairman of its Investment Attraction and Support Committee, recently discussed investing in Kazakhstan and the country's foreign investment climate in an interview with The Astana Times.

Bernard has experience promoting investment opportunities to the global business community in countries such as Turkey and Belgium and was invited, as an expert, by Kazakh Prime Minister Bakytzhan Sagintayev in 2016 to contribute to the establishment of an investment promotion and support agency (IPSA) to help diversify Kazakhstan's economy and decrease dependence on oil and gas.

Kazakh Invest has increased the number of projects implemented by foreign direct investments (FDI) flow, and new jobs have been created. The resulting financial inflow and increased local activity has had a significant social impact, said Bernard.

Kazakh Invest monitors 188 projects with foreign investments totalling \$49.8 billion. These projects will create 56,000 new jobs in Kazakhstan, including from 33 new production facilities worth \$4.23 billion that are expected to open in 2018 with cooperation be-



François Bernard

tween Kazakh Invest and foreign partners.

"The establishment of Kazakh Invest as an Investment Promotion and Support Agency (IPSA) will contribute to reaching the strategic goal of the country to develop the non-oil and gas investment flow. This goal is able to be reached because the new non-oil and gas projects, which facilitate the diversification of Kazakhstan's economy, are growing significantly in comparison to previous years," said Bernard.

Bernard added that international investors are looking at Kazakhstan's attractive investment environment for matching opportunities through their business development strategies.

"Among these priority sectors are the agro-food, infrastructure and logistics sectors, which is mainly due to the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), a booster for in-

ternational interest to Kazakhstan. The chemical and machinery sectors are also potential sectors to be developed. New sectors, such as tourism have a great potential for growth because Kazakhstan has such a wild and beautiful landscape. Thus, it is possible to make fantastic things here," he said.

Bernard noted Kazakh Invest is both an investment promotion and support agency.

"The role and mission of Kazakh Invest is to support potential investors from A to Z, until the point when they decide and implement their projects in a country," he said.

Kazakh Invest supports existing investors who have already implemented projects as well as new investors.

"For example, when the French company Leroy Merlin opened its flagship retail shop in Almaty, they knew that they can count on us if they face any challenges. The objective of Kazakh Invest, after first investments, is not to let investors stay alone but to support them in order to facilitate re-investments," added Bernard.

Bernard noted the international community is beginning to understand Kazakh Invest's central role and mission.

"Kazakh Invest and its international network inform, analyse, convince and attract new foreign investors (from some targeted key countries) to Kazakhstan, as well as gathers useful information and feed-

back to provide suggestions and recommendations to Kazakhstan's public decision makers in order to improve the attractiveness and business environment. It is tough and intense work; however, the company team is doing a great job," he said.

Kazakh Invest also organises large-scale investment events, such as the Kazakhstan Global Investment Roundtable 2018 held July 3 in Astana. During this event, initiated by the Kazakh Prime Minister, 600 high-level representatives from around the world attended and more than 30 investment commitments were signed with foreign investors worth approximately \$4.5 billion.

Bernard underlined that there are several ways to invest in a foreign company.

"First of all, one can invest alone without any support from Kazakh Invest or other local body, as is done in other countries. However, it is absolutely clear it is easier to invest and to implement projects with Kazakh Invest's support, because it works as a one-stop-shop; all foreign investors can reach out to it for any sort of preliminary guidance as well as to deal with the authorities and administrative issues," he noted.

When an investor considers investing in Kazakhstan, he or she can contact Kazakh Invest through its website or Kazakh Invest's representative in the investor's country, which allows the investor to

have preliminary contact in his or her own language. An investor can also contact the Kazakh diplomatic mission in the investor's country, who will forward the information to Kazakh Invest.

Projects are then forwarded to the central office in Astana and assisted in implementation.

"Based on my previous experience, the most important criteria for potential investors is the trust one has in his or her counterpart from the agency," he added.

The staff of an IPSA, such as Kazakh Invest, are also key to success for the agency and investor.

"Kazakh Invest has young, well-educated, professional and motivated collaborators. These people are like 'sponges'. They absorb new know-how, new technologies and new support strategies and are able to implement this new knowledge efficiently. Collaborators are one of the main assets of Kazakh Invest and of Kazakhstan. Our mission is to provide continuous education for them to effectively attract investments," Bernard said.

Kazakh Invest international network, a team working in synergy, includes Kazakh Invest representatives in foreign countries, Kazakh ambassadors in those countries and the ambassadors of investors' countries in Astana as well as Kazakh Invest country managers.

"The final objective is to have Kazakh Invest's official presence in approximately 16 key countries among the most important for Kazakhstan. Also, we want to develop our presence indirectly in other countries through advisory partners, which can be of interest for Kazakhstan later. We have to work step by step with motivation and perseverance," he said.

BUSINESS

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 26, 2018

BUSINESS NEWS IN BRIEF

Kazakhstan Temir Zholy (KTZ) and the Turkish government-owned railway company TCDD Taşımacılık A.Ş signed an agreement on strategic cooperation at Ankara's Kazakh-Turkish investment forum Sept. 12, reported the national railway company's press service. KTZ CEO Kanat Alpysbayev and TCDD Taşımacılık A.Ş Director General Veysi Kurt were signatories of the document which details strengthening bilateral relations in railway services and engineering. Joint work in developing both countries' transit capacity and transport logistic systems within the Trans-Caspian International Transport Route is planned. The parties also agreed to grant competitive pay scale provisions and build a consolidation and distribution centre for cargo bound for Kazakhstan and China from Turkey, and vice versa.

The Centras Group presented its Best CEO award to Halyk Bank's Umut Shayakhmetova at its 2018 award ceremony in Almaty, reported Kapital.kz. The evaluation criteria included the extent to which the executives shaped better leaders, attracted talented employees, developed their companies at a sustainable pace and observed long-term trends. Air Astana's Peter Foster, ChocoFamily's Ramil Mukhoryapov, Kaspi Bank's Mikhail Lomtadze and Magnum Cash&Carry's Alexander Garber were also recognised. Verna Capital was given the Impact 2018 award for constructing the Talan Towers complex and its upcoming project, Almaty Botanical Garden.

The current 12.5-percent share of national cinema at Kazakhstan's box office has almost doubled since 2014, said Minister of Culture and Sport Arystanbek Mukhamediyul at a Mazhilis (lower house of Parliament) plenary session. During the past three years, 67 documentaries, 20 art and four animation films have been produced, centring on the country's history, culture, traditions and modern achievements. Kazakh cinema recently entered the international rental market and is no longer limited to single screenings at international festivals and competitions.

Halyk Bank will allocate another one billion tenge (US\$2.72 million), doubling its commitment to two billion tenge (US\$5.45 million), to continue supporting women's business projects. The programme was launched in June, as women's demands for preferential loans has significantly exceeded expectations. Since its inception, bank experts have advised 750 women entrepreneurs, 249 of whom applied for loans and 81 received the funds to implement their projects. Another 45 applications have been approved for financing, while 85 are under consideration. The bank noted women's entrepreneurship spans a number of industries, including food, retail, education and medicine.

Kazakhstan has produced 43.4 billion tenge (US\$118.17 million) in pharmaceutical products, a 3.8-percent increase compared to 2017. One-third of all drugs are produced in the Almaty region, while 41.9 percent of production is in Shymkent and 15.4 percent in Almaty. The three southern regions constitute 89 percent of the output and house large companies such as Abdilbakhim GlobalFarm, Avrora, Cheminnova Alimor Kazpharm, Dolce, Dosfarm, Kelun-KazPharm, Chimpharm, Nobel Almaty Pharmaceutical Factory, Rapid-Alimor Pharm Industries and Zerde-Fito.

The Kazakh Ministry for Investment and Development expects a decrease in air ticket prices in 2019. High prices for air and railway travel remain a barrier for tourism development, emphasised Mazhilis (lower house of Parliament) deputy Shavkat Utemisov. Domestic travel is relatively expensive for the average consumer, with an Almaty - Astana one way ticket costing approximately 20,000-80,000 tenge (US\$56.41-225.62). The ministry provides travel benefits for children, youth, pensioners and people with disabilities and now intends to address the issue of cost. Vice Minister for Investment and Development Timur Toktabayev stated that, given the predicted economic situation and aviation fuel prices in the following year, air ticket prices should become more affordable.

Tsin-Kaz witnesses tremendous breakthrough over 20 years, and offers reasonably priced, high quality products

By Abira Kuandyk

ASTANA – Tsin-Kaz LLP, a major Kazakh company with an established name, has been specialising in processing and canning fruits and vegetables for two decades. The company's main mission is to produce high quality products at a reasonable price and contribute to people's health and well-being.

During the past 20 years, Tsin-Kaz has evolved from small workshops to a developing, self-sustaining and competitive enterprise. More than 50 percent of the Kazakh market is associated with tomato and canned vegetable products under its trademark and the company is known throughout Central Asia.

The company believes that the great credit for its successes over 20 years and for being recognised as a leader in the production of tomato products and canned vegetables in Kazakhstan lies with the company head and founder Qigang Chen.

Qigang Chen is a native of Chongqing. He studied international trade at the Xinjiang University of Finance and Economics, gained his master's diploma in management at the Capital University of Economics and Business. Qigang Chen also has a PhD in Economics and is a professor at the Xinjiang Agricultural University.

"The company's products are distributed throughout Kazakhstan in 42 regions. We have also built good working relations with partners in other countries. They express huge interest in our products



Qigang Chen

and many would like to cooperate with us," said Qigang Chen.

"Businesspeople from neighbouring countries find us through our website tomato.kz and articulate their interests in our products at international exhibitions, forums and fairs where we participate," added Qigang Chen.

Modernisation is one of the major items of the enterprise's long-term development, as it initiated a 618 million tenge (US\$1.6 million) project in 2011 involving automation, upgrades and expanding existing production. Part of the investment has resulted in opening two workshops producing vegetable salads and soy sauce.

Approximately 136 million tenge (US\$358,328) was invested in 2017 in equipment, with an additional 346 million tenge (US\$911,629) to be purchased by the end of the year.

In addition to traditional tomato paste, Tsin-Kaz makes a variety of products ranging from vegetable salads and sauces to six kinds of ketchup. Although the items are manufactured under several

brands, the common thread is quality that has stood the test of time.

The firm values its reputation, which extends to its new products. Advanced high-efficiency equipment, as well as the accepted small-volume and easy-to-use assortment, meet current market demands.

All products are manufactured in accordance with regulatory document requirements – the company's enterprise standards, interstate standards and product safety meet the strictest requirements. A production laboratory with the necessary equipment controls the quality of the raw materials and manufactured products.

Tsin-Kaz produces eight kinds of vegetable salads – autumn, cucumber, lecho in tomato sauce, pepper in oil with garlic and greens, bean, beans in tomato sauce, cabbage and courgetti – and two types of pickled cucumbers. The distinctive homemade recipes stem from a variety of fresh vegetables that contain vitamins and micro elements such as calcium, iron, phosphorus, sodium, potassium and natural antioxidants.

Demand for the company's products, namely salads and pickled cucumbers, has been growing in the last two years, as Tsin-Kaz offers higher quality and lower prices in both categories than its competition. Its products also contain only natural preservatives, in comparison to imported ones which have flavourings, stabilisers and other additives that double the storage life.

Environmentally friendly products are becoming more in demand in the world market. Tsin-Kaz's



Photo credit: astana.ru

salads and pickled cucumbers have the potential to expand their presence on the menus in Kazakhstan and neighbouring countries.

The company began manufacturing three kinds of soy sauce in 2016 and is still the only local producer. Tsin-Kaz uses its own polymeric container to reduce the cost, attracting consumers by quality and price. The soy sauce, which has proven its worth in both the Kazakh and Russian markets, took first place at that year's WorldFood exhibition.

Tsin-Kaz has now also entered the meat market. Its marinade was carefully devised through numerous experiments and tastings and chilli sauce, another market-driven product, was introduced this year. The enterprise is the first in the country to produce the latter.

As a leading industry proving its effectiveness in practice, Tsin-Kaz receives state assistance. The company participates in various government programmes intended to support small and medium enterprises driven by mutual interests, while the state strengthens the economy by promoting businesses.



Tsin-Kaz is studying the possibility of entering other markets by investigating demand and focusing on marketing and effective advertising. The first steps in this direction are exports to Russia (Barnaul, Chelyabinsk, Krasnoyarsk, Moscow, Novosibirsk and Ufa) and Kyrgyzstan.

The company sees expanding the production, ensuring quality, advancing exports and increasing competitiveness as core directions for its further development.

Kazakh National Bank's Invest Online goes mainstream

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – Kazakh National Bank's Invest Online system is becoming popular among citizens. The advantages of the system include online service, guaranteed investments in government securities with no risk of lost funds and an opportunity to return investments with accumulated income at any time.

Invest Online is a simple and free tool for individuals to invest in state securities, said National Bank's payment systems department director Yerlan Ashybekov, according to its press service.

He noted the product can be used by any Kazakh citizen, with

no need for special knowledge. Personal visits to financial organisations are not required, as documents are signed through the mobile application or website. The simplest way to begin Invest Online is with an electronic digital signature, which can be obtained in any population service centre.

Users can purchase short-term notes remotely in one action. Selling them and receiving guaranteed income is also easy, as all operations are available online 24/7. The programme has confirmed its demand in the five months since its launch, as citizens have purchased 304 million tenge (US\$812,000) in notes.

On average, citizens are expected to invest approximately 2 mil-

lion tenge (US\$5,340) every day, buying more than 20,000 short-term notes, according to the press service. Positive growth has been recorded in the volume of operations (\$129,000 in April, \$200,000 in July).

One advantage of the programme is the ability to invest small amounts – individuals can start with as little as \$0.30. In addition, the number of investments and their terms are not limited.

"All operations in the system are free of charge, including input and withdrawal of money and operations for buying. Selling short-term notes are not charged as well. The income received from the sale of short-term notes is not taxed," said Ashybekov.

Turkish company to buy Karaganda region gold deposit

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – Turkish company Lidya Madencilik plans to purchase 100 percent of the shares in the Karaganda region's Yuzhno-Moyintinskoye gold deposit. Estimates indicate the deposit can produce 8.4 tonnes of gold.

The company was enticed by Tau-Ken Samruk, a Kazakh company subsidiary of the Samruk Kazyna Sovereign Wealth Fund, which has attracted strategic investors to existing projects to extract and process polymetallic ores at the Aligyr deposit and explore for gold at Yuzhno-Moyintinskoye. A memorandum of understanding was signed by Tau-Ken Samruk Chairperson Kanat Kudaibergen and Lidya Madencilik CEO Mustafa Aksoi, according to the former's press service.

After advertising the Yuzhno-Moyintinskoye gold deposit sale, Lidya Madencilik, which has experience in developing gold depos-

its in its own country, presented the only offer, the press service added. Negotiations began in September 2017 and finished in August when the managements agreed on cooperation terms.

Kazakhstan's overall production of unwrought and semi-processed gold or in powder form reached 53,432 kilogrammes in January-July, a 9.7-percent increase compared to the same period in 2017.

Field geological exploration work on the deposit was completed in 2015-2016. In June 2017, Tau-Ken Samruk announced the allocation of subsoil use rights for

exploration, although geological exploration and field work at the deposit have not been conducted since 2017.

Founded in 2006, Lidya Madencilik is the mining division of the Calik Holding group of companies, which also operates in energy, construction, real estate, textiles, finance and telecommunications. It has representative offices in 22 countries, including the Balkans, Central Asia, the Middle East and North Africa.

Kazakhstan's overall production of unwrought and semi-processed gold or in powder form reached 53,432 kilogrammes in January-July, a 9.7-percent increase compared to the same period in 2017, reported the Kazakh Ministry of Economy statistics committee.

The gross output of unwrought and semi-processed silver or in powder form is much higher, reaching 575,426 kilogrammes during the same period. The figure is 9.6 percent less than the previous year.

Baspana Mortgage secondary housing loan programme



Chair of Baspana Mortgage Kairat Altynbekov.

By Inga Selezneva

ASTANA – Baspana Mortgage recently launched a secondary housing lending programme providing favourable terms, reported Chair of the company Kairat Altynbekov at a Sept. 11 Central Communications Service briefing in Astana.

"The 7-20-25 mortgage programme provides favourable loans in the primary market. Taking into account this fact, our company developed Baspana Hit, a special programme aimed at secondary housing lending. According to the terms of the programme, the initial contribution should be 20 percent of the cost of housing and the interest rate is the National Bank's base rate of 1.75 percent. Currently, the base rate is 9 percent. This means that the interest rate will be 10.75 percent and loan term is up to 15 years," he said.

Citizens can now contact partner banks of the Baspana Hit programme, which includes the same second-tier banks of the 7-20-25 programme.

"Home depreciation and its impact on the cost will be determined by the market. The company and partner banks are not responsible for this issue. Each buyer can resolve the degree of deterioration and the period of construction individually," he said.

The company feels that this initiative will give an additional impetus to the development of the mortgage market and encourage people to buy a new home.

Apartment costs will be the same for the both programmes. It costs 25 million tenge (US\$67,200) in Almaty, Astana, Aktau, Atyrau and Shymkent and 15 million tenge (US\$40,300) in other regions.

The company will consider allocating 150 billion tenge (US\$402 million) for construction to local executive bodies to increase the number of borrowers.

Applications for the amount of 27 billion tenge (US\$75 million) have been received as part of the home loan programme. The banks have already approved the issuance of about 18 billion tenge (US\$48 million). Astana, Almaty and Mangistau show positive dynamics in the growth of lending.

Baspana Mortgage developed new options to reduce the financial burden for young families and public sector workers. The local executive bodies will subsidise half the down payment for those categories of the population to reduce the initial contribution.

The list of partner banks includes Halyk Bank, Forte Bank, Bank Tsentrkredit, ATF Bank, Tsesnabank, Bank RBK and Eurasian Bank.

EDITORIAL & OPINION

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 26, 2018

Kazakhstan's ever-growing global and regional role as country near 27th anniversary

This year Kazakhstan will celebrate the 27th anniversary of its independence. No one can deny that the transformation which the country has undergone during that time has been nothing short of remarkable. In achieving independence in 1991, Kazakhstan, along with many of its neighbours, saw an end to the many decades of Soviet rule. All countries were rightly excited about what the future would hold.

In the following years, Kazakhstan made a point of developing peaceful relations with all its surrounding countries. This included agreeing on land borders, working to resolve the distribution of shared resources, such as the Caspian Sea, and, most famously, by becoming the first nation to voluntarily shut down a major nuclear test site and decommission its nuclear arsenal. It is in this spirit of working together with its neighbours and working for shared opportunities that Kazakhstan is proud of the role it plays as a member of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).

Kazakhstan has been a member of the Eurasian Economic Union since 2015, the economic organisation that was first proposed by Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev. It is through this cooperation that our businesses enjoy a free trade area, which stretches for thousands of kilometres across Eurasia. It is now possible for companies in Almaty to do business everywhere from Minsk to Vladivostok. It is clear that it is in Kazakhstan's interest to see all member states working together for the collective benefit of all our citizens.

Being a country of considerable size, yet sharing land borders with five other countries, the importance of Kazakhstan's multi-vectored foreign policy cannot be understated. Not only is it a member of the Commonwealth of Independent States, but it also plays a crucial role in several other international organisations including the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, the Turkic Council, the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

Lying at the crossroads of the world, between North and South, East and West means that Kazakhstan has always seen itself as part of an intercon-

ected world. Some states surrounded by the sea are often criticised as having an "island mentality" – meaning they are isolated and narrow minded. As a landlocked nation, Kazakhstan is perhaps as far away from that mindset as can be possible. The country understands that to succeed it is vital to engage, listen and learn from other nations.

Earlier in September, President Nazarbayev attended the Summit of the Cooperation Council of the Turkic-Speaking States (CTS), also known as the Turkic Council. As was reported in The Astana Times, the President called for young people across all member nations to "expand their knowledge about the cultural peculiarities of our countries."

He also suggested the use of the new Astana International Financial Centre (AIFC) as a way of creating partnerships between CTS countries. This is just one example of the way Kazakhstan uses its membership of international organisations to bring people together, which can only be a way of bringing about a better future for all.

Of course, being active through international organisations is not a matter of simply taking the easy path. There are times when difficult matters, such as global security are confronted. In this regard, the world has seen Kazakhstan step up on the world stage. From its current membership of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) to Astana's hosting of several rounds of Syrian peace talks – the country continues to strive to resolve some of the most pressing and difficult challenges for peace in war-torn parts of the world. It is evidence that Kazakhstan doesn't simply turn its hand to problems which are easily fixed but is committed to lasting solutions for some of the world's most difficult matters.

At a time where many countries are in the news for leaving international organisations, leading to criticisms that they are avoiding their obligations to others, Kazakhstan is certainly steering a different path. The country understands that it is only by engaging with others through vital international partnerships such as the CIS, that we can work together to make a better future for future generations.

All conditions created for increasing oil and gas extraction in Kazakhstan, says industry official

Continued from Page A1

At WPC in Astana, we are planning to have meetings of the Executive and Programme Committees of the council, the session of young professionals of the WPC Committee, as well as the meeting of the council itself.

In Astana, we are going to also have the preparatory works for the upcoming 23rd World Petroleum Congress scheduled for 2020 in Houston, United States. The congress's agenda will focus on "Innovative Energy Solutions."

The WPC Youth Committee is also planning to discuss the sixth Youth Forum in St. Petersburg in June 2019.

I would like to underline that the Kazakhstan National Committee perceives with great interest these events and is considering the possibility of delegating its representatives for the discussion of issues of the energy sector.

As for the key topics of the Astana meeting, the problems of effective investment development are on the agenda. In recent years, we have been able to significantly increase the hydrocarbon potential of our country, attract significant investments in the oil and gas industry and we continue working on the creation of favourable conditions for attracting investments to Kazakhstan. In my view, however, the most significant event of the WPC in Astana would be the conference on "Investment Opportunities: New Solutions for Sustainable Growth." The conference will allow us to introduce the WPC member states and their national committees to the latest trends in the development of the oil and gas and energy industries of Kazakhstan.

Its agenda will cover issues such as the expansion of investment instruments, effective protection of investors' rights and interests, industry legal regulation, green investments, among others. Participants will hear about success cases of companies working in the industry.

I am confident that these events will enhance the exchange of experience and best practices, as well as the expansion of cooperation among all the member countries of the council.

What would you say about recent initiatives and incentives in the energy sector of Kazakhstan aimed at boosting economic growth and competitiveness?

In order to create more favourable conditions for investment, the government, the public institutions and other stakeholders have done a great deal of work reforming the legislation in the sphere of subsoil use, taxation, environment, etc.

These initiatives primarily aim at the exploration and replenishment of the resource base of minerals, the introduction of international standards for inventory accounting, the reduction of administrative barriers, the rational use of mineral resources and provision of state support through establishing a balanced tax burden that would stimulate the development of all branches of the fuel and energy sector of Kazakhstan.

In your opinion, what is the importance and value of the



Asset Magauov

enterprises and sustaining constructive discussion about these issues both within the association and with relevant government authorities.

In 2017, Kazakhstan adopted a new code on subsoil and subsoil use and the tax code. This year, we began drafting the new environmental code. Together, these three documents – without exaggeration – are the most crucial legislative pieces for oil and gas companies.

The common goal of the new codes is to increase the investment attractiveness of Kazakhstan's oil and gas sectors, and our initiatives in this regard are reflected in the editions of two new codes adopted by the Parliament.

For instance, starting from 2019, the new tax legislation provides for the exclusion of bonuses of commercial detection, introduces new conditions for income taxation (it introduces a so-called alternative subsoil use tax for offshore and super-deep deposits), puts in place a good mechanism to allow for taxation not only for successful, but also on unsuccessful exploration activities, etc.

The new subsoil code significantly simplifies access to subsoil use contracts, offers special tools that stimulate investment in geological exploration (com-

It is also important to diversify the economy of Kazakhstan towards processing primary raw materials to receive goods and products with higher added value through using petrochemicals, gas chemistry and the development of the accompanying sectors of the economy.

binated contracts, the abolition of all non-productive deductions, etc.), provides, starting from 2024, for the transition to international standards for calculating recoverable reserves, eliminates as much as possible all administrative barriers (excessive reconciliations, lengthy decision-making), etc.

Overall, investors welcomed these changes. Already now, several major international companies are openly negotiating new exploration projects in Kazakhstan.

Regarding the new environmental code, we have tabled a large amount of legislative proposals to the ministry of energy, essentially addressing the imperfections of current environmental legislation, which, in our opinion, in some cases contains discriminatory approaches to the oil and

gas sectors. We are determined to thoroughly work on the environmental code, and currently are in process of an in-depth review of the best practices of Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) member states on regulation of certain issues on environmental responsibility, emission standards, monitoring, licensing system, etc.

Our proposals are reflected in the latest version of the concept of the new environmental code, which, we believe, is balanced from the point of view of protecting the environment, as well as industry interests on developing production activities, and this fact makes us look forward with optimism on updating the national environmental legislation.

What challenges and opportunities in its development does Kazakhstan's energy sector face today?

In the sphere of oil and gas production, the most urgent are the issues of replenishment of hydrocarbon resources, as well as the introduction of more efficient technologies for increasing the level of extraction of minerals.

The developing of the industry assumes a wider use of gas as the cleanest type of fuel, as well as the raw material for industry, which requires additional investments from the oil and gas industry into the exploration, production and processing of hydrocarbons, the introduction of technologies aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Soon, Kazakhstan will have a huge demand for hydrocarbon raw materials to provide all types of petroleum products for the development of the petrochemical industry. This depends directly on the actions of the state on the introduction of incentives for attracting investments in such a promising and resource-intensive industry.

Considering the existing initiatives, I could state that we have created quite favourable incentives, including economic ones, for companies and investors to overcome these challenges.

Overall, what is your assessment of the long-term development of Kazakhstan's energy sector?

Considering globally increasing energy consumption, including resources such as natural gas and oil, and price stabilisation (without excluding further rise), we have created sufficient prerequisites for increasing the extraction of hydrocarbon raw materials in Kazakhstan.

Surely, we also take into account the fact that in the future hydrocarbons will stop playing a leading role of the main fuel. Nonetheless, they will remain important for many other industries.

Today, the oil and gas industry faces several priority tasks, namely, replenishing the resource base, introducing more efficient technologies, and ensuring the stability of legislation in the long run.

It is also important to diversify the economy of Kazakhstan towards processing primary raw materials to receive goods and products with higher added value through using petrochemicals, gas chemistry and the development of the accompanying sectors of the economy.

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Advancing disarmament within the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

By Izumi Nakamitsu

The nexus between disarmament, arms control and development

The idea that disarmament and arms control are connected to development is not new. Article 26 of the Charter of the United Nations recognises disarmament as a precondition for durable peace, security and development by calling for the maintenance of international peace and security with the least diversion of the world's economic and human resources for arms.

For a long time, however, disarmament has largely slipped off the development agenda. This is despite overwhelming evidence that excessive arms accumulation diverts needed resources from development and fuels armed conflict and violence, leading to unnecessary death and suffering, social inequality and environmental degradation. Hence, the failure to establish effective disarmament and arms control systems is devastating to socioeconomic development, peace and security, and human well-being.

The UN Secretary-General recognised this in his new Agenda for Disarmament, where he described "a vast potential" for disarmament activities to further advance our pursuit of development objectives.

The Agenda, launched on May 24 2018, offers new perspectives on better integrating disarmament and arms control into our work on other key international priorities, moving beyond our tendency to view this pressing matter through a narrow, isolated security lens. Instead, it encourages us to place disarmament and arms control within the scope of our work on sustain-



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able development, conflict prevention and peace-building.

Disarmament and arms control: a contribution to peace and security

The 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide a unique opportunity to revisit the historical relationship between disarmament and development. While SDG 16 on peaceful and inclusive societies, justice and strong institutions recognizes that durable peace and lasting conditions for security are necessary for long-term development, we need to better understand the diverse areas in which achieving disarmament objectives can contribute to the implementation of the SDGs. All Member States have committed themselves to taking such an integrated approach.

A central concern for disarmament and arms control is the protection of civilians from the impact of weapons. Measures to ban or restrict certain weapons on humanitarian grounds have a clear role to play in reducing armed violence and related death rates, an objective under SDG target 16.1. The increasing urbanisation of armed conflict and the use of explosive weapons in towns and cities have particularly devastating impacts on civilians, causing death and

injury, forced displacement, and destruction of livelihoods and infrastructure. In response to the escalation of armed violence, the United Nations supports efforts by member states to develop appropriate limitations, common standards and policies in conformity with international humanitarian law on the use of explosive weapons in populated areas.

Through SDG target 16.4 on significantly reducing illicit arms flows, the 2030 Agenda explicitly reflects upon the importance of arms control in promoting peace, security and sustainable development, while placing disarmament and arms control within the scope of development policies. To provide sustainable and coherent solutions with a strong development focus to the problem of small arms control, the United Nations will establish a multi-partner trust facility through the Peacebuilding Fund, contributing to SDG targets 16.4 and 16.a on strengthening the institutional capacities of states to prevent violence, terrorism and crime.

Disarmament and arms control: a contribution to the broader 2030 Agenda

The advancement of disarmament and arms control objectives also supports the achievement of other SDGs, from good health and quality education to gender equality, economic growth, reduced inequalities and safe cities.

Disarmament and arms control can advance progress in achieving SDG 3 on good health and well-being, since armed violence is the leading cause of premature death and a key source of injuries, disability, psychological distress and disease. There is also increas-

ing concern regarding the risk of acquisition and use of biological weapons. To address it, the United Nations strengthens the capacity of member states to implement the Biological Weapons Convention, and will establish a standing capacity to conduct investigations of alleged use of biological weapons.

SDG 4 on quality education benefits from disarmament education, which promotes a culture of peace and non-violence. Raising awareness about disarmament issues emphasizes approaches to reducing and eliminating violent conflicts. It also encourages efforts to enhance national and international security at lower levels of armaments. Such education imparts knowledge and skills that empower individuals to participate in the achievement of concrete disarmament objectives.

With respect to SDG 5 on gender equality, gender-responsive disarmament and arms control have a recognised role in eliminating violence against women and girls in both public and private spheres. Weapons have differentiated impacts on women, men, girls and boys. While men and boys account for most violent deaths and constitute the majority of weapon owners and users, women and girls are more frequently the victims of gender-based violence facilitated by small arms, including domestic and sexual violence. To address violence against women, it is essential that gender considerations inform the development of legislation and policies on disarmament and arms control. We also need to challenge predominant gender stereotypes of masculinity associated with the ownership and use of small arms, which increase the risk of gender-based violence.

There is also a close connection between disarmament and the achievement of SDG 8 on decent

work and economic growth. United Nations studies have shown that excessive military spending negatively impacts economic growth, capital investment and employment. Reducing military budgets can lessen these negative effects and allow public spending to be redirected towards people-centred programmes for social and economic development. These measures will also contribute to the achievement of SDG 10 on reduced inequalities. To promote mutual restraint in military expenditure, the United Nations seeks opportunities for regional dialogue and further development of confidence-building initiatives.

Transparency and confidence-building instruments such as the United Nations Report on Military Expenditures can increase trust between countries, leading to greater stability. This and other transparency instruments, such as the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms, whereby States report on arms imports and exports, promote effective, accountable and transparent institutions, a key commitment under SDG target 16.6.

Disarmament and arms control further contribute to SDG 11 on the safety, resilience and sustainability of cities and human settlements. In many countries, arms and ammunition depots are located in populated areas where unplanned explosions can cause high levels of casualties, injuries and displacement, as well as economic loss and destruction of livelihoods and infrastructure. Over the last decades, more than half of States have experienced accidental explosions at munition sites. The safe and secure management of stockpiles, including the identification of surpluses and their destruction, helps prevent such incidents from occurring. Through the develop-

ment and dissemination of standards, guidelines and good practices, the United Nations supports States in improving the physical security and stockpile management of their weapons and ammunition. The International Small Arms Control Standards and the International Ammunition Technical Guidelines are prime examples of these efforts.

Finally, the disarmament community can contribute to more inclusive global governance, an objective expressed in SDG targets 5.5 and 16.8. To achieve greater inclusivity, we need to further promote the equal and full participation of women in all disarmament decision-making processes and support the active participation of all States, especially developing countries, in disarmament forums. A more inclusive disarmament machinery will lead to more effective and sustainable policy outcomes in all areas of peace and security, and it should be a major focus of our efforts.

Looking ahead: strengthening partnerships for disarmament

I believe that investment in disarmament and arms control is a direct investment in long-term peace and security, and, therefore, in sustainable development. The SDGs provide a comprehensive, universal framework for action, and I am committed to establishing and strengthening partnerships and collaborations in order to attain the Goals. Advancing disarmament and arms control makes a real difference for development. Acknowledging this fact on a broader scale will make the world safer, more prosperous and better prepared to tackle twenty-first century challenges.

The author is UN Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for Disarmament Affairs. The article first appeared in UN Chronicle in August 2018.

Kazakhstan's assistance to Afghanistan helps strengthen regional and global security, diplomat says

By Zhanna Akhmetova

Kazakhstan has long been providing active support for the reconstruction of Afghanistan, helping both financially and by promoting the stabilisation of the situation at the political level. Kazakh-Afghan cooperation and the importance of Kazakhstan's assistance for enhancing security in Afghanistan were the topics of an interview with Ambassador-at-Large at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and its Special Representative for Afghanistan Stanislav Vassilenko.

What is the history of bilateral relations between Kazakhstan and the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (IRA) since 1991?

Kazakhstan and Afghanistan established diplomatic relations on Feb. 12, 1992. In September 2002, Kazakhstan opened a diplomatic mission in Kabul, which became the embassy in June 2003. Since April 2018, Alimkhan Yesengeldiev has been the Ambassador of Kazakhstan in Kabul.

We now have a good bilateral relationship, strengthened by consistent and dynamic development over many areas.

From a political point, Kazakhstan stands for the early establishment of peace and stability in Afghanistan, including through the further development of bilateral, regional and multilateral cooperation. The two governments have a mutual understanding on many political issues of the international agenda. Astana cooperates with Kabul within the framework of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA), Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), Economic Cooperation Organisation (ECO) and IOFS (Islamic Organisation for Food Security).



Stanislav Vassilenko

We support the peaceful initiatives of the international community aimed at resolving the Afghan crisis; we are actively participating in the Heart of Asia – Istanbul process. Kazakhstan has extended its support to the Kabul Process, a new peace initiative by Afghanistan.

We welcome the active engagement of our Central Asian partners on platforms including those such as the Tashkent Conference on Afghanistan in March 2018. Let me note that we are also supportive of Afghanistan's receiving an observer status in the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO).

An inter-parliamentary relationship is being endorsed at the level of the leadership of both chambers of the Parliament of Kazakhstan, its deputy committees and commissions. As part of this cooperation, the two countries regularly exchange delegations.

You said at the UN Security Council meeting in New York in March 2018 that Afghanistan continues to face political and economic problems, as well as security threats. How does Kazakhstan help the IRA overcome these challenges?

Clearly, Kazakhstan supports Afghanistan's integration into the expanding regional network of trade, energy and transport links. We believe the restoration of its

economy through the implementation of long-term projects and the involvement of the region's countries in this network would be the most efficient way to address the complex problems of the IRA and I mean here primarily social challenges related to employment and boosting incomes.

Kazakh-Afghan trade turnover is steadily growing. In 2014, it amounted to \$336.7 million (\$333.53 million is Kazakhstan's export); then in 2016, it reached \$489.4 million (\$486.8 million being export, \$2.5 million import in Kazakhstan).

Between January-August 2017, trade reached \$328.5 million, including \$327.3 million in exports and \$1.2 million in imports – 11 percent more than the same period of 2016.

Kazakhstan's exports to Afghanistan are traditionally dominated by grain and flour (67 percent), followed by food products (27 percent), liquefied gas (7.2 percent) and rolled metal (5.6 percent). Smaller volumes of fertilisers, medicines, metal rods, auto parts and other goods have also been in consistent demand.

I would like to note that the Intergovernmental Commission for Trade and Economic Cooperation plays an important role in the development of trade and economic cooperation between the two countries. To strengthen its work, there is a need to make maximum use of the existing railway routes along the line of Kazakhstan – Turkmenistan – Iran to the border with Afghanistan.

For the regular supply of Kazakh grain and flour to Afghanistan, there is a need to reduce barriers in the documentation and transportation of flour products. In this regard, we pin high hopes on a new railway line from Turkmenistan to the border with Afghanistan.

In the field of cultural and humanitarian cooperation in recent years, we have successfully launched the Kazakh-Afghan state educational programme of the Republic of Kazakhstan for the training of 1,000 Afghan students. Until now, about 500 people have completed the programme. I can confirm that the Government of National Unity of Afghanistan and the Afghan people are highly interested in the continuation of the programme.

Sports representatives and the National Olympic Committee of Afghanistan are also willing to develop cooperation with their Kazakh counterparts. The Afghans participated in the 2017 Winter Universiade in Almaty; an analogue of Kazakh kokpar – the equestrian sport game bozkashi is very popular among Afghan youth.

In addition, public and private higher education institutions of the IRA would like to establish an exchange with their Kazakh colleagues to conduct training of Afghan students in Kazakhstan on a fee-paying basis. The National Archives, the National Museum and the National Library of Afghanistan have also expressed willingness to cooperate with similar Kazakh institutions. I would like to underscore that these organisations may have authentic sources and historic scripts related to the Kazakh Khanate.

In the field of medicine, the Afghan Ministry of Health is interested in establishing cooperation with Kazakhstan for training Afghan women in medical universities of Kazakhstan, purchasing medical products and developing medical tourism. So far, a draft memorandum on such cooperation has been sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan.

Kazakhstan fulfilled and continues to fulfill its international pledge

of economic assistance to the IRA. In July 2008, we transferred \$2.38 million to the Ministry of Finance of Afghanistan; \$160,000 being spent to build a school in the province of Samangan, \$570,000 to build a hospital in the province of Bamyan and \$1.65 million for repairing the Talukan-Kunduz-Shir Khan-Bandar road.

The repair was completed in October 2011 and the school in 2012. The hospital construction, suspended previously by the Afghan side, was resumed in October 2016.

In 2014, we provided scheduled financial assistance to the Afghan province of Samangan for the construction of specific infrastructure facilities. At the end of December 2014, the government of Kazakhstan transferred \$1.5 million to the special account of the Ministry of Finance of Afghanistan for the construction of four standard bridges in the Afghan city of Aibak. The bridges were necessary to strengthen the banks of the Aibak River in the province of Samangan. Currently, the Afghan side is implementing the project.

In October 2016, the government of Kazakhstan provided \$2 million in economic aid in support of the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces (ANDSF) to a relevant NATO trust fund. In October 2017, Astana received a letter from the government of Afghanistan with a request for humanitarian food aid in connection with drought and natural disasters in the country.

On Oct. 27, 2017, First Deputy Prime Minister of Kazakhstan Askar Mamin chaired the international humanitarian assistance commission meeting, after which there was a decision to provide humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan that included 260 tonnes of whole meal flour, 2,590

tonnes of white flour, 847,139 cans of canned meat and 40 tonnes of dried vegetables totalling 819,209,000 tenge (US\$2.3 million).

In your opinion, which undertakings of Kazakhstan are of global significance in the country's peacekeeping initiatives as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council for the restoration of peace and security in Afghanistan?

As a non-permanent member of the council, for the first time in the history of this major international organisation Kazakhstan represents not only Central Asia, but also Afghanistan, promoting the interests of this country among our priorities.

During our presidency in January 2018, we convened a Security Council ministerial debate on the topic "Building Regional Partnership in Afghanistan and Central Asia as a Model to Link Security and Development," where the UN member states reaffirmed their commitment to a political settlement of the situation in Afghanistan based on the concept of the security and development nexus.

At the same time, we organised a full-scale visit of the council members to Afghanistan preceded by a Kabul trip of the Permanent Representative of Kazakhstan to the United Nations in his role as the chairman of the council's sanctions committees.

What is Kazakhstan's contribution to ensuring stability in Afghanistan, as well as in the development of the entire region? Can we say that Kazakhstan is becoming not only a regional, but a global player?

Central Asia is reasonably viewed by the international community as a model for successful regional cooperation. It is significant that Kazakhstan has put forward the initiative to integrate Afghanistan into the region to advance the peace process in this country. In my view, Kazakhstan's contribution is undeniable and of great importance for strengthening regional and global stability.

EURASIA&WORLD

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 26, 2018

New chapter in Uzbekistan opens opportunities for region

By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – Since Shavkat Mirziyoyev came to power in 2016 after the death of Islam Karimov, Uzbekistan, the most populous country in Central Asia, has been witnessing significant changes both in domestic and foreign policy. The former Soviet republic has progressed significantly in the last two years following the 27 years of Karimov's rule, affecting almost every sphere in the country of 34 million people.

Mirziyoyev, who served as prime minister for 13 years and won the election in 2016 with 89 percent of the vote, has set in motion a reform-minded agenda with far-reaching impact. Addressing the United Nations General Assembly in September 2017, he said Uzbekistan is "consciously going towards resolute reforms and is committed to forming a new image of the country."

The changes include liberalising foreign economic activity; removing the peg from the U.S. dollar, a move that devalued the Uzbek som by 48 percent; abolishing the previously compulsory sale of foreign currency revenue and allowing full convertibility of the currency, among other initiatives.

Increasing its international credibility, Uzbekistan signed agreements with foreign financial institutions, including the World Bank and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, that lent funds for the country's development across many areas.

For the first time, the Uzbek leader addressed the problem of torture, released political prisoners, removed approximately 18,000 people from the country's



Photo credit: onyank

security services blacklist, banned doctors', teachers' and students' forced labour in cotton fields and, to a limited extent, loosened state control over the media. He also signed a decree abolishing the exit visa system which would have come into effect next year.

Separated from the rest of the world for generations, Uzbekistan has embarked on rekindling its ties with neighbouring countries and other key partners, including China, Russia and the U.S., facilitating regional cooperation and boosting its economic potential.

Opening the country was the "only path to consolidate the power and at the same time create an image of an open country with ambitious goals and plans," noted Central Asia Institute for Strategic Studies head Anna Gussarova.

"President Mirziyoyev has visited many countries in the neighbourhood and far abroad, meeting different political leaders. He started with an attempt to revise Uzbek-Tajik relations, the most challenging for the past years, and introduce peace and friendship narratives in conflict-prone border

areas of Central Asia," she said.

Gussarova believes it is too early to draw conclusions, however, because "peace requires long-term commitment."

In March, Mirziyoyev made a historic visit to Dushanbe, the first for an Uzbek President since 2002, meeting his counterpart President Emomali Rahmon and overseeing the signing of 27 agreements worth approximately \$140 million, as the two countries also resumed direct flights linking the city and Tashkent in April 2017.

He also travelled to Kazakhstan in March 2017 to meet with President Nursultan Nazarbayev, expressing firm commitment to boosting bilateral cooperation. Nazarbayev noted completely different ties were developing saying "only within last five months, trade turnover grew by 30 percent."

The two countries set an ambitious goal to bring trade turnover to \$5 billion by 2020.

Gussarova believes Uzbekistan's agenda is similar to Kazakhstan's, its neighbor and largest economy in Central Asia.

"The Uzbek foreign policy

agenda includes Central Asia as well as introducing new investment partners and projects in the country. Interestingly, President Mirziyoyev's agenda reminds one of President Nazarbayev's motto 'Economy first, politics second,' with a multi-vector foreign policy which should boost political dialogue with key non-regional actors and international organisations to strengthen the Uzbek economic capacity and development goals," she noted.

Relations between Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan have also moved in a positive direction, said Emil Dzhuraev, an associate professor at the American University of Central Asia (AUCA) in Bishkek.

"In the last years of Islam Karimov, relations between Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan were very bad; perhaps, they were even worse than Uzbek-Tajik relations. If we compare before and after, it is clear how relations between the countries changed tremendously in a positive way. Since the first days of Mirziyoyev coming to power, he showed positive signals right away and was open to dialogue and promised to solve disagreements between the countries in a constructive way," he said.

The border issues, he noted, have been "most important and very difficult to solve."

"Disagreement over disputed areas fed political manipulation of bilateral relations. What has been happening during the last two years is very intensive and frequent discussions and meetings of the intergovernmental commission in an effort to settle the border issues," he added.

Disagreements are natural along the process, but what matters, he said, is "at what level and with

what compromise the two sides are ready to reach an agreement in a political perspective."

Dzhuraev believes regional cooperation and integration are now far more present on the agenda.

"The new government in Uzbekistan and the subsequently increasing openness of the country to its neighbours and the region very seriously changed the situation in the region and as all can see, people start to bring up regional cooperation and even regional integration more frequently and more seriously," he said.

"The fact that leaders of all Central Asian countries gathered not for the first time in the last two years in a narrow format gives in itself serious ground to think that the ice has broken and the door is open to a serious discussion of common regional interests. If we assess to what extent the openness of Uzbekistan is important for the region, it cannot be stressed enough," he added.

Dzhuraev noted deepening and strengthening relations between the Central Asian countries separately boosts the dialogue capacity of each nation given their "limited resources and limited decision-making power."

"When we talk about very important geopolitical phenomena, such as the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative, Eurasian integration led by Russia and other developments, for each and every country in Central Asia it is very important to have, if not a support, at least common interests with neighbouring countries," he said.

The potential for regional cooperation is high.

"Inside the region itself, there could be more opportunities for trade and economic development

because the market is growing bigger than before and it is also very important," he added.

Dzhuraev also spoke about the challenges facing the region, including border disagreement, security with a common concern about Afghanistan and its deteriorating situation, and managing water and other natural resources.

"Also, [there are] very difficult relations with our giant neighbour – China. On one side, all countries have quite serious and fast-growing economic relations and on the other, quite difficult political ties. I mean geopolitical disagreements in regard to Xinjiang and quite recently in the form of disagreements that can occur between China and Kazakhstan and all other countries in terms of how the process of political re-education of the Muslim communities is going on, primarily for Muslim Uighurs, but also others. I believe it will be a common difficulty that is better to discuss together," the Kyrgyz scholar said.

Gussarova noted Uzbekistan can play the role of a mediator in the region.

"Uzbekistan could boost regional cooperation and finally bring Afghanistan to Central Asia as a mediator in peace talks with the Taliban, the Afghan government, the United States and the Russian Federation," she said.

Optimism and hope are in the air, yet questions remain.

"How long would it take him [Mirziyoyev] to change the country? As we all acknowledge, changes are always painful. The issue is whether those changes will be cosmetic or rather deep and feasible. Finally, it is not clear what Uzbekistan wants to achieve and what Central Asian countries want Uzbekistan to be," she added.

Tajikistan begins two-year CICA leadership term



Tajik Foreign Minister Sirojiddin Muhriddin (L) and Kazakh Foreign Minister Kairat Abdrakhmanov.

Staff Report

NEW YORK – Tajikistan assumed the chair of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA) during a Sept. 24 meeting of the organisation's member states' foreign ministers. The meeting was part of the 73rd session of the United Nation General Assembly.

Tajikistan will chair CICA until 2020 and assumed the role from China, which held the position from 2014 to 2018.

Kazakh Minister of Foreign Affairs Kairat Abdrakhmanov thanked China and outgoing CICA Executive Director Gong Jianwei for contributing to CICA's development.

Habibollo Mirzoev was also unanimously appointed during the meeting the new Executive Director of the Secretariat.

Kazakh Minister of Foreign Affairs Kairat Abdrakhmanov

thanked China and outgoing CICA Executive Director Gong Jianwei for contributing to CICA's development. He said China helped steer a new stage of the conference's development aimed at ensuring sustainable security and cooperation in Asia.

He also noted that the CICA youth and business councils have been established and the non-governmental forum has launched, having become a new channel for discussion and dissemination of the CICA security concept. The foreign minister also emphasised CICA's expansion during China's leadership, when its 27th member, the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka joined the organisation on July 20, 2018.

The minister also emphasised Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev's initiative to establish an Organisation for Security and Development in Asia on the basis of the conference and called for further discussion.

CICA was established Oct. 5, 1992 on Nazarbayev's initiative. CICA is an intergovernmental forum for dialogue, consultation, decision-making and implementation of measures based on consensus on security issues in Asia. CICA members include 27 Asian countries, eight observer countries and five organisations.

Foreign Ministry works to return citizens from refugee camp in Syria

Staff Report

ASTANA – The Kazakh Foreign Ministry is working to return 23 Kazakh citizens, seven women and 16 children, from a refugee camp in Syria. The individuals must be determined by Syrian and Iraqi authorities as not to be involved in terrorist activities before they can be returned.

"I want to assure that the work is carried out to identify the location of our citizens in Syria and Iraq. The question of returning them has been raised. The Kazakh embassy in Jordan as well as the Consulate

in Lebanon are concerned with the search of our citizens. In addition, we received requests from parents of our citizens who are currently in Syria. Necessary work is under way, special services, Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Committee for Emergency Situations are being engaged. The aircraft will be allocated in case of their return," said First Deputy Foreign Minister Mukhtar Tleuberdy.

"Syrian and Iraqi authorities conduct special check of many Kazakh citizens on their involvement in terrorist activities. After determining their non-involvement,

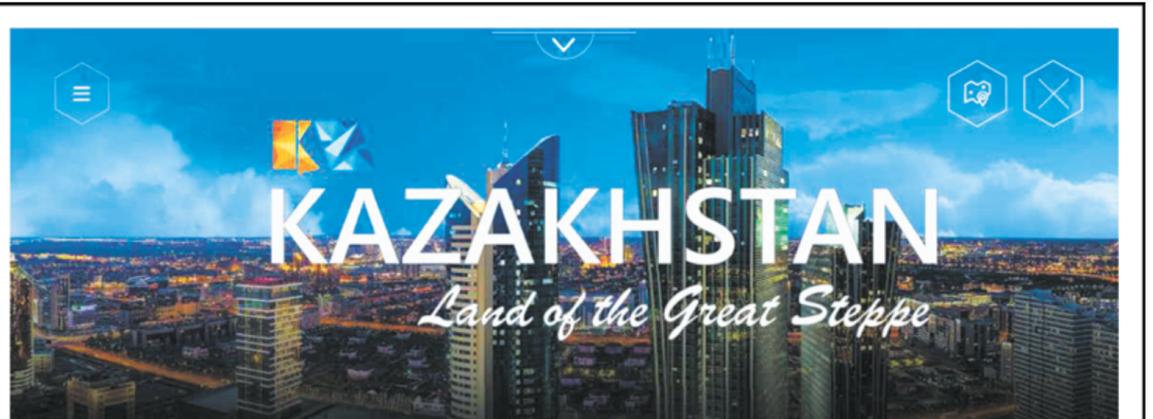
they will be submitted to the Kazakh side," explained Tleuberdy.

He also noted the possibility of returning children to Kazakhstan is being considered while their mothers are being inspected. "Mother's consent is required in order to return them home," he said.

"We possess some facts that grandparents admit their children's involvement in terrorist activities and thus they can initiate question regarding their grandchildren and deprive parents of their parental rights," he said.

Khabar 24 journalists recently received a video with footage taken by Kazakh citizens from

the refugee camp in Syria. Seven Kazakh women and 16 children have been staying there for eight months. One of these women, who introduced herself as Sabira Moldabekova, said she had left for Syria four years ago in order to return her daughter and grandchildren whose father was killed in that country. Currently, they are located in the refugee camp in the territory controlled by the Kurdish armed formations on the border with Turkey along with other Kazakh citizens. Kazakh citizens came from Uralsk, Aktobe, Almaty and Zhezkazgan. They live in tents in unfavourable conditions.



Google play

DISCOVER KAZAKHSTAN WITH A NEW APP



App Store

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

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

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

Nation&Capital

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 26, 2018

PEOPLE

Kazakhstan's human capital gives country business advantage, says international entrepreneur

B2

CULTURE

First Almaty Film Festival seeks rapprochement of cultures, international cooperation

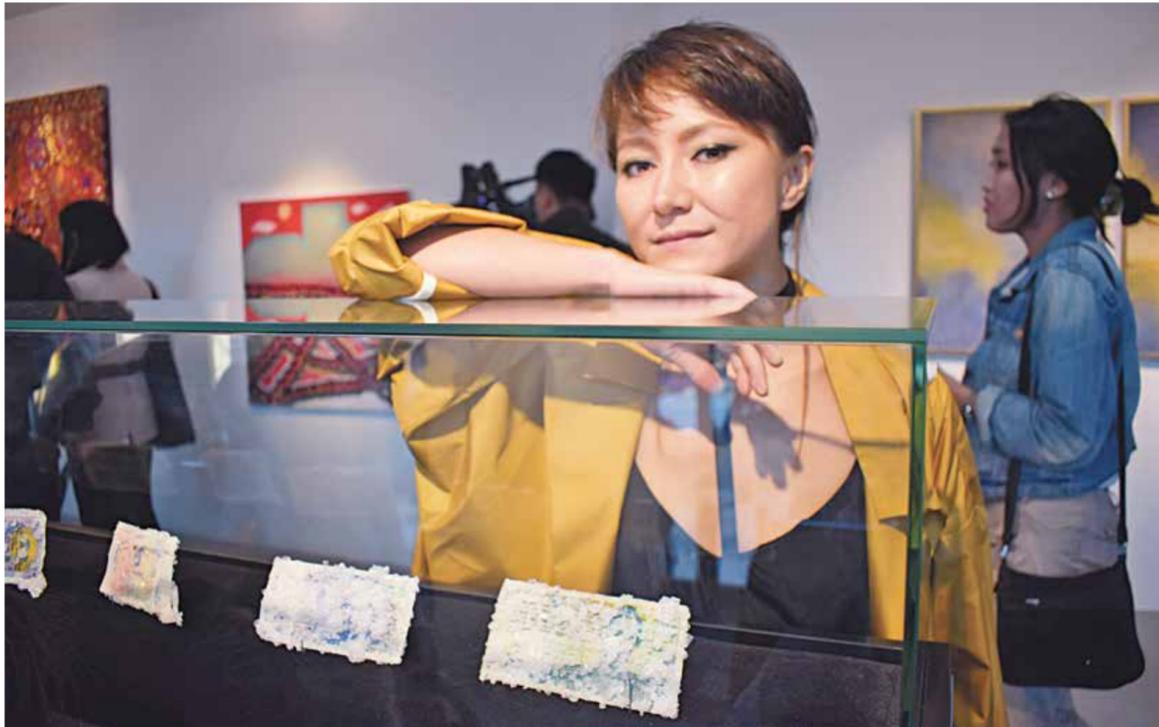
B3

SPORTS

Golovkin suffers first loss in career, relinquishes titles

B7

Three-part exhibit displays works of young Kazakh, international artists



Artist Ada Yu with her series of exhibits "Cristallisation de l'être – decripation de l'âme" (The crystallization of self-perception is the deliverance of the soul).

By Aidana Yergaliyeva

ASTANA – Young Kazakh and foreign artists presented works of contemporary art Sept. 15 at the first event of Astana Art Show 2018. The exhibition will continue until Oct. 28 in Astana.

The exhibition consists of three parts. The first part is named Metamorphosis and includes works from more than 20 Kazakh and foreign artists.

The second part named Restart will present the works of 16 young artists from Central Asia and Kazakhstan. It will open Sept. 22 at the Moskva Business Centre.

The last one, Ghost Expedition, will present works of artists from Europe and Kazakhstan inspired by sacred sites in the Mangistau region at TSE Art Destination Sept. 26.

Apart from the exhibitions,

Astana Art Show offers public lectures by historians and philosophers, masterclasses by famous artists and artists-guided excursions and workshops during the event.

The first event, Metamorphosis, is a creative space that incorporates exhibits of all forms made by various media starting from paintings and sculptures to mind-blowing, more modern and abstract installations. Some artworks were made exclusively for the event, while others have also been shown internationally.

Numerous Metamorphosis exhibit visitors crowded around an installation called "Kazakh traditional tea," which is a large bowl decorated with ceramic cups and ornaments offering free tea.

"You can see ornaments from various cultures on the cups that together form one Kazakh piyala (tea cup) from which tea is being

poured to all the visitors. Many children and visitors take the to-go cups," said author of the exhibit Mansur Smagambetov.

Ada Yu, an artist from London, in her series of exhibits under the name "Cristallisation de l'être – decripation de l'âme" (The crystallization of self-perception is the deliverance of the soul) illustrates the change of the epochs. Taking a closer look at the exhibits, older visitors could recognise bank bills from the Soviet times and the early years of Kazakhstan as an independent state.

Yu said the changing bills represent not only a change in geographic and political time but also in the updating of the values from each previous period.

Many artists through their works in the exhibition wanted to show the problems of identity in an ever globalising world.

Another part of the Metamor-

phosis exhibition that drew interest was a large installation with digital collages. They were created by the London art duo Mika Orynassarova and Bakhtiyar Berkin (better known as Mika & Berkin). This March they came to Kazakhstan to work with local galleries. They presented their personal exhibition recently that will also be available for viewing for one month at the Yessentai Gallery.

"The collage is made from photograph illustrations from 1950-60s from journals and ads and pictures. ... [The artwork reflects] the theme of metamorphosis: a rebirth from a caterpillar to a butterfly," said Orynassarova.

The opening of the exhibition attracted a steady stream of visitors and seemed to be well received.

"I think that everything is very well organised and beautiful," said visitor Gulden Timur.

Astana to host 2019 Global Urban Tourism Summit

By Dilshat Zhussupova

ASTANA – Astana will host the eighth World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) Global Summit on Urban Tourism in 2019 following a decision taken at the recently concluded similar summit in the capital of South Korea.

Seoul's seventh Global Summit on Urban Tourism: A 2030 Vision for Urban Tourism gathered more than 1,000 participants from 57 countries Sept. 16-19.

Astana's summit will attract leading tourism experts, gather government and private partners from all sectors to discuss a new form of urban tourism development, in which tourism will function as a tool for social cohesion, preservation of culture and economic development.

The global summit is hosted annually in a city selected according to UNWTO requirements. In deciding upon Astana as the summit destination, the city's development prospects for urban tourism, previous projects and event experience, sustainable development, economy, social sphere, ecology and administrative systems were considered.

"Earlier, the summit was held in large cities in which the level of tourism development exceeded global indicators, such as Istanbul, Moscow, Barcelona, Marrakech, Luxor, Kuala Lumpur and Seoul. Holding an event of this scale and

level is the first in the history of independent Kazakhstan in the field of tourism," stated the Astana Akimat (city administration).

The event is an opportunity to make Astana widely known as a new centre of tourism in Central Asia, to demonstrate new directions for city development, showcase its meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions (MICE) potential and strengthen cooperation with major international organisations. Hotel occupancy, souvenir demand and the number of cafe and restaurant visitors are thus expected to increase.

Tourism industry development is a key priority of the Kazakhstan 2050 Strategy, which involves positioning the country among the top 30 global economies by 2050. Moreover, Kazakhstan's Tourism Industry Development Plan 2020 aims to establish five tourism clusters, invest \$4 billion and create 300,000 new jobs in the industry by 2020.

The UNWTO is a United Nations (UN) agency which promotes responsible, sustainable and universally accessible tourism. It generates market knowledge, promotes competitive and sustainable tourism policies and instruments, advances tourism education and training and fosters tourism as an effective tool for development. A leading international organisation in tourism, its membership includes 158 countries, six territories and more than 500 affiliate members.

Tselinny: from old Soviet cinema to modern arts

By Aidana Yergaliyeva

ASTANA – Tselinny, once a fashionable Soviet cinema in Almaty, has been reconstructed into the country's first centre for contemporary culture and arts. The re-opening began Sept. 15 with an exhibition of contemporary architecture and arts.

Tselinny was one of the city's largest cinemas when it opened in 1964 but lost its glory in the 1990s. The movie house closed and was sold in the 2000s.

The initial display, available until Nov. 4, will allow the cinema to resume its past glory for a few months. The building will then be partially closed for reconstruction. Another part of the centre will serve as an exhibition and research site until its full opening, anticipated in 2020.

"Tselinny will not only be another attraction for citizens, but it will give a powerful impetus to the development of modern culture and art throughout Central

Asia, and in the future will enter the list of leading world art institutions," said founder Kairat Boranbayev.

Opening day started with the three-part project Beginning, with visitors treated to various installations and photos with views of old Almaty. The first section traces the story of the building to Soviet times.

Garage, the Russian museum of modern art, assisted the organisation, as architects from the Grace bureau designed the exhibition's scenography. The building contains large-format photographs, research materials and archival documents of Almaty's architecture from 1960-1980s.

"The centres of art, galleries and museums today are the main adornment of modern megacities. So, it is not surprising that we want to give a city like Almaty, which is dynamically developing, its own cultural centre created by the latest world standards," said Boranbayev.

Continued on Page B4

Hilton brings new affordable hotel brand, plans to expand business in Kazakhstan

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – Hilton, one of the world's largest hotel chains, opened the first Hampton by Hilton Aug. 15 in the Kazakh capital. The Astana Times spoke with Astana Triumphal Arch General Manager Maria Temerova to learn about the hotel's amenities and why the company is attracted to the Kazakh market.

"We are proud to announce that we provide the best service by Hilton with an affordable cost. An interesting fact about our hotel is Hamptonality, which is the mix of the Hampton brand and hospitality. Hamptonality means that our team members are friendly, authentic, careful and thoughtful with every guest and it is fact. It means we create Hamptonality on our own. We bring our own individual strengths and irresistible skills to work. We find our own ways to deliver on our brand values," she said.

The 114-room hotel is located in the heart of the new business district near Nazarbayev University, the expo grounds and the airport. A standard room starts at 24,000 tenge (US\$66) average per night and there is a number of packages and discounts.

Bringing best practices to ho-



General Manager of Hampton by Hilton Astana Triumphal Arch Maria Temerova.

tel operations is a priority for the company.

"There are many hotels in Astana, so we have a very experienced team and I am sure they are the best professionals in the market. In addition, we decided to trust in youth and hired people just after graduation who really want to work in the hospitality industry, develop themselves in this business and with passion in their eyes. Everyone who works at Hilton takes part in trainings depending on his or her position. We have general trainings, but still there are very important trainings about our brand standards, securi-

ty, safety and anticorruption," she explained.

The staff have the opportunity to choose among training programmes at Hilton University.

"For example, a front office agent can receive education in sales, housekeeping and HR and then can use this knowledge in practice and may change his or her position in time," she said.

Temerova noted Hilton is involved in the improvements in Kazakh business and tourism. The five-star Hilton Astana and Hilton Garden Inn Astana already operate in the city.

"Kazakhstan is a very young and interesting country. Main international companies have representative offices in Astana or Almaty; almost every week, governmental delegations visit the capital and national tourism is developing very fast. Now, Hilton is represented by three different brands in Astana for each segment of business and some are in the pipeline," she added.

"The potential of tourism is still developing," said Temerova. "At this moment, we do not have a big amount of people travelling for leisure; still, there are more individual business travellers from outbound and from Kazakhstan. The Hampton by Hilton brand is a good choice for them, because we are providing

the best service and convenient location, which is great to go to/from the airport and city centre, and we have everything that a guest might need for a two-three day accommodation during their business trip."

Hilton is a leader in the global hospitality market with a portfolio of 14 international brands, including approximately 5,400 facilities with more than 880,000 rooms in 106 countries. The company does not have a target audience and welcomes all visitors.

"Astana is a business city and travellers mostly visit Astana for business. But our rate segmentation and location also give us a very good chance to work with tourists, especially with tourists who come to visit sports events or events in the expo centre," she said.

From the customers' perspective, variety is now a major trend in the hotel industry.

"It is very good that in the city there are many hotels with different prices, services, location and philosophy. It has been proven that the most important values of the hotel are a clean room, comfortable bed and tasty, hot breakfast and these are the things we are ready to provide our guests with. In the near future, we hope to see more guests coming for leisure and conventions and we will do our best to be the lead hotel in Astana," she said.

THINGS TO WATCH & PLACES TO GO

NATIONAL MUSEUM

July 6 – October 3 Artists of 19th and 20th centuries from private collections, exhibition

June 28 – Sept. 30 Paul Serusier's art exhibition

Aug. 8 – Nov. 3 Pablo Picasso's art exhibition

ASTANA OPERA

September 26 at 7 p.m. Abai, opera

September 29 at 1 p.m. World Heart Day, concert

September 30 at 6 p.m. Don Quixote, ballet

September 29 at 6 p.m. Salome, ballet

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 26, 2018

Kazakhstan's human capital gives country business advantage, says international entrepreneur

By Yerbolat Uatkhonov

ASTANA – Will Aston has formed two companies within the Astana International Financial Centre (AIFC), becoming one of the first businesspeople to cooperate with it. He spoke about the advantages of working at the centre and the services it provides and evaluated Kazakhstan's potential in an interview with The Astana Times.

Ozara Services, a consulting company built on experience from similar jurisdictions, is Aston's first venture in the centre. He has also formed Ozara Finance, an Islamic fintech organisation developing and proving a platform for Islamic investment and finance cooperatives.

"We provide business advisory services to help companies that may be applying to the AIFC. Also, we are providing business advisory in terms of ongoing operational activity," he said.



Will Aston

"The second service we have is the programme of implementation and major projects. We have extensive experience in leading and delivering major programmes. The third area is digital transformation. I think there are a lot of opportunities in Kazakhstan and within the financial services sector for digital transformation. These are the three services that our consulting business offers," he added.

At this point, the companies have enough clients.

"We have work underway for Islamic fintech. It received financial services permission to be able to operate in the regulatory sandbox and now we are engaging with the agricultural sector to be able to build up and prove that platform. We will work on that for two years. We are going to work with people in the sector and international agencies. We want to be able to help the growth of the sector, to be able to prove the platform, make sure that products work and make sure they work within the context of Kazakhstan. After the two-year period within the sandbox, we will be seeking to roll out and operate a platform on an ongoing basis," said Aston.

He finds Kazakhstan's potential to be very high.

"The fundamentals are good from the perspective of development; the human capital and talent are better than in other juris-

dictions where I have worked. If I compare with, for example, the United Arab Emirates, then I can say that the quality of the individuals is very high. They are well-educated and very capable. They are also very young and that's a huge benefit in terms of longer term potential," he said.

"But it also means that there is a challenge in terms of getting the right mix of international experience to work with the very capable, young talented people in Kazakhstan. I think the real question is actually how you execute – what capabilities you need to be able to actually deliver on the promise. I think it requires the ability to bring the best international experience and practically make that work. Another challenge is making sure there is actually visibility and transparency of how things are done. I think the centre is going to be pivotal in enabling more international investment to come in. The foundations for the centre

are there. It is now down to executing with transparency and visibility and, if that's done, I think the promise will be fulfilled," he added.

Aston's staff works in Kazakhstan and the U.K., and he has already evaluated the expat centre operation.

"The expat centre was very useful for me. Obviously, as a foreigner coming to Kazakhstan who doesn't speak much Russian and doesn't speak Kazakh, the expat centre has been very helpful in actually enabling me to get all the things done with my visa application and making sure it was all correct. I didn't know what I needed to do in terms of my visa, exactly what needed to be done for company bank payment. The expat centre helped me and actually did the form-filling work with me, to make sure that all sorted out and was right the first time. It was not necessarily part of their job,

but they have been extraordinary helpful in making sure that it's been as easy as possible for me to be able to get everything sorted out," he said.

Aston feels AIFC's Bureau for Professional Development is very important as well, due to the need to ensure things are operating to the highest international standards.

"That means the opportunity is particularly for local people to be able to get the right qualifications, as well as gaining experience. I think the educational work of the ongoing professional education of the bureau is absolutely foundational. That will certainly be the case as we roll out the platform for Islamic investment and finance cooperatives, because those are member institutions and the customers running it, so making sure that we have the appropriate professional training foundation is really important for us," he added.

Kazakh Supreme Mufti: care for peace is moral, civic duty of every Muslim

Continued from Page A1

SAMK, mosques and zeket (charity) funds actively participate in the country's social life by providing families with many children, the elderly, widows and people with disabilities with necessities such as food, clothes and coal for heating in winter months. Each mosque also organises charity dinners during the holy month of Ramadan. Other

ing the unity of Kazakh Muslims, promoting family values, organising trainings for Islamic clerks and controlling rituals, ceremonies and mosque activities, as well as promoting religious education using mass media.

The organisation also focuses on religious literature, textbooks and websites. Daily activities include meetings, speeches and discussions on relevant topics, such as



Kazakh Supreme Mufti Serikbay kazhy Oraz

initiatives include contributing to building houses, purchasing apartments for the needy and preparing children for school.

The Supreme Mufti, however, also stressed the importance of unity and friendly relations between different nationalities and religions.

"Approximately 70 percent of the population in Kazakhstan, a home for more than 120 nationalities of different religious views, are Muslims. The religion, one of the main components of the nation's spiritual culture, which traditionally highly valued nobility, tolerance and hospitality, in my opinion contributes to the stability and peace. Moreover, the prosperity of the country and its nation is only possible when there is unity, peace and harmony. At the same time, care for peace and contributing to its preservation is a moral and civic duty of every Muslim," he added.

The mufti highly values the Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions' contribution to peace.

"Surely, this year the congress will also be remembered for its richness and content, making a real contribution to ensuring mutual respect, understanding and harmony on the planet," he said of the event slated to take place in Astana Oct. 10-11.

SAMK works to create the proper conditions for preaching and disseminating Islamic teachings. Its other goals include maintain-

spiritual harmony, tolerance and real Islamic values.

During the first forum of imams, SAMK adopted four documents including two stipulating its activities, such as Platform of Kazakh Muslims and Norms and Ethics of the SAMK Worker. The other documents, Personality of a Muslim and Portrait of the Imam, illustrate the personality of modern Muslims and determine the requirements for education and qualification level of religious clerks.

"First of all, Islam is a science; therefore, I pay significant attention to the qualification of imams. A highly educated population demands educated imams capable of answering their questions. For that purpose, we regularly check the knowledge of imams in local mosques and send some of them for short-term trainings to Muslim countries," he said.

The Supreme Mufti believes the spirituality of the Kazakh people should not be neglected.

"As President Nursultan Nazarbayev points out, the spiritual component of the personality is of high significance since it gives strength and power to world civilisations. Therefore, the Kazakh nation faces an important task of modernising its consciousness. As regards the personality of the modern Muslim in Kazakhstan, I perceive him/her to be an educated, kind family person, adhering to religious standards and being a patriot of the nation," he added.

100 New Face's pediatrician conducts complex surgeries, changes children's lives

By Abira Kuandyk

ASTANA — Paediatric orthopaedist and traumatologist Isamdun Haramov is a real saviour and hero who gives children a chance to live full and happy lives. His diligent hands correct physiological deformities in dozens of Kazakh youngsters every year.

"Why did I become a doctor? Looking back, I think the main reason was my father's illness. I learned about giving an injection when I studied in the fifth grade. My father's sufferings have prompted me to pursue studies in medicine. I think every person who has put on a white coat works for the well-being and health of every Kazakh citizen," he said.

Haramov began his studies at Karaganda State Medical Institute in 1989. Six years later, he graduated from Almaty State Medical Institute with a paediatrics specialty and completed a clinical residency at the same institution from 1995-1997. Since 1997, Haramov has practiced at the Asfendiyarov Kazakh National

Medical University Aksai University Clinic.

He performs unique surgeries for children with severe forms of scoliosis. This type of surgery is not new for Kazakhstan, though before last year, it was only conducted in the capital.

"These are very complex surgeries lasting around three-four hours to seven-eight hours. In the course of this operation, a metal structure is installed which remains for a lifetime, unless rejection and pain emerge. Children are given a lengthy rehabilitation course after the operation; they cannot sit and receive home study," said Haramov.

Introducing the operational aid at a university clinic in the southern part of the country was a real event. Parents and their children previously needed to travel for the surgery and its aftermath, an option not open to all.

Children with third-fourth degree scoliosis are surgery candidates, as it is the stage when the deformity begins to impact internal organs. The condition, which may be congenital or detected in

youngsters age eight-nine, most frequently occurs in girls.

"These are truly unique operations that merit keen attention, resources, professionalism and experience. They are not only complex, but also costly operations. In addition to purchasing metal structures, a special tool is also needed," he said.

The doctor's merits have been

repeatedly noted with various awards. He received the diploma of honour from the Ministry of Healthcare in 2005 and was bestowed with the Excellence in the Healthcare of Kazakhstan badge in 2012. Haramov also had been presented with the Asfendiyarov Kazakh National Medical University silver medal.



Isamdun Haramov

Official among 100 New Faces, promotes reading in rural areas

By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – Nurzhan Altayev, Kazakh deputy minister of labour and social protection and previous deputy minister of agriculture and deputy chair of the Atameken National Chamber of Entrepreneurs, is among the nation's 100 New Faces. In addition to his professional success, Altayev is known for his nationwide campaign that seeks to promote a culture of reading, primarily in rural areas.

He launched his Reading Nation project in October 2016, starting from a rural library in the Tolebi district in the South Kazakhstan region that was upgraded with new equipment, technology and books in three languages.

"We saw old libraries in villages left from the Soviet times. The buildings were in very bad condition. The books there were very old, approximately from 1970s. Several other business people and I decided to select libraries and upgrade them at our own expense, buying new literature in three languages," he told The Astana Times.

The books range in theme from world classics, including Charles Dickens, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, William Shakespeare and



Nurzhan Altayev

Leo Tolstoy, to Kazakh literature.

"Contemporary books about business, for example such as 'Blue Ocean Strategy' [by W. Chan Kim], are in Russian and also translated in Kazakh. We also included English language learning books, because there was a big demand for that. We bought very diverse literature," he added.

The libraries were also equipped with co-working centres.

"This is where they can gather. We connected centres to the Internet. People can use electronic resources and interact with each other. We also invited business coaches there and well-known people so that they would come and meet young people in rural areas, because they [young people] live in such a big in-

formation vacuum. Hardly anyone visits those villages," said Altayev.

The example of prominent figures, he said, was meant to show young people that everyone has a chance to succeed.

"One does not need to be someone's relative or have connections to achieve something. First, [there is] knowledge and it is also important to read more. There is nothing difficult in their way. Ordinary people can achieve success without anyone's help. These are self-made people," he noted.

Altayev believes reading is the key to success.

"I believe books developed me as a person. There is a significant amount of research that was conducted recently around the world that focused on successful people, politicians and millionaires and that sought to understand what was common among them. It turned out there was nothing common in gender, race and skin, but their love of books. They were always reading, from early childhood," he said.

Being included in the New Faces list was a surprise for Altayev, who was appointed minister of agriculture in November.

"It seemed to me that I did not do something significant. It was a small project. We did not do it for promot-

ing ourselves, but wanted young people to be at the centre," he said.

He noted those selected feel a certain responsibility.

"It was quite unexpected for me, considering I was in civil service at that time. I then contacted the organisers to learn whether it was appropriate for me to be on the list and they said that I was not a civil service worker when the applications were submitted and that they were not able to exclude me from the list anyway," he said.

"At the meeting with the President, there were very interesting people that I have never heard of. Such interesting fates and lives. I was astonished," he added.

The national project that selected 102 finalists last year, including athletes, scientists, individuals in the arts, medical workers, business people and social workers, entered its second stage in September.

Altayev believes initiative is important to demonstrate the existence of the "Kazakh dream."

"You know, there is such a term as 'American dream' meaning that regardless of gender, race or social position, a person can achieve everything and even become president. I believe the situation is even better in Kazakhstan. We have a 'Kazakh dream,'" he said.

CULTURE

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 26, 2018

First Almaty Film Festival seeks rapprochement of cultures, international cooperation

By Abira Kuandyk

ASTANA – The first Almaty International Film Festival, held Sept. 15-19, achieved its goals of developing Kazakh cinema, increasing the public's interest in film art and strengthening international cooperation.

The festival, which will become an annual event, presented the opening ceremony at the Palace of the Republic with the film "Ayka" directed by Sergei Dvortsevov.

"The festival was a success. I think many will agree – the festival was conducted at a very high level. We watched ten films; they were different and we unanimously chose the most iconic. It is very bold," jury member and Russian director and screenwriter Sergey Bodrov told sputniknews.kz.

The festival's theme, Rapprochement of Cultures, included films of 2018 made as co-productions of two or more countries – "And Breathe Normally" (Belgium, Iceland, Sweden), "Averno" (Bolivia, Uruguay), "Crystal Swan" (Belarus, Germany, Russia, U.S.), "The Gentle Indifference of the World"



Photo credit: Almaty Film Festival Facebook page.

(France, Kazakhstan), "Horizon" (Georgia, Sweden), "Omotenashi" (Japan, Taiwan), "Painting Life" (India, U.S.), "The Reports on Sarah and Salem" (Germany, Mexico, the Netherlands, Palestine)

"Sofia" (France, Qatar) and "Volcano" (Germany, Ukraine).

"The international co-production in cinema gives a number of advantages and opens numerous doors, namely the opportunity to expand

the film audience in new markets, to attract creative specialists and investors in the country and to learn the culture and traditions of other nations," noted the festival website, almatyfilmfestival.com.

In addition to the competitive programmes, City in Motion, Family Films, Special Screening and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) presented 21 feature films and documentaries from around the world.

The festival, organised by the Astana Film Fund, was initiated by the Almaty Akimat (administration). The event also included a business forum where participants discussed prospects for developing domestic cinema, exporting Kazakh films to other countries, co-production issues and the influence of cinema on developing Almaty's tourism potential.

"Currently, 20-25 films are shot per year in Kazakhstan. The annual market of private Kazakh film production is about \$8-10 million. An average of \$200,000-\$250,000 is spent on the production of one Kazakh film and box offices comprise around \$400,000-500,000. Within the film festival we organised project pitching, which will help the winner to get investments from the Almaty Film Festival to implement the project," said festival general producer Ernar Kurmashev.

Disney to develop more projects with Kazakhstan

By Aidana Yergaliyeva

ASTANA – Walt Disney's Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) office is enthusiastic about Kazakhstan's draft law "On cinema" and plans to cooperate with the country by assisting filmmakers and the local dubbing industry, said the company's Director General Marina Zhigalova-Ozkan during the Sept. 15 roundtable at the Almaty Film Festival's business site.

The Disney delegation held a series of negotiations with Kazakh Minister of Culture and Sports Arystanbek Mukhamediuly and the Bolashak Corporate Fund during its visit to the capital on the eve of the festival's Sept. 15 opening.

"This support is very important for us," said Zhigalova-Ozkan, referring to the governmental bodies. "There are ideas for cooperation. Perhaps, it's too early to say something... We are discussing different plans, and we are optimistic about the opportunities that exist in Kazakhstan."

The company, along with other world-famous film studios such as Paramount Pictures, 20th Century Fox and Warner Bros, will be ready to cooperate closer with Kazakhstan once the Mazhilis (lower house of Parliament) passes the law, said Mukhamediuly. The draft will be introduced Sept. 19.

The draft law suggests providing full financial support, covering the entire estimated cost, for socially important films including children's movies and social, animated and debut films, he added.

Bolashak proposed amendments to the draft law to create better tax preference conditions for distributing organisations.

"That would increase the interest of cinemas to show films in Kazakh during prime time," said Director Dinara Chaizhunusova.

"This would be a good help for the Kazakh-speaking audience. This project contributes to the formation of a foreign cinema bank in the Kazakh language."

Bolashak also discussed their ideas with Disney on ways it can help protect the rights of children with autism in receiving quality education.

With Bolashak's direct engagement and support, 25 foreign films have been dubbed in Kazakh to date, most released by Disney. Dubbing a foreign film into Kazakh costs \$150,000.

The nation's dubbing industry has incorporated many improvements since Zhigalova-Ozkan's last visit in 2011.

"The first film we dubbed [in Kazakh] was 'Cars.' Back then [in 2011], it was not easy to find voices to train. There was no dubbing industry, no ready actors," she said.

Director General of the Walt Disney Company CIS Marina Zhigalova-Ozkan. Photo credit: inform.kz.

Kazakhstan now has two certified dubbing studios in Almaty and the capital and certain trained actors who can sing at a level equal to the text dubbing, she added.

The Kazakh-speaking audience will soon be able to enjoy the newest Disney films in their native language. The cartoon "Ralph vs. the Internet" will be released Nov. 22 and "The Nutcracker and the Four Realms" on Dec. 8.

Operating in Moscow for the last 12 years, Disney's CIS office has become one of the leading developers of the Russian entertainment and media market, as well as running Disney's innovation centre to produce its own films such as "The Last Warrior." The CIS is also interested in reviewing films made in Kazakhstan with the possibility of distribution in Russian territory, said Zhigalova-Ozkan.

World-class musicians perform on Astana Opera stage

By Dilshat Zhussupova

ASTANA – World-renowned musicians performed the Sept. 16 concert "Stars of the Performing Arts" at the Astana Opera.

The opera house's sixth theatrical season recently kicked off with the Sept. 8 concert "Astana Is My Beautiful Dream," and audiences were further treated to Franz von Suppé's overture "Poet and Peasant," a concert suite performed by a cellist, soprano and Konstantin Boyarsky's symphony orchestra. Max Bruch's Kol Nidrei was performed by a cellist and symphony orchestra, and the evening con-

cluded with Felix Mendelssohn's Symphony No. 4 in A Major, Op. 90.

David Geringas performed Bruch's work on the cello, accompanied by Astana Opera's symphony orchestra. He is a Lithuanian cellist, conductor and Gold Medal laureate of the International Tchaikovsky competition. Geringas studied at the Moscow Conservatory and is known as an extremely versatile musician, exhibiting a vast repertoire from early baroque to contemporary music. He performed as a soloist with the Berlin Philharmonic, Vienna Philharmonic, Royal Philharmonic, London Philharmonic, Czech Philhar-

UNESCO to conduct events supporting Silk Road Heritage sites

By Dilshat Zhussupova

ASTANA – The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) will conduct events in September and October to support its Silk Roads Heritage Properties in Central Asia project, reports unesco.kz.

The project involves training national experts from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan in the documentation, conservation and sustainable management of World Heritage properties and the Silk Roads' cultural heritage corridors. The organisation is seeking to strengthen sub-regional level coordination and reinforce knowledge and data-sharing among Central Asian experts.

Within the framework of the project, a series of events are slated for September-October. These include national coordination meetings in the cluster countries, a working group's sub-regional meeting on the preparation of the nomination dossier on the Serial Transnational World Heritage Nomination of Silk Roads: Fergana – Syr Darya Corridor on Oct. 2 and a sub-regional workshop in Almaty on management strategy development for the Silk

Roads' common corridors on Oct. 3-4.

Representatives of the ministries of culture of Central Asian countries, UNESCO National Commissions and experts on the Fergana – Syr Darya Corridor from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan will participate in the meetings. Invited international experts include the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), International Conservation Center-Xi'an, the International Institute for Central Asian Studies (IICAS) and UNESCO representatives.

Central Asia's segments were key to the Silk Roads network from the second century B.C. to the late 16th century. The routes facilitated cultural, religious and economic exchanges and ultimately lead to the advancement of urban planning, architecture, art, science, technology and craftsmanship. Their conservation, protection, documentation and management are important to Central Asian states.

UNESCO is a UN agency that promotes cross-border collaboration through education, science and culture. UNESCO's project, sponsored by Japan, has helped support World Heritage properties since 2011.

Spirit of Dance festival unites cultures through music, movement

By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – Astana hosted The Spirit of Dance festival, part of the Spirit of Tengri project, Sept. 14 at the Kazakhstan concert hall, the city's largest. The event gathered dance groups from 14 countries, including Azerbaijan, Canada, Georgia, Latvia, India, Ireland, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan.

Established in 2012 by Kazakhstan's Tengri FM radio station, the Spirit of Tengri is a national and cultural project that has welcomed more than 120,000 visitors from Kazakhstan and abroad to celebrate nomadic culture. The Spirit of Tengri provides those from formerly nomadic societies and those simply interested to use music to access and explore their cultural roots. Bands from more than 70 countries around the globe participated in the festival throughout the years.

Now, the brand-new Spirit of Dance project aims to do something similar, but through dance.

Spirit of Dance participants performed national dances in a contemporary manner in 20- to 30-minute blocks, using another country's traditional sounds to guide their movements.

"We came up with this idea long ago. Organising the Spirit of Tengri festivals, we saw that we could add more and improve them with a real ethnic dance. Different dance groups from around the globe contacted us, but there was no conceptual idea that would have been interesting to us and our audi-

ence. We decided that if we could present ethnic music in an interesting way, then we could do the same with dance. Our idea was to invite small dance groups and ask them to present a contemporary version of their national dance," said Spirit of Tengri general producer Zhan Kasteyev, as quoted by Tengrinews.

"For instance, Georgian dancers adapt their national dance to Canadian music or Canadian dancers adapt their dance to Kazakh national music. This is a show where dance takes us on a journey throughout the universe. We tried to encompass as many countries as possible," said Kasteyev.

The dance festival promotes diversity of art, said Kazakh Minister of Culture and Sports Arystanbek Mukhamediuly.

"I personally thank the project organisers, because we need such diversity in art. As a ministry, we are involved in the classical, ballet and pop genres, but when something extraordinary like this is shown, and for the first time such diverse ethnic dances take place with live vocals, this gives rise to great admiration and deep respect," said the minister.

"You know, those who visit our country are surprised at how spiritually wealthy our country is. This is a big positive sign that we strive to greatness and diversity. The festival gathered full house and this shows that people are willing to spend money on self development and cultural enlightenment. This is a sign that Kazakhstan is on the right track," said Mukhamediuly.



WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 26, 2018

Research sharing platform seeks to nurture Kazakh expertise

By Dilshat Zhussupova

ASTANA – PaperLab is a discussion platform offering scholars and state bodies the opportunity to be exposed to and critically reflect on each other's expertise, views and decision-making. Launched in 2016 by Soros Foundation-Kazakhstan's Public Policy initiative graduates Serik Beissembayev and Malika Tukmadiyeva, the platform supports young researchers and contributes to developing Kazakh expertise.

The project idea was devised during their five-month fellowships at George Washington University's Elliott School of International Affairs' Central Asia Programme. There, the young professionals built on their research and analytical skills through seminars, workshops, training sessions and mentorships.

"Given that experience, we realised that we lack a medium through which researchers may share their work and discuss their findings under a common theme," said Beissembayev. "The absence of such a platform is a key problem in our community because it hinders the development of research."

They took it upon themselves to create and foster a research-oriented environment in Kazakhstan, registering the discussion platform as the PaperLab public fund. The name is equal parts creative and informative, referencing the colloquial term for an article in academia – "paper" – and the idea of a public policy research lab.

PaperLab is an independent platform providing an open exchange among engaged citizens, researchers and government officials. Every six weeks, it holds expert discussions on issues which concern everyday citizens, with the objective of developing recommendations for effective policy decision-making.

Topics include sports, religion, gender, media, non-governmental organisations and criminal justice reform. Selecting the themes involves noting what has caused public resonance and considering whether experts may make a valuable contribution to the given policy area.

"Rarely do we have issues with finding experts and researchers," said Tukmadiyeva. "We try to focus on young researchers because they are interesting, charismatic and

produce high-quality research. For the sake of the quality of the discussions, our job is often to pivot the attention of researchers from theory, methodology and international best practices toward the formulation of recommendations, since we want discussions to be more applied than abstract."

In this way, PaperLab has established a network of early-career researchers from different countries.

"There are researchers from Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. The latter constitute the project's backbone, many of whom are graduates of the Soros Foundation-Kazakhstan's Public Policy initiative," added Beissembayev.

The project founders value a plurality of perspectives, as indicated by the inclusivity of their discussion panels.

"Initially, we were concerned that it would be difficult to work with government agencies because there is a commonly held belief that our state bodies are closed off to communication and engagement," said Tukmadiyeva. "We did not encounter this problem. With some exceptions, almost all government agencies have been receptive, especially at the top levels."

As they developed the basic concept the last two years through trial and error, the PaperLab team has come to better understand how dialogue may be best facilitated. Beissembayev and Tukmadiyeva aim to accomplish even greater inclusivity by fostering representation from a broader range of experts from the country's regions and, for the first time, hosting discussions in Kazakh.

"We are interested in observing the difference between discussions in Russian and Kazakh, if there are any differences at all," said Tukmadiyeva.

The desired outcome is to provide an opportunity for the meaningful discussion and analysis of important decisions, given that many reforms are currently occurring in Kazakhstan.

"Even if we do not directly influence decisions, we still shape a culture in which officials may come and talk with experts and citizens on contentious issues," said Beissembayev. "Following certain discussions, civil servants have reached out to us for consultations, an organisation of Astana's Department of Culture and Sports approached us. I realised that the problem partially stems from the fact that state bodies often do not have access to expert knowledge in the first place."

PaperLab discussions are announced and livestreamed on Facebook at @paperlabkz.

Young Kazakh entrepreneur produces halal cosmetics

By Abira Kuandyk

ASTANA – Husna Cosmetics, which sells natural halal items in Almaty, Astana, Shymkent and Ural'sk, has been operating in the Kazakh market for the last two years. Founder Zhaina Kuanysh, who aspires to promote national production and eventually export her products, spoke about her plans in an interview with kapital.kz.

"When I choose cosmetics, it was essential for me to ensure that there are no harmful chemicals and animal fats. This applies both to decorative and care cosmetics. I had to order from abroad, because I did not find a suitable option for myself in Kazakhstan's market. First, many components in the cosmetic's composition are harmful for the skin, but people do not know that. Second, it is important for me to have a product from a national manufacturer," she said.

"I wish our country to develop. By producing our own cosmetics, I intend to export it abroad in the future," she added.

Kuanysh cited an example of lipstick from a well-known firm which contains lead. Following an examination, she learned it has 3.7 percent of the additive, which is considered a large amount.

"Many people use Korean cosmetics now and there are manufacturers who use hazardous ingredients, but we do not know about it. Lead is a harmful substance that settles permanently in the body. Products in Kazakhstan are allowed to have up to 5 percent lead, but according to European standards it is very high. Many purchasers are not aware of it and pay little attention to the impact of lead on an organism. Expensive cosmetics do not guarantee good quality," she said.

"Husna cosmetics are not expensive, but I can say that it is of high quality. It is important to read the cosmetic's composition when buying it," she added.

Kuanysh began with \$2 million as her own investment. She started small, just making lipstick, and over time the assortment has expanded. Now, one can find whitening creams, pigmentation serum, gotu kola cream, centella asiatica, universal restoring complex serum and washing foam. Decorative cosmetics include

lipsticks, BB creams, cushions, eyeliners and eyebrow pencils.

"We create cosmetics taking into account skin of women specifically of our region and our race. American brands are more focused on its local area and local residents. It is not suitable for Asians," she said.

She creates her own formulas, for understanding skin structure is as important as understanding chemistry. Friends from different countries assist in the production process by correcting mistakes and supporting product development.

The cosmetics contain high-quality ingredients purchased from Japan, South Korea, Spain and the U.S.

"Raw materials are of high quality in these countries. The quality of the ingredients in China is quite different. Ceramides, for example, are the important element of the stratum corneum of our epidermis. The composition may have the same name, but the percentage is different. Chinese manufacturers will add one gram of raw material and 99 percent will be composed of other substances. Japanese manufacturers, on the contrary, will add 99 percent of ceramides and one percent will be composed of other substances. From China we can adopt technology, but the most important thing is practice. I received substantive knowledge in Taiwan," she added.

Three point six-gram lipstick costs 5,000 tenge (US\$13.36), 1.8-gram lipstick is 3,000 tenge (US\$8.10), face washing foam is 2,500 tenge (US\$6.68) and gotu kola cream is 3,500 tenge (US\$9.35).

The young brand currently has 6,000 lipsticks and 600 other products. Production volume is demand-driven.

"We sold, for example, 500 jars of sunscreen in a period of a month and a half. Sixty people bought our products in half a month. It is about 30 purchases in a week. This is only in Almaty. We are waiting for the certification declaration of our new products. We intend to talk with pharmacies and shops in order to put our product on shelves," said Kuanysh.

"The production process is automated by half. We need to purchase more equipment to fully automate it. We are sure our company will come to this. We are in the process of developing complex serum and washing foam. Decorative cosmetics include

Tselinny: from old Soviet cinema to modern contemporary arts centre

Continued from Page B1

According to the organisers, the new centre shows post-war architecture from a new angle incorporating the natural, social, political and cultural context of the times.

It reveals the uniqueness of architectural decisions and unity of the urban environment.

"The project reflects the multifaceted nature of the new institution... In a single space of the first project we combine art and archi-

ture exhibitions, educational programmes and film screenings, but most importantly, [we] open and expose the building itself that allows you to read on the surfaces and layers of plastering the change of different epochs, their thinking and ideology," said Beginning curator Yekaterina Golovatyuk.

The second part of the project will be staged in the former nightclub built into Tselinny in the early 2000s, where Central Asian contemporary artists of different generations will show their works.

The third part is a public film screenings programme in the cinema halls, including lectures, discussions, workshops and excursions. Visitors can watch archival newsreel, cult films by Kazakhstan directors and Soviet documentaries, as well as a demonstration of films from the Garage Screen Film

Festival. The programme will also include feature films devoted to various types of artistic creativity and the best examples of modern experimental cinema.

"The exhibition at Tselinny will become a kind of prologue to the future activity of the centre. It will support young artists through exhibitions, residences and educational programmes," said the exhibition's curator Meruyert Kaliyeva.

The restoration has uncovered items once considered lost, such as the sgraffito (a form of decoration made by scratching a wall) by Eugeny Sidorkin found in July. Sidorkin was a Soviet graphic artist and honoured art worker of the Kazakh SSR. It was assumed the sgraffito had been destroyed during the repair works in 2000 and a copy was reproduced on the southern facade of the building.



Photo credit: Almaty, Tolokno/infoburo.kz.

Interdisciplinary research team builds electronic atlas of sacred geography

By Dilshat Zhussupova

ASTANA – An electronic atlas of Kazakhstan's sacred places and monuments will be created as part of the three-year project "Investment Potential of the Sacred Geography of Kazakhstan: Geospatial Monitoring, IT technology and Historical & Cultural Analysis in the Production of an Electronic Atlas of the Republic" led by Nazarbayev University (NU) associate professor Nikolay Tsyrempilov.

NU professors from the history, philosophy, religious studies, anthropology and sociology departments make up the core of the team, in addition to involvement by the Kazakhstan National Geographic Society, Kazakhstan Gharysh Sapary and Kazakh National Museum. The stars aligned for the project's realisation, since it is unprecedented for a university in Central Asia to host specialists in all three major world religions under one roof.

An electronic atlas is an instrument which allows users to geographically visualise historic and cultural phenomena.

"This kind of technology is widespread primarily in Western countries," said Tsyrempilov in an interview with The Astana Times. "In Switzerland, there exists an entire institute dedicated to a digital atlas of

the country. Opening their map, you may find out the population inflow rate of major Swiss cities. The interactive map shows you the figures in visual form. In this way, electronic atlases may show you data not only on contemporary issues, but also on historical ones."

Kazakhstan currently lacks such a tool, but not for long. The research team applied for and received the Kazakh Ministry of Education and Science grant under the Mangilik Yel (Eternal Nation) programme. Having identified 12 geographic sites of sacred significance for Muslims,

Buddhists and Orthodox Christians, the team of historians, theologians and archaeologists set out on an expedition in May-July.

Every electronic atlas needs a starting point and the focus on sacred geography is particularly relevant for Kazakhstan.

"We need a spatial analysis of how religiously significant sites are distributed throughout the territory of Kazakhstan. The country is currently developing its domestic tourism, given that many prefer to go abroad and there is a consequent capital outflow to the United Arab Emirates, Turkey and Thailand and other nations. Our long-term priority, as researchers, is to render areas with religious and historical significance more tourist- and pilgrim-friendly. As suggested by the project name, we are trying to attract



Researchers with the guardian of a mosque.

investors to develop the tourist infrastructure around such objects. Our purpose was to analyse aspects critical to investors. Are the sacred sites reachable by bus and train? Is there sufficient accommodation infrastructure?" said Tsyrempilov.

Beyond contributing to domestic tourism, the collected data will serve to emphasise Kazakhstan's religious diversity.

"We hope that our research will provide a foreground of the cultural richness and high degree of tolerance historically maintained in Kazakhstan," he noted. "It is important to convey the uniqueness of Kazakhstan as a region in which major religions encountered one another and peacefully coexisted."

Above all, the researchers' priority

is to assess the historic and cultural potential of each site.

"I specialise in the history of Buddhism and originate from a Buddhist region in Russia. With this project, I took the opportunity to extrapolate my research agenda to eastern Kazakhstan, which is the site of many Buddhist temples and monasteries. For instance, the Ablai-kit monastery is one of the largest in Eurasia. Upon my visit, I was truly overwhelmed by the site, the landscape and the way it was installed within this incredible landscape. I firmly believe that the Ablai-kit monastery has great potential in attracting tourists as a historical object, a view which is shared by the Ust-Kamenogorsk Akimat (city administration)" he added.

The data collected came from interviewing locals, shrine keepers, akimat officials and museum curators, examining rare manuscripts detailing the sites' history and archival work.

"We also found old maps, which we compared with new maps in order to understand how the sites' previous geography corresponds to recent ones," said the professor. "For example, the Konyr Auliye cave in eastern Kazakhstan had religious significance for Buddhist Dzhungars and Kazakhs, prior to the rise of Islam. Now undergoing the process of Islamisation, the site is an interesting example of how a place can hold religious significance for different groups. That is why digitising old maps was an important part of our project."

Information technology (IT) specialists are presently building a platform for the electronic atlas, which will progressively integrate the collected data.

"Regarding the data collected from the Muslim sites, we are going to visualise the distribution of the most important Sufi shrines and really see how the Isabek-ishan mazar complex, which is the focus of our project, is situated in the context of the wider Muslim Sufi geography of Kazakhstan," said Tsyrempilov.

"There are many other aspects that may be revealed uniquely through visualisation. These aspects will remain hidden if we do not also observe a given site's geography, landscape and connections with similar objects and the general infrastructure of trade routes and pastures," he added.

Once the electronic atlas begins

operating in 2020, the project team will invite people not only to view it but also contribute their knowledge of Kazakhstan's religiously significant sites to make the resource as complete as possible.

While they are pioneers in the technological aspect of their project, Tsyrempilov emphasised the research team is following the trail already well established by Kazakh historians, theologians and archaeologists.

"We seek to incorporate NU into the already-existing and excellent academic community in Kazakhstan," he said. "One of the problems of our university is that many professors' research interests and work remain outside of Kazakhstan. This project is an opportunity to bind their research interests to the country. I, myself, primarily dealt with Tibet and Mongolia. Now, undertaking research on Kazakhstan, I am even more enthusiastic. The same concerns my colleagues who mostly dealt with Tatars of Russia or Orthodox Christians elsewhere and now study Tatar diasporas or Christian churches in Kazakhstan."

NU will host a research conference on religious tolerance in Kazakhstan and the erstwhile Russian Empire on Oct. 5-7. The announcement will be posted on www.historyatnu.wordpress.com. Another conference, centred on research based on geographic information systems (GIS), which is expected to attract national and international digital humanities specialists, such as the team behind the Oriental Institute at the University of Chicago's CAMEL Lab, is slated for 2020.

SOCIETY

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 26, 2018

Number of young people outside of education, employment decreases

By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – The number of young people in Kazakhstan who are neither employed nor in the education system, known as NEETs, has decreased to 7.7 percent of Kazakh youth, reported social development and education officials at a Sept. 18 government meeting. The meeting also adopted a roadmap to help young people find jobs.

“Comparing to 2015, the youth unemployment rate declined from 4.2 percent to 3.8 percent in 2017 thanks to such projects as Employment Road Map 2020, Zhasyl Yel and others,” said Kazakh Minister of Education and Science Yerlan Sagdiyev.

“The Serpin programme has been active since 2014. At present, as part of the project, 12,344 people study in 26 universities in nine regions and

2,276 people study at 37 professional and technical institutes in seven regions. In general, this project draws a big interest among young people, especially from families with low social and economic status and can serve as a real social elevator for their professional self-development,” said Sagdiyev.

The roadmap adopted at the meeting outlines seven youth categories and divides youth into three age groups – from 18 to 21, from 22 to 24 and from 25 to 29.

“The first group is dependants. Those that are educated, with certain practical skills, but not willing to continue studying or working,” said Kazakh Minister of Social Development Darkhan Kaletayev.

The second group includes young women with little children and single mothers.

“The third group includes freelancers who prefer flexibility, non-institutionalised jobs, shad-

ow sector, prefer casual earnings,” he said.

The document also identifies young people in rural areas, people with disabilities, young people from families of a low social and economic status as vulnerable.

Kaletayev discussed several measures to involve young people. Among those are professional orientation by creating consultative centres for young people, advancing technical and professional education, improving dual education, raising awareness about state support and development initiatives and development of youth entrepreneurship.

The geographic areas of the country needing the most improvement, said Kaletayev, include the Mangistau and Karaganda regions where NEETs are from 10 percent to 13 percent.

Kazakhstan also follows global trends in women being nearly two

times more likely than men to become NEET, said Kaletayev.

A Global Employment Trends for Youth report released by the International Labour Organisation in 2017 said, globally, 34 percent of young women are NEET in contrast to ten percent of young men who are NEET.

The figure is similar in Central and Western Asia with 32 percent of young women and 15 percent of young men who are NEET.

Kaletayev said it is important to give youth direction to avoid larger problems later.

“Youth seeks to find their own identity and does not always find a place in an existing social structure. This gives rise to problems such as suicide, deviation, deep social alienation. Family values are getting lost,” he said.

The term NEET is a “relatively new indicator” and is believed to address an array of vulnerabilities among youth, according to the International Labour Organisation.

Kazakhstan combats high suicide rates

By Aidana Yergaliyeva

ASTANA – As the international community marked the Sept. 10 World Day against Suicide, Kazakhstan ranks fourth in the world in the number of suicide deaths per capita, according to the World Health Organisation.

The Kazakh government has recognised suicide, including teen suicide, as a public health threat and the World Health Organisation (WHO) says Kazakhstan has 40.1 suicide deaths per 100,000 people per year.

“I took the cheapest wine and a blade, and then went to the bathroom. When I started to cut myself, I had a quick thought that it is so pointless and foolish. If I cut myself and die like this, then what? For what then I had all of my past life, all of the sufferings, why my mother suffered giving me birth. Then, inner self-love and self-respect worked, I told myself ‘No I won’t leave this world like this. I will live and will bring something good to this world. I will live each moment with joy. I will die, beautifully, when it will be necessary naturally,’” said Aziz Zairov, a famous Kazakh film director and one of those named as one of Kazakhstan’s 100 New Faces.

While Zairov chose life, his life has never been easy. He was orphaned at two years old, developed a disability of the second stage at

12 years of age, had to live in the streets and face additional challenges. His only sibling, a younger sister, committed a suicide when he was a young adult. He has also had several friends take their own lives.

As UNICEF consultant, Robin N. Harr explained in her special report “Child Suicide in Kazakhstan,” Kazakh society still maintains taboos around the topic of suicide and neglects health issues, which can be treated, such as depression.

Some Kazakh psychologists have pointed to poor communication in families, the stress of educational exams and exposure to violence on television as contributing to the number of suicides.

Kazakhstan, however, has had some success in combating the problem. A programme in 2015 in the Kyzylorda region decreased suicide rates 23 percent, while suicide attempts among children were estimated to have been reduced by 50 percent. The size of the group considered at risk has also been decreasing annually, according to Zagipa Baliyeva, deputy of the Mazhilis (lower house of Parliament) and, until June 12 this year, Commissioner for Children’s Rights in Kazakhstan as reported by apparatus.info.

According to WHO, suicides are preventable with timely, evidence-based and often low-cost interventions.

Novel by Saken Zhunusov for English readers presented

Staff Report

A novel by Kazakh prose writer Saken Zhunusov called “Amanai and Zamanai” has been translated into English and was recently presented in the framework of the Rukhani Zhanjyru programme.

That significant event associated with the name of the famous countryman, was attended by the members of the Akmola regional branch of the Union of Writers of Kazakhstan, scientific and creative intellectuals and relatives of the writer.

“The work by Saken Zhunusov holds its rightful place in the golden fund of the Kazakh literature. And the book was published thanks to Akmola businessmen who financed the translation and

publication in London”, said Akim (Governor) of the region Malik Murzalin.

The project is implemented on the initiative of the Kazakh PEN Club. In recent years, it has translated and published in London and New York approximately 10 works by Kazakh classic writers.

“They published works by Mukaghalii Makatayev, Berdibek Sokpabayev, Abish Kekilbayev, Olzhas Suleimenov, Smagul Yelubai, Herold Belger, and Mukhtar Auezov. As part of the project called ‘We – the Kazakhs...’ it is planned to translate the 25 best books of the Kazakh authors,” said President of the Kazakh PEN Club Bigeldy Gabdulilin.

The novel was translated by British writers and translators Si-

mon Hollingsworth and Simon Geoghegan.

Simon Geoghegan said that they had been working on several translations of the Kazakh classics for more than two years. According to Geoghegan, the book “Amanai and Zamanai” should be presented to the world. It tells about the turning point in the history of Kazakhstan. And it is very important to enrich the world community by such reports about these events,

“The work by Saken Zhunusov holds its rightful place in the golden fund of the Kazakh literature. And the book was published thanks to Akmola businessmen who financed the translation and publication in London.”

thoroughly studied and comprehensively described by such prominent writers as Zhunusov.



All citizens to declare income, property and debts

By Inga Seleznyova

ASTANA – Beginning Jan. 1, 2020, every Kazakh adult citizen will be required to declare his or her income, property and even debts. The tax declarations will counteract the shadow economy, reduce the level of corruption in state bodies, expand the tax base and increase revenues to budget from individual income tax.

Experts also believe the declarations will increase the effectiveness of criminal investigations and improve the taxpayers’ culture.

Approximately 12.9 million citizens will start submitting declarations, according to the forecast by the Ministry of Finance state revenue committee. Nearly 7.4 million live in cities and towns and 5.5 million in rural areas, including adult citizens, ethnic Kazakhs who returned to their historical mother-

land, those with residence permits, working pensioners and students.

Citizens will have to declare real estate or shares in real estate, money in bank accounts and cash if the amounts exceed 500 minimum wages (14,142,000 tenge or US\$38,500). Individuals will not be required to declare garden plots, livestock, art objects and jewellery.

Citizens will also need to declare debts beginning at 500 minimum wages (14,142,000 tenge US\$38,500) and confirm them with a loan agreement, receipt or other document.

Checking declarations will be automated, with corresponding software to compare income and expenses. If a citizen fails to declare, he or she will receive a first warning, then be fined \$20.

Declarations can be submitted at any Kazpost or state income management office, peoples service centre or through e-gov.kz.

Independent creative company stages play to raise awareness about mental health

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – ORTA Centre for Universal Arts will present the techno-performance “Svetoprestavleniye Sergey Kalmykov” on Oct. 6, 7, 9 and 10 in Almaty. The play was the headliner this year at the New Drama Festival in Moscow’s Meyerhold Centre.

The Astana Times spoke with centre founder Rustem Begenov to learn about the production and its main theme.

After years of working in Moscow theatres, the stage director and producer released the pop-mechanical play “Medea. Material” in 2016. As Kazakhstan’s first multidimensional theatre project, it received numerous reviews in the media, was part of the New European Festival in Moscow and nominated for the Sergey Kuryokhin Prize grand prix in St. Petersburg.

“Svetoprestavleniye Sergey Kalmykov” debuted May 26. “Svetoprestavleniye” in Russian

means “the end of the world” or literally “the end of light” and also refers to a chaotic mess on stage. The flamboyant production combines modern electronic music, naive theatre, large-scale robots, inventive light technologies and tonnes of cardboard boxes, aluminium cans, bags, branches and bones.

The production tells the tragic and crazy life of avant-garde artist Sergey Kalmykov, who moved to Almaty in the 1930s and died alone in poverty in a psychiatric clinic in 1967.

“When we staged this play in Moscow, our artist and my great friend Alexander Bakanov turned the Meyerhold Centre into a total installation. The atmosphere was really special. Spectators were welcomed with kurt (salty balls made from dried cow’s milk) and followed all the instructions of our actress Alexandra Morozova. They also participated in a show and walked through all the boxes and items. The audience thanked us.

They never experienced such kind of show. They were glad to learn about the amazing artist and last avant-gardist Sergey Kalmykov,” said Begenov.

He noted mental health is the main theme of the project. Kalmykov led an eccentric life, constantly talking about the future, art, other worlds and trips with Leonardo da Vinci. Only shortly before his death from exhaustion did his doctor record the paranoid nonsense and today many researchers believe he suffered from schizophrenia.

“People know so little about mental illness, including clinical depression and bipolar disorder. A year ago, my wife, actress Alexandra Morozova, was diagnosed with bipolar affective disorder. Up to that moment she was suffering almost all her life, not knowing about this disease and how it can be treated. Treating depression should start with seeing the doctor. Positive thoughts and a vacation by the sea are not enough sometimes,” he said.

The centre, in collaboration with the Vlast news website, also organised the public discussion, Madness and Art, in May. Critics, philosophers, psychiatrists and artists spoke about creativity and mental health, the nature of genius and why mental illnesses are considered shameful in society.

The centre works in two main directions, creating its own interdisciplinary productions and launching projects related to the local cultural environment.

“We believe that networking with the most outstanding artists of our time is one of the most effective ways of transforming the cultural environment,” said Begenov.

In collaboration with Goethe-Institute Kazakhstan and its director Eva Schmidt, the centre invited German director and composer Heiner Goebbels to Almaty. His best performances were presented prior to his arrival.

“People watched the performances with great interest and attended the lectures. Despite the

novelty of the form and lack of a narrative and a message, Goebbels’ performances are understandable and emotional,” he said.

The company’s main mission is to bring together artists and professionals from different fields and countries to search for new art forms.

“I noticed that our audience is also ready to avoid formats. ORTA centre is not an ordinary theatre. We do not have a permanent actors’ company and a venue to stage performances. ORTA is rather an independent creative company. If we like the project, we are looking for the possibilities of its implementation. We are motivated by creative impulse and a desire to make a project. An idea is of paramount importance and its implementation is the next thing. It is difficult to create art performances by order,” he said.

Begenov spoke about cooperating with American Tommy Simpson, who served as the composer and sound designer for the recent project.

“I like his music very much and the way he treats the sounds. I shared an idea about the project with him and he agreed to collaborate. We have many common interests, similar views on art. He helped to create the musical part of the show. His music was created in our dialogues about the meaning of the text, the actions of the actress and the visual images of the play and then this music again influenced the scenes, visual solutions and actress’ existence on stage. It was a fascinating process full of pure creativity, which led to a remarkable and unexpected result,” he added.

Simpson posted about the project on Facebook.

“It has been a freeing experience for myself through the music, but also reflects the process of creating this piece for all involved. It’s been a journey into the creative unknown and I’ve had the opportunity to experiment and discover new ways of harmonising sound which resonates in me. Even though we are all individuals, we’re also all on the same journey through life; things resonant in one can resonate in all and my hope is to bring people along on this strange dream that I’ve been living since joining this project,” he wrote.

TOURISM

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 26, 2018

Outdoor adventure, cycling tours in Kazakhstan have great potential, says bicycle adventure club founder

By Abira Kuandyk

ASTANA – Alexander Gabchenko has visited 34 countries, at least 200 cities and more than 150 unique destinations – many on two wheels. The founder of Almaty's Bicycle Adventure Club sat down with The Astana Times to talk about cycling, cycling tours, the club he founded and outdoor culture in Kazakhstan.

"Kazakhstan is a very big country with vast expanses. There are a lot of scenic spots, sites, nature attractions which are convenient to visit by bicycle. Thus, there are a lot of routes that people love and a lot of people who cycle independently. Every region in the country possesses some natural attraction, nature reserves and parks where one can ride a bicycle and witness spectacular views," he said.

"Almaty's Bicycle Adventure Club organises expeditions that lasts from one day to two weeks. Cycling expeditions mainly run within Kazakhstan, but we also travel beyond. For example, this year we went to Mongolia and the



Alexandr Gabchenko

Mongolian Altai. We also often travel to Kyrgyzstan."

Gabchenko founded the club four years ago to teach people how to

bike, camp, sleep in tents and do other adventure travelling essentials. "Currently, our activity is more advanced and we offer long bicycle tours to experience unique cycling trips that people cannot have in other conditions," he shared.

Club adventures often involve travelling by bike with the help of car. This format is convenient for beginners because it saves them from carrying lots of clothes and other things, which can instead be transported by the car.

"Burabike is the only charity bicycle race in Kazakhstan that aims not only to offer a bike ride, but also to raise funds in order to help various organisations and people with different life situations," he said of the Aug. 30 race. "It is a very good idea and I really like it. I took part in Burabike for the first time this year, despite the fact that it is already six years old. The level of organisation is very good. The event gathered many participants, approximately 800 cyclists and around 1,500 to 2,000 guests. The funds raised from the auction and sales exhibition goes for a stated

purpose; this year, money was transferred for medical equipment into a village clinic in the Karaganda region," he said.

Gabchenko says interest in cycling is growing among both youth and adults in Kazakhstan.

"I cannot evaluate the children's and young people's interest in cycling, because their interest depends on adults. There are very few organisations that would be engaged in developing cycling among children and youth. One reason can be that bicycles aren't cheap. As a little child it is easier to get a bicycle, while as one gets older, the price for a bicycle is significant. I would say there are few people who use a bicycle as a mean of transport among younger people," he said.

"However, I think, this situation is changing. With infrastructure development and changing cultures in cities such as Astana and Almaty, I see a growing interest in cycling," he added.

"Adults, those who earn money and are older than 21, have more opportunities to purchase a bicycle. The number of people who use a

bicycle as a mean of transport – I mean, to travel from work to home and back, as well as for travelling – is growing."

Gabchenko noted that Kazakhstan offers its residents huge potential to immerse themselves in outdoor culture, with activities from fishing trips to trail running close to hand.

Unique landscapes, mountains, lakes, rivers and seas are winning travelling options. Deserts are definitely spectacular, though they require endurance.

"Personally, I like mountains, I often go to the mountains in Kazakhstan and abroad," Gabchenko revealed.

Though there is plenty on offer, a lack of information and financial constraints can keep Kazakh citizens from the outdoors.

"Some people do not have enough information sources," Gabchenko said. "Some people are more concerned about their economic-financial base. Outdoor activities are for people who have a desire not only to grow financially but also spiritually."

Balkhash, unique lake offering nice summer vacation

By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – Balkhash, Kazakhstan's largest lake, is among many popular destinations for vacation within the country. With its blue and crystal-clear waters, the lake is located amidst diverse landscapes bordering the Almaty, Zhambyl and Karaganda regions. The Chu-Ili Mountains stretch to the south and Betpak Dala Desert stretches across 75,000 square kilometres to the west.

Balkhash is also famous for the unique chemical composition of its waters. A narrow strait, 3.5 kilometres wide and six meters deep, divides the lake into fresh and salty sections.

The eastern salty part of the lake is popular among locals and tourists, who come to enjoy beaches,

blue waters and waves throughout summer and into September.

Legends

Similar to other pristine natural sites in Kazakhstan, legend narrates the history of the lake's creation. The legend says an old and rich man by the name Balkhash decided to marry off his daughter Ili and sought to find a man any girl would want to marry. The best and richest men gathered to try their luck in a competition for the young lady; the winner, however, turned out to be the poor shepherd Karatal who was in love with Ili.

When Karatal and Ili escaped at night, Balkhash cursed the two and turned them into two rivers and himself into a lake depriving the two of a chance to reunite.

What to do

The area's climate is great for a summer vacation, as the temperature does not exceed 30 Celsius degrees, while water stays warm and pleasant.

"The lake is amazing, reminds of a sea. There are big waves, water is very warm and very pleasant. The water is crystal clear. The beach is sandy. Everything is comfortable," said capital resident Alken Karibayev in an interview for the story.

Balkhash is also a great place for birdwatchers, as the area is home to approximately 120 species of birds, including 12 species that are part of the Red Book of the protected wildlife.

There is a chance to come across Persian gazelles, wild boars, wolves and other animals included in the Red Book.

Getting there

There are many options of getting to the lake. The lake is an approximately nine-hour, 600-kilometre drive from Astana and an approximately ten-hour drive from Almaty.

"We got there by car, around 600 kilometres along Astana-Almaty highway. We did not stay in the town itself, but in Taraganlyk village located 15 kilometers from Balkhash," said Karibayev.

Trains also go to Balkhash from Astana and Almaty. The train from Astana takes 14 hours and a one-way ticket costs approximately 4,000 tenge (US\$10.6).

There is, however, no direct train route from Almaty, yet one could travel to the Sary-Shagan or Mointy station, which will take nine to 12 hours at a cost of around 4,000 tenge (US\$10.6) and from there one can get a taxi or a bus.

Accommodation

Balkhash offers a wide range of accommodation options depending on one's preferences and financial means. For example, Balkhash sanatorium sells a two-bed standard room at 23,000 tenge (US\$61.2), including medical and therapy procedures and buffet, while Millennium hotel offers a deluxe two-bed room at 10,000 tenge (US\$26.6), with breakfast included.

Infrastructure is yet to be developed, added Karibayev.

"The vacation near beach is great, but infrastructure is not developed, especially for those coming with families," he said. "If one wants a budget vacation and if we compare to Burabai, then prices are relatively equal. There are hardly any offers for people who seek a luxury vacation."

Qazaq Geography expedition highlights Kazakh attractions, raises awareness of environmental concerns

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – Travelling from sea to sea, the Kazakh National Geographic Society's (Qazaq Geographiy) fifth expedition started Sept. 10 from Almaty. The participants will travel more than 3,000 kilometres in 12 days, finishing Sept. 21 in Aktau.

The team, composed of 25 individuals including local and foreign travel bloggers, reporters, photographers and a Kazakh TV camera crew, will discover new routes, check accommodation facilities and propose better conditions to increase the region's attractiveness for travellers.

Leaving from Turkestan, the fascinating and extreme trip will visit Lake Kambash, famous for its healing properties, then move to the Kyzylorda region. The participants will also travel to the shores of the Aral Sea, where the shrinking condition is one of the biggest environmental problems for the entire region. Once the centre of a blooming oasis, tourists are now attracted to the remains of fishing vessels scattered over the white salt desert.

"One of the objectives of this expedition is to draw public attention to environmental problems, in particular, to the problem of the Aral Sea. We are also promoting the tourist potential of the western part of Kazakhstan," said leader Dauren Raptayev.

The expedition will travel to

Beineu village in the Mangistau region, home to burial monuments dating to the 16th century. The monuments are made in various architectural forms including domes and single-celled mausoleums, with more than 800 objects kept in the necropolis. The Beket-Ata underground mosque is located 132 kilometres from Zhanaozen.

The itinerary includes picturesque Tamshala Canyon, one of the region's sacred places. The small Tamshala Lake is situated eight kilometres from the beginning of the canyon, famous for its waterfall.

Mangistau is often referred as an "open-air museum," as there are more than 100 natural and archaeological monuments.

Travellers will drive to the huge geological landslide on Cape Zhygylgan (Fallen Ground) located near the Caspian Sea. They will also visit Sultan Epe Canyon and Shakpak Ata underground mosque, the latter with drawings from the 10-13th centuries, Tuzbair saline land on the Ustyurt plateau, the Sherkala and Ayrakti Mountains and Boszhira natural boundary.

The expedition is a part of the Uly Dala Eline Sayahat (Tour across the Country of the Great Steppe) project launched by Kazakh Tourism. The New Silk Road, the sixth and final expedition, will travel to the Almaty, Turkestan and Zhambyl regions. A team from National Geographic Russia will take part in the project.



Photo credit: Nikolai Bushnikov

Company offers turnkey tours around Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan

By Abira Kuandyk

ASTANA – Explore Kazakhstan, an Almaty-based tourism agency, offers fully organised tours of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan ranging from helicopter tours to nature trips with tents. Founder Chingiz Shulanbayev, who aspires to promote domestic tourism, spoke about the company and its current activities in an interview with The Astana Times.

"EXPO 2017 had a favourable effect on the amount of tourists coming to Kazakhstan from abroad. For instance, this year we welcomed tourists from Germany, Belgium, France, Italy and South Korea," he said.

Explore Kazakhstan welcomes local tourists, but 90 percent of the company's clients are non-natives.

"There are also local tourists who want to relax and enjoy nature in full; thus, they hire a guide and a driver to make their trip informative and organised," he added.

The agency arranges excursions and tours aboard 4WD sport-utility vehicles and comfortable minibuses, with certified guides and all necessary camping equipment. Tourists can also choose accommodations in hotels, guest houses and yurts.

The company organises day-long excursions involving a trip around the city and its environs. For example, tourists can arrange jaunts around Almaty and nearby destinations such as Charyn Canyon, Big Almaty Lake, Medeu, Chimbulak, Kolsai Lake and Tamgaly open air museum.

Trips usually continue for six-ten days. The company offers turnkey

tours to East Kazakhstan region and West Kazakhstan region, as well as Kyrgyzstan. East Kazakhstan offers spectacular sites such as Yazevoe Lake, Kok-Kol Lake, Belukha Mountain, Bukhtarma reservoir and Kara-Koba River. West Kazakhstan region has well-known destinations like the Caspian Sea, Shopan Ata and Beket Ata necropolises.

Shulanbayev recommends May, June, the second half of August and September as the best times to visit Kazakhstan. Spots are not overcrowded and the weather is pleasant in September, he noted.

Kazakhstan is considered an attractive place for active rest, trekking and hiking. Foreign tourists usually want to combine active leisure with a hot springs rest.

In addition, Explore Kazakhstan organises nature tours, offering a field kitchen, tents and cooks.

"We can also arrange a helicopter tour. Recently, we greeted guests from the U.K. and we flew over Charyn Canyon and Kolsai Lake in Almaty region," he said.

The company's goal is to successfully operate in the tourism industry.

"At the current stage, we are establishing cooperation with foreign partners," he added.

In the future, it plans to create its own advertising department, which will lead to expanding its structure and attracting new staff for a team of approximately 50.

For more information, one can visit explorekazakhstan.net and @[explore_kazakhstan27](https://www.instagram.com/explore_kazakhstan27) on Instagram.

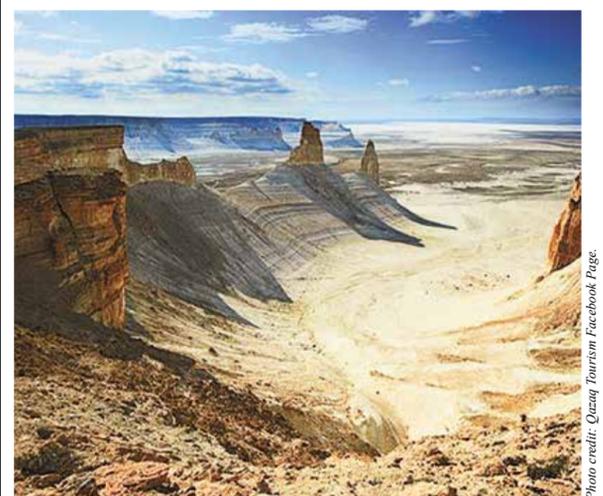


Photo credit: Qazaq Tourism Facebook Page

SPORTS

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 26, 2018

Golovkin suffers first loss in career, relinquishes titles

By Anuar Abdrakhmanov

ASTANA – Kazakh boxer Gennady Golovkin suffered his first professional loss and relinquished his multiple middleweight titles after losing a Sept. 15 rematch with Mexican boxer Saul Canelo Alvarez.

Alvarez won by decision and now holds the WBC, WBA (Super) and IBO world middleweight titles.

“I’m not going to say who won tonight, because the victory belongs to Canelo according to the judges. I thought that the supporters witnessed a good bout. I thought I fought better than he did. It was a bout between the two champions. I feel good. I have a small cut. I am a boxer and do my job. As for a third fight, of course, I would like to have it and think everyone does,” Golovkin told reporters after the bout at the T-Mobile Arena in Las Vegas.



Canelo Alvarez (L) vs Gennady GGG Golovkin (R).

Most of the rounds were close, but Alvarez appeared to land more upper body blows and was better

able to defend and counter punch than in the previous fight a year ago which ended in a draw. Golovkin’s trainers urged the Kazakh to try to knock out Alvarez, but ultimately Golovkin was never able to land a deciding blow.

“Golovkin is a strong boxer and showed a good bout,” the Mexican boxer said. “But I was stronger. Thanks to everyone for believing in me. Thanks to my team for a good job. Now I am to enjoy the moment, the victory is for my supporters and Mexico,” he added.

The rematch had been planned for May 5 but was delayed after Alvarez tested positive for the banned substance clenbuterol.

While Golovkin mentioned the possibility of a rematch to reporters after the bout, Golovkin’s coach Abel Sanchez said the boxer has had an intense schedule and will not fight again in 2018.

Astana Marathon promotes charity and healthy lifestyle



By Dilshat Zhussupova

ASTANA – Astana Marathon 2018 gathered 4,661 runners from 37 cities in Kazakhstan and abroad on a rather cold Sept. 16 morning.

Organised annually since 2009, the run promotes a healthy lifestyle while raising money for charity. This year, the marathon entered the Association of International Marathons and Distance Races (AIMS) and is seeking to obtain the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF) road race bronze label to confirm its high organisational standards.

With its flat terrain, the city is a favourable marathon destination. Participants gathered at the EXPO 2017 campus at 6 a.m. to warm up and stretch. The route, certified by IAAF, took runners past the Palace of Peace and Harmony, Khazret Sultan Mosque, Baiterek Monument, Nazarbayev University and Astana Arena.

Runners hailed from Australia, France, Georgia, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Luxembourg, Russia, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom and Uzbekistan. People of all abilities participated individually and in pairs, families and companies, with the opportunity to compete in the 10-kilometre and 42.2-kilometre distances if they were above ages 16 and 18, respectively.

Eric Kering was the first to

complete the 42.2-kilometre distance in approximately 2 hours, 17 minutes. Robert Gaiho and Amir Baytukanov followed closely behind in second and third place, respectively. Shadrack Koech finished first in the 10-kilometre distance in approximately 30 minutes, with Kenneth Rotich taking second and Alexey Gusarov, third.

The finish line was ultimately crossed by 3,567 participants, 2,895 running the shorter distance and the balance completing the full marathon. There, they received jubilee medals for the capital’s 20th anniversary. Participants may access their results at www.athlinks.com.

This year, the European Union (EU) delegation to Kazakhstan partnered with Astana Marathon, launching the #EU4Running campaign to celebrate 25 years of diplomatic relations. The delegation provided participants with 100 free places and runner’s kits with EU-branded items, many of whom were delegation members, project and partner staff, representatives of international organisations and EU member states’ embassies and capital residents and guests.

In addition to raising funds for various charities, Astana Marathon is determined to foster a love for running among the people in rural areas. The funds raised for the One Steppe Beyond project will help to organise short distance races across the country. Donations may be made at www.astana42k.com/charity.

Kazakh blind and visually impaired cyclists complete bike ride in Paris

Staff Report

ASTANA – Sport Without Limits, the intercontinental Astana-Paris bike marathon for visually-impaired and blind cyclists, came to a memorable end Sept. 10 in the French capital near the Kazakh Embassy, reported the Kazakh Foreign Ministry.

Launched more than a month ago at the Kazakh Eli monument, the unique project helped 17 individuals, including cyclists and volunteers, cross more than 5,000 kilometres and visit more than 30 cities

in six countries – Kazakhstan, Russia, Belarus, Poland, Germany, and France. Riding under the slogan “The World of Unlimited Possibilities,” their objective was to show that Kazakhs with disabilities are able to achieve the most daunting goals, motivating all to engage in regular sports activities and lead a healthy life. Throughout their journey, the athletes felt tremendous support from all who met them along the way and even welcomed three additional cyclists in Germany, who joined the contingent on the way to the finish line.

The final part of the marathon

started at the bust of Kazakh politician and publicist Mustafa Shokay in Nogent-sur-Marne. The route passed through many landmarks in the Paris region and the capital itself, including the Champs-Élysées and other tracks along the last leg of the Tour de France. The athletes were joined in support by Kazakh Ambassador to France Jean Galiev and members of the Diploma Cycles Association of Europe and Foreign Affairs.

Near the Arc de Triomphe, the cyclists were welcomed by Jeanne d’Hauteserre, Mayor of Paris’ eighth arrondissement; Alain Néri, honorary Senator and former professional cyclist Alain Siclis and the head of a Paralympic foundation, as well as representatives of the Kazakh student youth population, diaspora, French friends of Kazakhstan, diplomats and their families.

“We are sincerely happy to see you at the finish of your long and difficult path, on which you overcame many difficulties, but also met a lot of kind and sympathetic people. Initiatives such as yours really work to bring peoples and cultures together and contribute to strengthening Kazakhstan’s positive image abroad. It is symbolic that the bike marathon united Astana and Paris in the year of celebration of the tenth anniversary of the strategic partnership between Kazakhstan and France. After all, your achievement is another con-

tribution to the development of Kazakh-French sports and humanitarian cooperation,” noted Galiev.

In Paris, the athletes went on a motor ship tour to view the capital’s main attractions.

While passing through cities and countries, the cyclists met with associations supporting those with disabilities, sports organisation representatives and local authorities, as well as hundreds and thousands of ordinary people, showing that even if you do not see a clear picture of the world, you can still pursue your goal. The participants urge all those who learn of their initiative, both healthy and those with special needs, to follow one’s dreams, be a proactive member of society, dispel existing stereotypes related to individuals with disabilities and promote modern Kazakh culture and achievements.

The Kazakh diplomatic missions arranged athlete meetings in each country along the route.

Sport without Limits was introduced in 2016 with the support of the Anashim charity fund for children and youth. Established in 2001, the fund mainly deals with socialising persons with sight difficulties and has implemented many successful projects which have helped people with special needs achieve their goals. Two previous marathons for visually-impaired and blind cyclists, Almaty-Astana and Almaty-Issyk-Kul, were completed with the fund’s support.



FC Astana, Dinamo Kyiv tie in first UEFA Europe League group stage

By Anuar Abdrakhmanov

ASTANA — FC Astana and Ukraine’s Dinamo Kyiv ended their first match of the UEFA Europa League group stage with a 2:2 draw.

The match was challenging for Astana as Dinamo Kyiv is the group’s favourite team and Ukraine’s most titled team.

Dinamo’s forward Viktor Tsygankov scored first on a pass from Vitaliy Buyalskyi. Ten minutes later, Astana’s defender Marin Anichic sent the ball into the goal by the head thus equalising the score.

The Ukrainian team was ahead after the first half as Dinamo’s player Denis Germash scored the second goal 1:2. The goal was assisted by a mistake by Astana goalkeeper Nenad Eric.

In the 4th minute of extra time, Astana player Roman Murtazayev tied the score at 2:2. Thus, FC Astana earns the first point in the

UEFA Europe League group stage of this season.

“We warned the players of much pressure from first minutes. And it is a pity we conceded a goal in the 11th minute. We managed to take the lead as we levelled the score in addition to many chances to score goals. The second half we needed to be more active, move forward, as we were not content with the score. We performed several counterattacks, and fortunately, the team could gain its first point in Kyiv,” said Astana Head Coach Grigori Babayan.

“We should be content with a draw in an away match. The match turned out to be interesting with many goals. We conceded a goal because of the mistake; however, it is football, and we should move forward. Good thing that we levelled the score. I think a draw is a good result,” said Astana’s captain and goalkeeper Nenad Eric.

Astana will face France’s Rennes in the next UEFA Europe League match Oct. 4 at Astana Arena.



Photo credit: vesti.kz

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 26, 2018

Le Sallay International Academy offers distance learning for middle schoolers

By Dilshat Zhussupova

ASTANA – Le Sallay International Academy in France offers children aged 10 to 14 the option of distance learning. The pioneering distance learning programme combines home study with a learning camp.

Each term, students spend three to four weeks of their studies at the 16th century castle Château Le Sallay in a four-hectare private park in Burgundy. For the remaining 6-8 weeks, they take classes from home aided by online education technologies.

The usual options for children residing in places with little access to a quality education include

attending boarding school or being homeschooled, both of which have drawbacks. The academy, however, allows students to take advantage of learning from the best teachers, as with top boarding schools, while also maintaining a normal family life, as with homeschooling.

“You get to have your children around!” said Humanities Department Head Matthew McConnell. “They will be at home more but will also get that independence by going to the learning camps and being on their own while getting the socialisation that is part of the school experience.”

For expats who often change their country of residence every one or two years, the academy

could serve as a constant in their children’s lives. Children with special needs may also benefit more from its teaching style because classes are often conducted in small groups, and teachers and psychologists are trained in addressing the needs of children of all abilities.

The primary benefit of distance learning is that it affords children a uniquely tailored education. According to the Mathematics and Science Department Head Yan Rauch, the combined online and offline method of learning best suits his teaching method.

“I need the camps to create the human relationship, a natural contact with the children – and it’s also important that they develop



relationships among themselves,” he said. “Once this basis is established, it doesn’t really matter if we proceed to solve puzzles online or offline.”

Science and mathematics are taught based on approaches extensively used in Russia, China, South Korea and, recently, the United States under the Russian School of Mathematics brand. The academy also prepares many of its students

ing experience. Guest lecturers at the learning camps will include Princeton University professor Michael Barany, award-winning writer and journalist Andrew Lam and digital media guru Elizabeth Osder, among others.



Photo credit: lesallay.academy

The primary benefit of distance learning is that it affords children a uniquely tailored education. According to the Mathematics and Science Department Head Yan Rauch, the combined online and offline method of learning best suits his teaching method.

for their compulsory national examinations and, upon request, for admission to American or British high schools.

Given that the school is not tied down to any given location, gathering the best teachers was made possible. Teachers of literature, history and art are graduates of prestigious American and British universities, with years of teach-

An academic year costs \$41,238.75, with fee discounts available for gifted children. Parents and children may become acquainted with the academy’s approach to education in early 2019 at a seven-week pilot period for \$5,840. Classes will start September 2019.

Further information may be found on www.lesallay.academy.

First Montessori school in Kazakhstan opens doors in Astana

By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – Parents in Astana now have more educational options for their kids, as the first Montessori school in Kazakhstan opened in the capital welcoming first ten students aged 6-9.

The child-centred educational approach developed by Maria Montessori in 1897 is one of the world’s most popular educational methods and it has gained increasing popularity in Kazakhstan over the years.

The method nurtures child’s natural interest to knowledge and allows them to learn at their own pace and discover their potential within a supportive and prepared learning environment.

Head of the school Leila Mukasheva, who is also a paediatrician, opened a Montessori centre, though not a school, in Astana in 2006.

“I learned about this method in 2006. It will be almost 13 years this year. At that time there was shortage of kindergartens in Astana as you may know. My child was two years old at that time and I realised that I was not satisfied with kindergartens and I decided to take responsibility. I became interested [in the topic]. When I heard about Montessori and her also being a paediatrician, I started studying this topic,” Mukasheva told The Astana Times.

“At that time, there was a centre (though not a complete school) in Almaty. I travelled there, met people and started studying in Russia. One of my coaches was from the Netherlands,” she said.

Mukasheva noted few people were aware of the method back then.

“Some even called us a sect, because something strange, they said, was happening there. Mothers with their children were coming and going always happy,” she added.

Over the years, the centre welcomed more than 1,000 children.

“We had eight cohorts and we understood we needed to open a school,” she added.

The school and the centre follows core concepts of the Montessori system, including multi-age groups, where younger children learn from older children and older reinforce their skills, uninterrupted work time and special Montessori learning materials.

Mukasheva noted the demand is growing.

“There are more mothers now who lived abroad and saw what Montessori system means. For instance, it is common in the West when there is a choice in children’s development methods and options. They come here and they are surprised at Montessori centres working in Kazakhstan,” said Mukasheva.

Choosing Montessori system, however, is not driven by a trend, rather by a “conscious decision” of parents.

“The deciding factor for us is the understanding on behalf of parents. We are always open and transparent about what we are doing. If we see that parents care more about grades and such external success and they want to make their children wonder kids, then it is not for us. We are not able to know what these children represent and perhaps they do not need it,” she said.

“We plan to accompany children until 12 years old. We do not seek to prepare them to a traditional classroom, but to a real life. It is a big difference,” she said.

The day at the Montessori school starts at 8:30 a.m. with children preparing breakfast on their own and lasts until 5 p.m.

Unlike traditional schools, biology, geography and history is taught from the first grade to meet children’s increasing hunger for knowledge, particularly high at this age, according to Mukasheva.

The classes last three hours, where children enjoy freedom within the limits, among core Montessori concepts. Teachers, who are trained and have experience in Montessori style system, guide children throughout the process.

Children also learn Kazakh and

English languages, art and music in the second half of the day.

The goal, she noted, is to let children to “live through the process.”

The emphasis is not on textbooks or grades, rather meeting children’s curiosity and interest to learning and allowing children to learn at their own pace, as traditional curriculum that sets a certain pace constraints children’s development resulting in many disappointments for them.

“Such children who lack concentration and attentive observation, when they reach sixth grade, they lose their interest to learning. Their performance is worsening. The curriculum becomes more complicated and he or she is not able to grasp it, not because he or she is not that smart, but because the pace is not theirs,” she said.

Though the popularity of the educational approach is growing, it is not supposed to draw big numbers, said Mukasheva.

“Montessori system is not for everyone. It is a decision of parents who recognise that the world is different and want their children understand where they are living, be committed to his or her principles and do not surrender to life and system,” she said.

“There is some statistics. Global population can be divided into three groups. One percent that change the world, three percent that change their life and the remaining population are simply following others. Our goal is to ensure our children in either one or three percent of the population changing the world or at least controlling their life,” she said.

She compared children to a blank list that entails a “significant responsibility” and noted children’s independence is what amazes her most.

“This probably is the most attractive part for me. I understand that no matter how I educate my children, we still live in one society. If you want to change something, we need to start from children. If they are surrounded by love, attention and understanding, they will grow as confident people capable to change,” she said.

Mayor reports on capital’s transport, engineering, social facilities development plan

By Abira Kuandyk

ASTANA – Astana Akim (Mayor) Bakhyt Sultanov reviewed the comprehensive plan for the capital’s development of engineering and transport infrastructure for 2019 to 2023 at a Sep. 18 government meeting.

Sultanov identified five promising development zones in the capital: Mynzhyllyk Alley and the Nurlı Zhol railway station, Mangilik El Avenue, Turan Avenue’s West, Telman Suburb’s South and the Asan Kaigy Street renovation, primeminister.kz reports.

With a growing birth rate and steady migration toward the capital, Astana’s population is expected to increase by around 2.5 percent annually and reach approximately 2 million by 2030. In addition, the number of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) will increase by more than 37 percent, exceeding 216,000. The share of small and medium-sized businesses in the gross regional product will grow to 57 percent by 2023 (and reach 50.5 percent in 2018).

The expected economy growth rates and the tax base will ensure an increase in local budget revenues by 43.7 percent to 355 billion tenge (US\$956.82 million). Annual revenues to the national budget from Astana will grow by 14 percent, from 823 billion tenge (US\$2.21 billion) in 2018 to 940 billion tenge (US\$2.53 billion) in 2023.

“In the next five years, around 6 trillion tenge (US\$16.17 billion) of private investments will be invested in the capital’s development. Thus, one tenge (US\$0.003) of



Bakhyt Sultanov

state investments will be invested to four to five tenge (US\$0.011 to US\$0.013) of private investment. This will contribute to the expansion of social and engineering infrastructure, as well as to the growth of housing construction,” said Sultanov.

It is planned to build 121 km of roads, two traffic interchanges, three bridges, an overpass, a tunnel and a complete ring road by 2023 with the annual 8 to 9 percent increase of motorisation level. Forming a transport frame will decrease the probability of a traffic collapse on the roads and unload the city’s main thoroughfares by 50 percent.

The storm water drainage system is one of Astana’s biggest challenges.

“It is planned to work on the coverage of 17,300 hectares and ensure unimpeded drainage of surface runoff by the end of 2019. The total water catchment area will grow from 13,000 hectares to 23,000 hectares. To ensure quality services for the population, 150 kilometres of water supply networks and 81 kilometres of water disposal networks will be built,” added Sultanov.

Privatising Astana’s energy

complexes is being considered with the involvement of independent consultants with experience in this field. All privatisation procedures are planned to be completed by the end of 2020, said the akim.

It is also planned to build three 110 kV substations and reconstruct 110 kV overhead lines. This will provide Mynzhyllyk Alley and Zheleznodorozhny Village with LRT electricity, reducing the load in the southwestern part of the city, he added.

Sultanov also reported on the development of the education system.

“It is planned to build 37 schools and 10 outbuildings for approximately 63,000 places for 2019 to 2023. This will eliminate the deficit in schools by 2021,” he said. It is also planned to build six kindergartens through public-private partnerships (PPPs) in the amount of 6 billion tenge (US\$16.34 million).

The PPP mechanism is also going to be used for healthcare facilities. It is planned to build 13 facilities for 44.1 billion tenge (US\$120.16 million) and two more facilities for 30.4 billion tenge (US\$82.83 million). Included in these will be the Central Road Hospital with 500 beds and a perinatal centre with 250 beds, he added.

Sultanov noted that the implementation of the comprehensive plan will have a positive effect on economic development in the capital and in the country. In five years the budget will receive 7 trillion tenge (US\$19.07 billion). It is also planned to attract 6 trillion (US\$16.17 billion) of private investments. This will create 300,000 new jobs and attract around 3 million tourists.