



Geopolitical rivalry, terrorism among threats facing Eurasia, Nazarbayev tells Astana Club



By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – Astana Club, a platform to debate public issues based on Chatham House rules, kicked off its fourth annual meeting Nov. 12. The meeting focused on challenges facing the Eurasian region and the building of Eurasian strategic architecture. The meeting gathered 50 leading experts, politicians and diplomats from 33 countries.

Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev addressed the event's plenary session Nov. 13 outlining key risks threatening the greater region and ways to address them.

"First are the growing contradictions between major powers that intensify the instability of the current global order, making global events less predictable. We have

not witnessed such a confrontation for quite a long time. The so-called post-bipolar world order becomes a thing of the past. We witness the formation of Greater Eurasia," said Nazarbayev.

Escalating the geopolitical rivalry between China, Russia and the United States also impacts the Greater Eurasia context, he noted.

"Difficulties have always been present in this strategic triangle if we look back at history. Yet, the ability to manage them has drastically weakened in the recent years. Large scale crisis is more possible than ever before," said the Kazakh President.

"The confrontation questions the efficiency of global development institutes and security in general. The foundation for strategic stability present since World War II is shattering," he said.

Economic contradictions, in what is known as trade wars, are on the rise with an increasing threat posed to global economies.

"One of such wars is unfolding between the U.S. and China, together accounting for the third of the world's economy, 20 percent of global exports and more than a third of investment flow. This will result in the economic downturn in general and will worsen the situation in developing countries," said Nazarbayev.

Poverty and the unemployment rate, he noted, will continue to rise, turning into a fertile ground for terrorism, migration and separatism.

The same scenario, he noted, unfolded in Afghanistan.

The region is also vulnerable to sanctions introduced by countries unilaterally as a punitive measure to counter sanctions.

Nazarbayev said some parts of the Greater Eurasia may turn into the scene of large-scale military confrontation and the Middle East, where instability is caused by the Syrian crisis, political tensions in Iraq, civil war in Libya and internal challenges, is among such regions.

The breaking up of a landmark Iranian deal that, as Nazarbayev put it, was "achieved in difficult circumstances" exacerbates the situation. In May, U.S. President Donald Trump announced his country's withdrawal from the agreement initially signed by the five permanent members of the UN Security Council: the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Russia and China, plus Germany and Iran.

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President opens AIK's first trading session



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GDP grows 4.1 percent in 10 months of 2018

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – Kazakhstan's gross domestic product (GDP) grew 4.1 percent in a ten-month period, reported Minister of National Economy Timur Suleimenov at the Nov. 13 government meeting. Overall, the economy has maintained a positive growth trend.

"The high investment activity, a slowdown in inflation processes and an increase in production in the basic sectors of the economy contributed to the economic growth. Investment demand is also growing. Investments in fixed assets increased by 20.8 percent. The production increase amounted to 4.7 percent, with the growth of the manufacturing industry outpacing the mining industry," he said.

The mining industry increased by 4.6 percent due to increased production in iron ore, coal and lignite, natural gas, oil and non-ferrous metal ore.

Construction industry growth stabilised at 4.1 percent.

"The growth is due to an increase in the construction of residential buildings, industrial facilities, the reconstruction of roads and the modernisation of the Shymkent refinery," he added.

Output is increasing in the non-trading sector due to the expanded real economic sector. Service production grew by 4 percent, trade by 7.2 percent and transport by 4.5 percent.

International trade also showed

solid growth with an eight-month increase of 21.6 percent. Exports increased by 28.2 percent due to the increased supply of oil and natural gas, agricultural products, aluminium and copper ores.

In the labour market, 414,500 people have been employed since the beginning of the year. Salaries are growing at a moderate pace, with the average monthly salary increasing to 158,200 tenge (US\$422) in January – September.

Inflation was 0.4 percent in October, lower than the expected forecast, said National Bank Chairman Daniyar Akishev. As a result, annual inflation fell to 5.3 percent compared to 7.7 percent in October 2017, the lowest rate since 2015. Low inflation rates at the end of the year will result in annual inflation remaining within the 5-7 percent target corridor.

The bank announced plans to increase the base rate from 9 to 9.25 percent. The change allows increasing demand for tenge and assets and retaining convenient conditions for cash loans.

Banks approved 2,900 loan applications for 35 billion tenge (US\$94 million) as part of the 7-20-25 housing lending programme. The National Bank conducts explanatory work among the population through a 24/7 call centre. Baspama, a Kazakh construction company, will launch the project, which will help to assess opportunities for online programme participation in the near future.

Astana hosts CSTO Collective Security Council summit

By Malika Orazgaliyeva

ASTANA – The presidents and heads of government of the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) Council member states met in Astana Nov. 8 to discuss regional security, organisational operations and summarise Kazakhstan's chairmanship in 2018.

The meeting was attended by presidents Nursultan Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan, Alexander Lukashenko of Belarus, Sooronbay Jeenbekov of Kyrgyzstan, Vladimir Putin of Russia, Emomali Rahmon of Tajikistan, acting Prime Minister of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan, as well as CSTO Secretary General Valery Semerikov and defence and foreign ministers of the six states.

The participants discussed international and regional security, as well as the interaction of CSTO member states within the establishment and internationally.

Nazarbayev said it was important to strengthen cooperation within the CSTO and improve mechanisms to ensure collective security.

"The main political document of the CSTO Summit in Astana became the final declaration, which reflects the objectives and plans of the organisation for the coming period. A statement 'On coordinated measures regarding participants of armed conflicts on the side of international terrorist organisations' was adopted. We



Photo credit: Akorda Press.

completed the work, introduced by our Belarusian colleagues, on the legal registration of the status of the CSTO partner and the observer. A corresponding package of documents has been signed," said Nazarbayev.

The meeting approved action plans to combat illegal migration and coordinate information policy in favour of the CSTO countries.

"Kazakhstan considers the CSTO as an authoritative and effective structure. This year Kazakhstan successfully implemented its priorities with the active and comprehensive support of the member states," said Nazarbayev.

"The coordination council for the standardisation of weapons

and military equipment was created at the meeting of the CSTO intergovernmental commission on military-technical cooperation," he said.

He also focused on the results of joint work on countering cyber threats and combating illicit drug trafficking.

Nazarbayev stressed that during Kazakhstan's chairmanship, the initiative on adoption of a universal code of conduct to achieve a world free of terrorism, which was approved by more than 70 countries, was implemented.

The CSTO chairmanship was transferred from Kazakhstan to Kyrgyzstan for the next inter-sessional period of one year. Nazarbayev expressed confidence the

Kyrgyz chairmanship will be held at a high level and help develop the organisation.

Earlier in the day, a joint meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers (CFM), the Council of Defence Ministers (CDM) and the Committee of Secretaries of the Security Councils (CSSC) of the CSTO was held with the participation of representatives from Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan. The meeting sought to strengthen international and regional security, military cooperation and to address current threats.

The next joint meeting of the CFM, the CDM and the CSTO's CSSC and the summit will be in 2019 in Kyrgyzstan.

EBRD, EU and China commit to investment cooperation in Central Asia

By Dilshat Zhussupova

ASTANA – The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) committed to closer cooperation with China and the European Union (EU) to attract greater investment in Central Asia at Beijing's Nov. 14 Central Asia Investment Forum (CAIF).

Hosted by the EBRD and the People's Bank of China (PBoC) and sponsored by the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China, CAIF gathered more than 600 leading investors, policymakers, economists and experts from China and abroad. Discussion panels centred on opportunities presented by the

Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) to Central Asia in the financial sector, agribusiness, renewable energy development, risk mitigation and public-private partnership (PPP) in infrastructure.

Attendees included EBRD President Suma Chakrabarti, the European Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development Neven Mimica and PBoC Deputy Governor Chen Yulu, who agreed to enhance investment in the region. The parties will build on institutions and clients' capacities, promote a predictable and level playing field and incentivise green and inclusive investment.

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Kazakhstan will support and incentivise IT innovation, says President

Staff Report

ASTANA – Kazakh innovators in information technology (IT) are to be incentivised and supported, said Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev Nov. 6 at the Astana Hub opening ceremony.

The President said the Astana Hub is to become Kazakhstan’s centre of innovation. To facilitate this, users of the hub’s technopark will enjoy a simplified visa regime, greater labour mobility, tax benefits and expert mentorship on their start-ups.

“We need to create a new generation of IT talents, and our main task is to help our smart and capable youth,” he said. “Support toward private initiatives, programming schools, Olympiads and updated university curriculums is to be provided.”

Nazarbayev further singled out the importance of financial support from the government and businesses for start-up implementation.

One of Astana Hub’s main foundations is the Law on Venture Financing, which entered into force July 21 and eased visa procedures and employment regimes for foreign technopark participants. The first Kazakh business angels club QazAngels will soon begin its work, in which angel investors will contribute their time, money and connections to help entrepreneurs with their ventures.

Digitisation was contextualised within the country’s broader industrialisation efforts.



“The Internet of things, artificial intelligence, three-dimensional printing technology and blockchain infiltrate all spheres of life,” the President noted. “Digitisation has become a key factor in states’ development and competitiveness. The world’s leading countries and

their associations, such as the G20 and the European Union, have all adopted strategic documents on digitisation.”

On his first official visit to Kazakhstan, Estonian Prime Minister Jüri Ratas was present at the ceremony. Nazarbayev, stress-

ing Estonia’s experience in digital technologies, thanked Ratas for participating in Astana Hub’s launch. He concluded by urging all to actively participate in the development of innovative technology.

The Astana Hub international technopark hopes to attract \$67

billion in investments within the next five years. It has signed a memorandum with American seed accelerator Techstars and established connections with other innovation ecosystems in Belarus, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Ukraine and Uzbekistan.

NATIONAL NEWS IN BRIEF

More than 15,000 fires have been registered annually in the country in the past years, reported Kazinform. Since 2015, 3,319 people have been injured and 1,410 died. Material damage to the properties was approximately 12 billion tenge (US\$32 million). The highest number of fires has been observed in the Almaty, East Kazakhstan, Karaganda and Kostanai regions. “Currently, 422 fire stations operate and more than half of these are located in buildings that do not meet the requirements. Twenty-three of these are in disrepair and are subject to demolition. We need to build 137 additional facilities, including 111 in urban and 23 in rural areas,” said Minister of Internal Affairs Kalmukhanbet Kassymov at the Nov. 12 government meeting.

Huawei Technologies presented its innovative demo centre Nov. 6 at the Astana Hub. The company intends to invest in cloud computing, Internet of Things, big data, mobile broadband, software-defined networks and other promising areas to create an open, flexible and secure information and communication technology infrastructure. “Huawei is committed to becoming the best partner for building a digital society and an industrial digital transformation. The opening of the innovation centre is the major step. We are ready to provide help and support to improve competitiveness in Central Asia and around the world. It is not just a project, but a long-term investment in the Kazakh IT market, an intellectual contribution to the digitisation of the country’s economy,” said Huawei Technologies Kazakhstan General Director Zhang Qingguo.

Two cotton processing plants using more than 6 billion tenge (US\$16 million) will be launched in the Turkestan region, reported the Turkestan Invest press service. “The production capacity of the first plant is 150,000 tonnes per year. Approximately 250-300 jobs will be created. The plant will be opened in late November. The products will be exported to China. An Uzbek company invested 890 million tenge (US\$2 million) in the second plant. The facility is located on an area of 10 hectares in the Shardara industrial zone and 50 workplaces are expected. Currently, the construction and installation works are underway. The launch of the first phase is scheduled for December,” according to the release.

The Ministry of Social Development will release the road map to execute the Year of Youth, according to its press service. “We identified 11 key areas that we would like to implement in the coming year. It includes the development of youth infrastructure, education, employment, health, affordable housing, business development and improving financial literacy, legal culture, increasing the level of intolerance to corruption, strengthening the sense of patriotism, supporting talented youth, developing youth non-governmental organisations and informational support and state youth policy,” said Minister Darkhan Kaletayev.

Beginning Jan. 1, Kazakhstan will introduce a value-added tax (VAT) checking account on a voluntary basis for VAT payers using blockchain technology. “VAT payers can open a bank account used for separate accounting of money transfer on VAT amounts. A separate mode of transactions will be applied to these accounts by limiting the type of transactions performed for crediting VAT amounts to the Counterparty VAT Control Account for mutual settlements between buyers and suppliers for the supply of goods and paying VAT to the budget,” according to the release.

EBRD, EU and China commit to investment cooperation in Central Asia



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The EBRD is Central Asia’s largest institutional investor with approximately \$14 billion committed to more than 750 projects in private sector development. It finances wind and solar power in Kazakhstan and Mongolia, empowers female entrepreneurs in Tajikistan, promotes sustainable tourism in Uzbekistan, enhances healthcare access in Kyrgyzstan and supports small businesses in Turkmenistan. With a 4.6 [economic] percent growth rate forecast in 2018, “there is much more to Central Asia than traditional carbon energy,” noted the bank’s president.

The region is increasingly becoming an important bridge for Asia-Europe trade and innovation with initiatives such as the BRI, China’s development strategy on improving regional cooperation and connectivity via land and maritime networks.

“Central Asia is a region which needs and wants to be better connected to and integrated with the wider global economy. It has the potential to start playing the role it once had as a key link between the East and the West. The EBRD can mobilise high-quality investment and develop business in the region, and we also see an important role for Chinese investors as demand remains huge,” said Chakrabarti.

As a shareholder since 2016, China enjoys greater investment opportunities in the regions where

the EBRD operates, including Central Asia. The bank began its work in Kazakhstan in 1993, investing more than \$8 billion in PPPs, renewable energy regulation, subsoil use, privatisation, inclusivity in the energy sector and capital market development. BRI investments in the country include railroads, pipelines and a dry port along its border to ship goods to Europe.

China is to work with the other parties in promoting “renewable energy, infrastructure and agribusiness and risk mitigation cooperation... under the BRI,” said Chen commenting on the signature of a memorandum of understanding between the EBRD and the China International Contractors Association at the event.

Mimica reiterated the European Union and Central Asia’s long-standing partnership in trade, security, energy and connectivity and their shared values of peace and prosperity.

“The EU’s new strategy for ‘Connecting Europe and Asia’ is the latest example of our firm commitment to boosting cooperation with our Asian partners in key areas like connectivity and sustainable development,” he said.

The partners’ commitments are to also contribute to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, given that “we are just over a decade away from 2030 and our promise to end poverty and inequalities by achieving the Sustainable Development Goals,” added the commissioner.

Agreements worth \$1.7 billion signed at Turkestan business forum

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – Seventeen business agreements worth \$1.7 billion were signed at the recent Ancient Turkestan – New Opportunities forum in Turkestan, said Regional Akim (Governor) Zhanseit Tuimbayev at an Oct. 31 press conference.

Among the agreements is a pledge by the Iranian company Ardabil Petrochemical to invest in the region’s \$205 million oncology centre and in the construction of an oil refinery. The Chinese company Changchun Longyuan Power Equipment agreed to contribute \$648 million to the production of power plants and goods. The Shanghai Lianfu New Energy Science & Technology Group will build in a \$340 million plant to manufacture solar-powered electric buses. Green Land Alatau and Russian investors will allocate \$180 million to build a greenhouse.

“This year we attracted 163.5 billion tenge (US\$440 million) in investments. The forum was held to develop the investment and tourism attractiveness. More than 500 entrepreneurs from 17 coun-

tries attended the event,” said Tuimbayev.

Work is underway to create a Turkistan special economic zone. The land with full infrastructure and tax incentives for 25 years is expected to help incentivise projects in the tourism sector, construction and industry.

Currently, nine industrial zones operate in the region. The local financial institutions have said they are ready to co-invest up to \$3 million in projects with foreign capital.

The local administration, Kazakh Invest national company and Turkestan Invest are working to launch 13 investment projects totalling \$615 million. The projects are expected to create 3,000 jobs.

Overall, it is planned to ensure employment for 65,000 people as part of the Enbek Productive Employment and Mass Entrepreneurship Development Programme. Some 58,700 residents have already received jobs and 7,953 people took part in training.

The region will organise 168 events as part of the Ruhani Zhangyru (Modernisation of Kazakhstan’s Identity) state programme, the akim said.

“The head of state noted that the Turkestan region is one of the

great achievements of spiritual modernisation and set a task to make Turkestan a spiritual centre of the Turkic world. As a result, we launched 21 tourist routes to the sacred sites and cultural monuments. We are developing the Ontustik TourAudio mobile app in several languages and special videos about the sites included in the Sacred Map of Kazakhstan and of the Turkestan region. The QR codes were installed at 35 tourist sites. Yesterday, the millionth tourist arrived in our city. He is from the U.S. Compared to last year, the number of tourists increased by 57.2 percent. We must effectively use the potential of the region,” he said.

The number of tourists is expected to reach five million by 2025 with the implementation of the tourism industry development concept 2018-2025.

Three hotels, a hostel, two sanatoriums and a travel company will be built in the region. By the end of this year, 14 tourist facilities will be launched including hotels, recreation areas and sanatoriums. The Kaskasu mountain-skiing base and beach tourism will be improved at the Shardara reservoir. The Sarygash resort will be expanded.



EXTERNAL NEWS IN BRIEF

Kazakhstan will bid to host the 2023 World Petroleum Congress, an important event in the global oil and gas industry organised every three years to provide an opportunity for industry players and experts to discuss innovations, technologies and key issues in the field. The decision was adopted unanimously during the 23rd meeting of the KazEnergy Association of Oil, Gas and Energy Complex, whose chair Timur Kulibayev said 2018 has been productive for the country’s energy sector. In October, Kazakhstan hosted the World Petroleum Council meeting that gathered more than 800 delegates from 51 countries. “All delegates indicated the high level of organisation of the meeting and noted that Astana could rightfully bid for hosting the World Petroleum Congress scheduled for 2023,” he said.

Senior diplomats, representatives of academia, experts and students gathered at Oxford University for the Oxford Silk Road Society panel session on Central Asia and regional security, politics, economy, culture and education. Kazakh Ambassador to the U.K. Erlan Idrissov and Uzbek Ambassador Alisher Shaihov attended the gathering, where Idrissov briefed participants on Kazakhstan’s vision about fundamental political and economic processes unfolding in the region. Regional ties are going through significant positive changes and the importance of the region in global politics is growing, he said, emphasising the rekindling of regional ties and increasingly frequent political dialogue of Central Asian countries. He stressed the importance of the first informal meeting of Central Asian leaders in March in Astana.

Kazakhstan participated in the 11th Korea-Central Asia Cooperation Forum Nov. 6-7 in Seoul. The forum, first convened in 2007 at South Korea’s initiative, joined five Central Asian countries and South Korean government representatives to explore cooperation prospects in energy, transport and logistics, water resources, environment, health and culture. The programme also featured a business competition, where Dmitriy Tyo, cardiologist from Petropavlovsk in northern Kazakhstan, won third place for his website and mobile app meant to connect citizens, medicine organisations and medicine producers. The Kazakh delegation suggested organising the next forum in Astana.

Kazakhstan took part in the second round of Moscow consultations on Afghanistan, which gathered deputy foreign ministers, special envoys and observers from Afghanistan, China, India, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Russia, Tajikistan, the United States and Uzbekistan. Initiated by Russia, the first meeting was organised in September in the country’s effort to bring the Afghan government and Taliban to the negotiating table. Opening the meeting, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov expressed hope it will help seek solutions to national reconciliation and peace talks in Afghanistan emphasising the growing threat from Daesh. Though refusing to attend the September meeting, Afghanistan send several High Peace Council officials to the second session. The Kazakh delegation was headed by First Deputy Foreign Minister Mukhtar Tleuberdi, who reiterated the importance of reaching stability in Afghanistan for Central Asia and stressed the need to bring Afghanistan into regional cooperation processes.

Kazakh tourism companies presented Travel to Kazakhstan at the 34th international Philoxenia tourism exhibition in Thessaloniki, the second largest city in Greece and one of the world’s popular destinations. The three-day event featured 615 exhibitors from 22 countries and attracted visitors from 47 nations. Kazakhstan participated for the first time in the Mediterranean region exhibit. Its stand, displaying the nation’s tourism destinations, nature and culture, was accompanied by performances of Kazakh folk songs and national games.

Slovak Prime Minister visits Kazakhstan, attends business forum

By Almasbek Zhumadilov

ASTANA – Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev and Slovak Prime Minister Peter Pellegrini discussed bilateral trade and economic cooperation Nov. 15 in Astana during Pellegrini’s first official visit to Kazakhstan.

“I believe that your visit will give a new impetus to the development of mutual relations,” said Nazarbayev.

Pellegrini praised Kazakhstan’s growing international role.

“Kazakhstan has a great authority in the field of international relations. We highly appreciate the stabilising role of Kazakhstan in solving many international issues,” he said.

Pellegrini said the countries should expand bilateral trade and economic relations and increase cooperation in agriculture and transit and logistics, including within the Belt and Road initiative.

Pellegrini also discussed with Kazakh Prime Minister Bakytzhan Sagintayev expanding cooperation in trade, economic, cultural and humanitarian affairs, energy, agriculture, engineering, transit, joint investment projects and tourism.

Slovakia plans to open two cen-



tres for simplified obtaining of Schengen visas for Kazakh citizens in Kazakhstan.

Sagintayev noted growing bilateral trade and said Kazakhstan is interested in Slovak experience in the automotive industry, alternative and renewable energy sources and green economy, energy infrastructure and nuclear energy.

Bilateral trade in 2017 grew 40 percent over 2016 to \$53 million. In January-August 2018, trade volumes reached \$33.5 million and the inflow of Slovak direct investment from 2005 to the second quarter of 2018 totalled \$20.6 million.

Pellegrini noted Kazakhstan was key partner for Slovakia in Central Asia and that Slovak companies are involved in large energy and infrastructure projects in Kazakhstan.

The Slovak Prime Minister also

thanked Kazakhstan for protecting investors and exempting them from double taxation.

Sixty-two legal entities, branches and representative offices with Slovak participation are registered in Kazakhstan.

Slovakia will chair the Organisation for Security and Cooperation (OSCE) in Europe in 2019 and Pellegrini said his country is interested in Kazakhstan’s experience as 2010 chair, during which Kazakhstan organised the first OIC Summit in 11 years.

Pellegrini also led a delegation of 70 Slovak business and government representatives to the Nov. 15 Kazakh-Slovak Business Forum in Astana. The forum gathered approximately 120 business people from both countries.

Sagintayev told the gathering

Slovakia is a key partner for Kazakhstan in Central Europe and said the countries have in common an agro-industrial economic orientation of the economies, a developed human potential and a favourable geographical location.

Sagintayev outlined priority areas to increase cooperation, including manufacturing and non-primary exports. Kazakhstan also seeks to expand elements of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, including 3D printing, online trade, mobile banking, digital services, automation, robotisation, artificial intelligence and the exchange of big data.

Sagintayev also said Kazakhstan seeks to use new technologies and processing techniques to expand agricultural productivity and increase exports.

He also noted that Kazakhstan is a member of the Eurasian Economic Union with a population of more than 180 million people with no customs borders, and other major international economic cooperation organisations

He noted that tax burdens have been lessened and that procedures for public-public partnerships have been simplified. He also said Kazakhstan has improved migration and labour laws and simplified pro-

cedures for these activities. He also noted Kazakhstan has set up structures, such as the Foreign Investors Council under the President and the Council for the Improvement of the Investment Climate to protect foreign investors. These procedures, Sagintayev told the gathering, contributed to Kazakhstan jumping to 28th on the 2019 World Bank Doing Business ranking.

Sagintayev invited the Slovak businesses to participate in joint projects, including in Kazakhstan’s large-scale privatisation of the major national companies.

Pellegrini said that Slovak entrepreneurs are interested in investing in Kazakhstan and that the Slovak government wants to expand economic relations through joint investments and projects.

“There are industries in the energy sector in which we see the greatest potential, including the renewable sources, mechanical engineering, mining equipment, oil and gas, water purification technology, as well as food production and many others. Therefore, the firms that are present here represent precisely these areas,” said Pellegrini,

Diplomatic relations between Kazakhstan and Slovakia were established Jan. 1, 1993.

Astana Club presents 2019 Global Risks rating

By Saltanat Boteu

ASTANA – Astana Club International discussion platform held the first day of a Nov. 12-13 meeting presenting 2019 Global Risk rating for Eurasian region. The rating distinguishes ten major risks for the region that need to be addressed for the Eurasian integrity and peacebuilding.

The date of the Astana Club meeting is a symbolic date. Hundred years ago, Nov. 11 was the end of the First World War that led to large-scale territorial changes in Eurasia. According to organisers, currently Eurasia is once again facing important changes and difficult issues that need to be addressed by the world community. The first step to the integrity is to identify key issues and risks in the

region, which is presented in 2019 Global Risks rating.

“Today is symbolic date. We present our wonderful report one day after the celebration of 100 years of the end of the First World War. Many experts say that world system is experiencing the process of misbalance. Risks grow and instability grows, even in such a stable region as Central Asia ... The product that is presented today [the rating] is of high quality. I travel around the world and saw many reports... and this is a great achievement,” said Atlantic Council’s Senior Expert Ariel Cohen at the press conference.

The purpose of the rating is to assess current geopolitical and geo-economic processes both in the Eurasian region and throughout the world. According to Institute of World Economics and Politics

(IWEPP) Director Yerzhan Saltybayev, although the identified ten risks do not directly influence Kazakhstan, their impact is significant.

Among major ten risks are the relationship between global powers such as Russia, the U.S. and China including the escalation of the confrontation between China and the U.S. degradation of relations between Russia and the West. The list also includes trade wars, the war in the Middle East, “defrosting” hot spots in Eurasia, growth of separatism and ethno-confessional conflicts, aggravation of environmental and water challenges, strengthening and evolution of cyber threats, the beginning of a new arms race and risk of major nuclear and man-made disasters.

“This rating was made by IWEPP. During the research, opinions of more than 30 experts from around

the world were collected and approximately 1,000 experts participated in the survey, the results of which helped us to identify major ten global risks of 2019... The aim of the rating is to attract attention of the world’s politics and experts to the trending issues and to discuss solutions to these issues on the Astana Club discussion,” said Expert of IWEPP Zhanibek Arynov.

According to Cohen, although the rating distinguishes major risks, the political and economic issues in the region should be considered from different perspectives and in deeper context.

“Many talk about trade wars, I, unfortunately, see this not only in this context; it is also perspectives of the growth of People’s Republic of China, its economic and military growth and growth of competition between China and the

U.S... Dialogue between the U.S. and China should include not only trade issues, but [ways] to prevent confrontation in South China Sea [or] agreement on medium-range missiles,” noted Cohen.

The participants also noted the role of the platform in global dialogue.

“Astana Club is a unique platform not for the balance of powers, but balance of ideas,” said Eurasian Studies Institute’s Director and Shanghai University International Relations and Public Administration School’s Professor Yan Chen.

The club is an international discussion platform in the format of a political forum that brings together leading experts, politicians and diplomats from around the world. The focus of the experts is to discuss the challenges in Eurasia in times of crises and uncertainty.

Geopolitical rivalry, terrorism among threats...

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International terrorism and extremism continue to pose significant threats to international security and stability, the Kazakh leader continued.

Cyber security is turning into a new dimension of global stability. With cyber attacks being able to seize control over facilities and other strategic objects, Nazarbayev stressed the importance of guarding against such attacks.

He once again made of passionate plea to the countries to step up efforts towards achieving a nuclear weapons-free world.

Nazarbayev said the world is getting closer to repeating the Cuba crisis scenario, referring to the recent advancement of the NATO forces and deployment of new bases and military infrastructure closer to Russian borders.

As he went on to propose various solutions in order to bolster global security, the Kazakh President suggested updating the 1975 Helsinki Act, once a turning point in the Cold War signed by 35 nations at the height of the Cold War.

He proposed organising a conference in 2020 for the purpose of discussing this possibility that will also mark the document’s 40th anniversary.

“We understand that coming to a new agreement will not be easy. It is rational to start preparing for final negotiations already in 2019. Kazakhstan is ready to initiate this event, as we organised the first in this century OSCE (Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Eu-

rope) summit in Astana. As usual, many things will depend on the position of great powers. In this regard, I would like to call on the big states to join efforts to reach a new agreement,” said Nazarbayev.

He underlined the need to build a trust-based dialogue between nuclear powers and step up negotiations to decrease nuclear arsenals and create nuclear weapon-free zones.

To address growing trade tensions, the countries should sit at the table for negotiations under the auspices of the World Trade Organisation.

“Astana will host the ministerial meeting of this organisation in 2020. We see the solution in the formation of uniform fair rules for trade and investment cooperation. Of course, there is still the need to reaffirm intellectual property rights, develop flexible and effective rules for the transfer of technologies,” said Nazarbayev.

He also believes Asia needs its own collective security organisation.

“It is a matter of time. The Kazakh initiative of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA) that currently includes 30 countries in the Asian continent may serve as the foundation for future security and cooperation organisation in Asia. To this purpose, as the first step, I suggest organising a joint consultative meeting of the OSCE, CICA and ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations) regional forum on security,” he said.

Nazarbayev highlighted the importance of organising a Eurasian security conference, similar to the Munich Security Conference taking place in Munich since 1963.

The sixth proposal elaborated by the President stresses the need for the international community to develop a Global strategy of cooperation in the development of information space.

Existing global order is challenged in many ways, said former Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency and Nobel Peace Prize winner Mohamed ElBaradei speaking immediately after Nazarbayev.

“Violence and polarisation between and within nations is spreading. Inequality is more flagged. International law and institutions are losing authority and influence. Our global security system is strained and instead of looking for multilateral dialogue and collective security, we are relying more and more on confrontation and unilateral use of force and, at best, sanctions,” said ElBaradei.

Countries continue to rely on nuclear weapons, in what he described as the “most horrifying component of global security system,” as a source of security and influence.

“We remain hostage for our survival on mutual assured destruction doctrine, which is dangerous, unsustainable and naive. It is a doctrine grounded on the premise that those who have nuclear weapons are more equal than others and is subject to inevitable human fallibility and miscalculation. Yet, today there are 15,000 nuclear weapons and 2,000 are on high alert,” he said, praising Kazakhstan and Nazarbayev personally for the commitment to eliminating nuclear weapons and the contribution to date.

Countries are prisoners of history and geography, said former Afghan president Hamid Karzai, referring to his country’s geographical location that could be regarded by some as blessing and sometimes as a curse.

“We are a Central Asian country. We are also a South Asian country. If you see our linkages to Iran and Turkey, we are also a West Asian country. This combination brings Afghanistan to its very particular situation,” he said, highlighting a centuries-long rivalry between major powers and the rising terrorism activities in the country.

“Prolongation of war, continuation of extremism, increasing violence and terrorist organisation, arrival of Daish in Afghanistan. All of these gave rise to suspicion, especially among big powers. This poses our country with tremendous challenges that we can only overcome by being wiser ourselves as Afghans and by conducting ourselves more equitably wiser with our neighbours, region and big powers,” he said.

Afghanistan needs to learn a delicate balancing, he said, referring to Kazakhstan’s famed multi-vector policy. Though problems persist, there is still hope, he added.

“The recent American initiative to launch a peace process with the Taliban and also the Russian initiative of the Moscow dialogue format. We in Afghanistan hope that these two major powers will join hands and that these two initiatives by two important countries for us will also be assisted by China, India, Iran, and Pakistan especially and our friends and brothers, Turkey,” he said.

In his remarks, Karzai thanked Nazarbayev for Kazakhstan’s support of Afghanistan, including the country’s programme to offer 1,000 Afghans an opportunity to study in Kazakhstan.

Karzai also noted the country’s important role in encouraging dialogue between the sides.

Former Turkish Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu, in turn, stressed the multi-level and multidimensional nature of the current global situation.

“It is multilevel because we have national, regional and global aspects. It is multidimensional, because we have security, economic, cultural consequences of the crisis,” he said.

Global order has not witnessed an inclusive restructuring since the Cold War, said Davutoglu.

“There has not been any sophisticated approach to reorganising international structures, international organisations, UN reform. We have regional instabilities and global crisis. The system itself is in crisis which is supposed to solve the crisis,” he said, emphasising the need for an inclusive approach to handling the crisis.

Davutoglu said the countries could benefit from regional initiatives, including the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

“We need a geopolitical stability, not ceasefire, but sustainable peace. We need geoeconomic interdependency like BRI, which all of us from East Asia, China up to Turkey and West Asia could benefit from. We all will be winners from this project,” said the Turkish politician, scholar and diplomat.

ECONOMY

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 21, 2018

President opens AIX’s first trading session

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev launched the first trading session on the Astana International Exchange (AIX) Nov. 14, coinciding with the 25th anniversary of tenge, the national currency, reported the press service of the Astana International Financial Centre (AIFC).

The Kazatomprom national atomic company, which produces 20 percent of the world’s uranium, became the first company to be listed on the stock exchange.

Nazarbayev said the national currency helped create the country’s financial system and ensure economic sovereignty.

“Since then, the economy grew significantly, and people’s standard of living increased. The major reforms are being implemented in the country. The launch of the AIFC is a major step in the sustainable development of our country,” he said.

The AIFC should become the main financial hub of the region and one of the leading financial centres in Asia.

“The financial centre gave Astana a new status of a financial capital. Astana’s position rose by 27 points in the Global Financial Centres Index (GFCI). Astana will continue to develop as a smart city

providing comfortable conditions for its residents and visitors,” said the President.

“We plan to place the shares of Kazakhtelecom, Air Astana, KazMunayGas and other national companies on the stock exchange in the future. The AIFC will make its contribution to attracting foreign capital and bringing the stock market to a new level. We invited leading partners and experts and created favourable conditions for its participants,” he said.

All the initiatives seek to improve the lives of the population and increase Kazakhstan’s competitiveness.

“Today, we take a major step. The Kazatomprom national company successfully placed its shares for the initial public offering on the London Stock Exchange and the AIFC Exchange. Foreign and domestic investors showed interest in this. Some 49 foreign, 16 domestic legal entities and 2,700 Kazakh citizens took part in the IPO,” said Chairman of the Board of the Samruk Kazyna Sovereign Wealth Fund Akhmetzhan Yessimov.

According to Kazatomprom, the price for one share was \$11.60 per GDR. About 7.8 million shares of the company are available on the AIX.

“This year, the AIFC ranks 61 and we plan to join the top 50



international financial centres in the next three years. Eighty-eight companies have already registered and we plan that up to 500 companies will be registered by the end of 2020. The first transactions were launched on our stock exchange. We successfully placed the bonds of Kazakhtelecom national company. Today, our stock exchange serves as a launching platform for trading the shares of Kazatomprom. And we hope that

the AIFC will be the same launching platform as Baikonur for the space industry,” said AIFC Governor Kairat Kelimbetov.

“Local and international investors are interested in our company. Our list of shareholders now includes Kazakh investors and leading international investment funds. We are ready to share the success and future of the company’s shareholders with our shareholders and lead the company forward for the

benefit of our country,” said Chairman of the Board of Kazatomprom Galymzhan Pirmatov.

The AIX was established in 2017 as part of the 100 Concrete Steps Plan of the Nation. Currently, 11 local and global brokers are working on the AIX. The AIX’s shareholders include AIFC, Goldman Sachs, Shanghai Stock Exchange, the Silk Road Fund and NASDAQ, which also provides the trading platform for AIX.

ECONOMY
NEWS IN BRIEF

State budget revenues decreased by 5.6 percent to 8.3 trillion tenge (US\$22.18 billion) from January-September, reported finprom.kz. The main factor was the 34.4 percent decrease in transfers, or 1.3 trillion tenge (US\$3.47 billion). In the corresponding period during the past five years, the maximum increase in state budget revenues was 34.6 percent in 2017. This was mainly due to transfers that almost doubled last year. For the first nine months of 2018, the main share of state budget revenues was 5.6 trillion tenge (US\$15.2 billion) in tax revenues (a 67 percent share of all revenues). The share of transfers to budget revenue was 30.3 percent.

Kazakhstan is becoming the centre of investment attraction within the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU). In the first half of the year, the union financed \$864 million in Kazakh projects, 37 percent more than a year ago. Foreign trade between nations has rapidly increased. Last year, Kazakh trade turnover with countries in the EAEU was \$17.8 billion (28.9 percent increase). In the first eight months of 2018, trade has already reached \$12.3 billion. At the same growth rate, trade may increase by 3-5 percent year-on-year by the end of the year. The share of EAEU investments is currently 7 percent of the total gross foreign investment, or \$12.3 billion.

The dynamic start of trading on the new Astana International Exchange (AIX) has served as a mechanism for quickly attracting equity and debt capital. In domestic capital, AIX trading volume was 503.3 million tenge (US\$1.36 million) during the first trading session. Kazatomprom conducted 381 trade transactions on its shares. At the same time, there is a shortage of liquidity in the capital market. As of July 1, the ratio of market capitalisation of equity and bond markets to gross domestic product (GDP) is 31.6 percent and 15.4 percent, respectively, which is significantly lower than the world practice of developed countries (40-45 percent for the stock market and 130-135 percent for the bond market).

Although foreign direct investment has been growing, the loan portfolio of second-tier banks decreased by 13.2 percent at the end of June. This occurred as Kazakhstan’s financial sector continues to shrink. The country’s banks had a loan portfolio volume of 13.2 trillion tenge (US\$35.70 billion) in the past year, which is 24.8 percent in relation to GDP. The demand for insurance products continues its steady decline. The average Kazakh has 15,600 tenge (US\$42.20) of insurance per year, which is only 0.5 percent of GDP per capita. The total volume of bank loans to GDP is 25.6 percent. In current market conditions, banks are forced to concentrate on retail lending and funding. At the end of September, loans to individuals were 5.1 trillion tenge (US\$13.79 billion), or 40.2 percent of all bank loans directed to the Kazakh economy.

Kazakhstan produced 25,897 vehicles, including cars, trucks, buses, special vehicles and trailers, with a total value of 162.9 billion tenge (US\$440.60 million) from January-October, according to KazAvtoProm, the Union of Automotive Enterprises. The output volume in physical terms surpassed last year’s figure by 72.1 percent, reported inform.kz. Passenger car production comprised a significant bulk of total production, increasing 86 percent to 24,155 units. At the same time, production of buses decreased 2.2 times (249 units), while trucks (882 units) and specialised vehicles (163 units) decreased by 21 percent and 12.8 percent, respectively.

Kazakhstan supports extending OPEC deal in 2019

Staff Report

ASTANA – Kazakh Vice Minister of Energy Magzum Mirzagaliyev recently affirmed Kazakhstan’s support for extending OPEC+ output cuts in 2019.

OPEC and non-OPEC countries agreed in November 2016 in Vienna to cut oil production by 1.8 million barrels per day, corresponding to roughly two

percent of global oil production. The move was meant to ease a global supply glut and push up oil prices that dropped below \$30 in early 2016. The drop came as China experienced an economic slowdown and the United States increased oil output as a shale oil producer.

Though the deal came into force in January 2017 over an initial six-month period, the countries, are close to entering the

third year with no definite end in sight.

“This cooperation and agreement were very right and timely. It worked both in the interest of oil exporting countries and oil importers. All have been winners,” Mirzagaliyev said.

The OPEC and non-OPEC Joint Ministerial Monitoring Committee met in Abu Dhabi with no firm decisions reached.

The next full OPEC meeting is

scheduled for Dec. 6 in Vienna, where the countries are expected to decide whether stay the course or cut output.

Mirzagaliyev said in case countries agreed to cut production, Kazakhstan stands for taking October-November levels.

The monitoring ministerial committee, however, is considering several options.

“These could be some average number from the beginning of

2018 until October, inclusively. It could also be three months from August to October. These are the questions that are still need to be discussed,” he added.

The vice minister also said Kazakhstan will bring up the possibility of special conditions for the country’s largest Kashagan project launched at the end of 2016 with its expectation for growing production volumes at Kashagan next year.

Latest IMF report highlights need for reform in Central Asia and Caucasus

By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – The Caucasus and Central Asia (CCA) region demonstrated a dynamic and remarkable 4.1-percent economic growth in 2017 over the 2.5-percent increase in 2016 and the latest Regional Economic Outlook for the CCA released by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) forecasts growth to stabilise at 4 percent in 2018-2019 and approximately 4.1 percent in the mid-term.

The countries, however, should not relax and must renew their efforts to improve the budget situation and continue reforms, said IMF Deputy Director for the Middle East and Central Asia Juha Kahkonen in an interview with The Astana Times.

Rising commodity prices, increasing fiscal spending and strong external demand facilitated the growth. The surge in commodity prices, which IMF expects to fade, should not lead countries to postpone their reforms.

“It is important for governments not to expect that this will continue.

There should be no complacency and given that governments used the reserves that they had to stimulate the economy during the previous downturn, they should now start to create savings again,” he said.

The IMF forecast for Kazakhstan’s economic growth among major oil exporters is 3.7 percent this year, close to the 3.8 percent expected by the government. The country benefited from increased demand for metals and agricultural products, said the report.

Report indicates rising external risks

“Lower commodity prices associated with a weaker global



Juha Kahkonen

Photo credit: IMF

outlook would also worsen the external and fiscal positions of countries in the region. While financial linkages with advanced economies are relatively limited, an unexpected tightening of global financial conditions could also lead to capital flow reversals and sharp movements of exchange rates,” it added.

Kahkonen noted countries need to galvanise efforts to address new risks, including monetary tightening of U.S. and global trade tensions that could produce a negative impact through their effect on commodity prices and economic growth of key trading partners of the region.

“Countries need to take actions to shelter themselves from these pressures. But even if these risks do not materialise, countries should take action to raise growth in the medium to longer term, because otherwise they will not catch up any time soon with international competitors,” he said.

Flexible exchange rates, which he defined as “a natural shock absorber,” are central to protecting countries from external shocks and ensuring greater monetary independence.

Kazakhstan relinquished control of its currency in August 2015, switching to a floating exchange rate in response to the economic woes of its major trading partners,

China and Russia, and low prices for its oil and metal exports.

“One thing is to keep the exchange rate flexible, because the lesson from the previous downturn when countries moved to floating exchange rates is that this can to some extent shelter the countries from external shocks,” he said.

Fiscal consolidation is also important.

“Given that countries have used their budgetary savings to stimulate the economies during the previous downturn, there is much less room now. Governments need to build new savings and budget deficit need to be reduced. If these risks materialise, governments have resources to act,” he added.

BRI and reforms in Uzbekistan unveil opportunities

Policy changes in Uzbekistan and the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), first announced by Chinese President Xi Jinping in Kazakhstan in 2013, also affect the economic potential of the region.

“The region and Kazakhstan are already benefiting from both initiatives. Uzbekistan’s opening up was great news for the region and there are already more trade and investments between the countries, but Uzbekistan is only at the beginning of its reforms and if the reforms succeed, there are plenty of further opportunities,” said Kahkonen.

He added the BRI project could improve Kazakhstan’s growth potential, a key participant of the initiative.

“Kazakhstan has been actively involved in the Belt and Road Initiative and there are many projects underway that are improving connectivity and improving transpor-

tation and other infrastructure,” he noted.

The countries should be careful in choosing projects to prevent them from being “settled with debt that would be difficult to pay back,” he added.

Kahkonen also stressed the need to ensure inclusive economic growth.

“There is plenty of room to make the growth more inclusive, so that growth benefits all and so further reforms are needed to improve the business climate and make the banking sector stronger,” he said.

Private sector as growth engine

To ensure progress, Kahkonen stressed the need to reduce the state’s footprint in the economy and provide an enabling environment for the private sector to thrive.

“The state should stay away from the productive sectors and it should provide public services, help strengthen the banking sector if needed, create rules and regulations that apply equally to all, reduce corruption [and provide a] public administration that is efficient. That is the best way to allow the private sector to expand in a sustained way,” he said.

Kazatomprom, the country’s major uranium operator which listed its shares on the London Stock Exchange earlier in November, is an example of the country’s ongoing IPO initiative.

The report said “successful completion of plans to conduct initial public offerings for major state-owned enterprises would send a strong signal that the role of the state is being meaningfully reduced and provide an opportunity for the private sector to increase its role in the economy.”

Financial sector remains weak

The report indicated the financial sector is still recovering from the financial crisis and is strained by deep structural factors including lack of competition, weak governance, a segmented credit market and weak regulation and supervision.

The Kazakh financial sector has been under pressure this year. Kazakh National Bank recently revoked licenses from three banks, Astana Bank, Eximbank and Qazaq Banki, all of which were criticised by Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev in April about their poor performance.

In September, however, the central bank provided a 150 billion tenge (US\$401 million) loan to Tsesna Bank, the nation’s second largest bank, to address its liquidity problems. One week later, bank shareholders recapitalised the bank by 40 billion tenge (US\$106.95 million).

“Banking sector problems have been there for quite some time ever since the global financial crisis and the fact that banks have needed to be recapitalised several times is an indication that the underlining business model has not been right,” said Kahkonen.

The report called for the countries to enact fundamental reforms to ensure financial stability and resilience. Kazakhstan’s recent initiative to strengthen the central bank’s supervisory power is among such reforms.

“It is important now to make sure that banks will now operate in a different way based on commercial principles and there is certainly some hope given that the central bank is now getting new powers to supervise and regulate,” he said.

BUSINESS

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 21, 2018

BUSINESS NEWS IN BRIEF

Astana International Financial Centre (AIFC), the Astana Financial Services Authority (AFSA) and the Monetary Authority of Singapore (MAS) signed a cooperation agreement to boost FinTech ties between Kazakhstan and Singapore, reported the AIFC press service. Cooperation will allow for joint participation in and sharing information on innovative projects in the two markets. The agreement was signed by AFSA CEO Mukhtar Bubeyev, AIFCA CEO Nurlan Kussainov and MAS chief FinTech officer Sopnendu Mohanty. Initiated by Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev, AIFC aims to attract investment into Kazakhstan's economy by establishing a business-friendly environment for financial services and capital markets in the country.

Standard & Poor's upgraded Eurasia Insurance Company's financial reliability rating to BBB- with a stable outlook and the national rating to kzAAA. The assigned rating is indicative of Kazakhstan's stable economy and its positive reform outcomes, said CEO and chairperson Boris Umanov. The Kazakh-based company, established in 1995, occupies top positions in the country in terms of assets, insurance reserves, equity, authorised capital and volume of insurance premiums.

Kazakhstan will apply to host the 24th World Petroleum Congress in 2023, reported Kapital.kz. The congress is the premier global oil and gas forum, attracting high-level industry and government leaders from more than 100 countries. The 23rd congress will be held Dec. 6-10, 2020 in Houston, Texas. Atameken and KazEnergy chairperson Timur Kulibayev noted the timeliness of the announcement, given that the upcoming year is forecasted to be favourable for Kazakhstan's energy sector. Atameken and KazEnergy jointly contributed to the new environmental code and the recent adoption of the code on subsoil and subsoil use and the law On Standardisation will further facilitate energy sector development in the country.

Kaspi Bank chairperson Mikhail Lomtadze presented new Kaspi.kz services and announced IPO plans at a Nov. 9 presentation in London. In December, transfers among Kaspi clients with Kaspi Gold cards will become faster and more convenient. Transfers by Kaspi QR, by simply scanning a QR code, will be available in addition to transfers by card and mobile number. Customers will be able to open Kaspi Gold and Kaspi Deposit Online cards through the mobile app, which those with a positive credit history will also be able to use to receive a cash loan. Shopping at partner stores without a card will also become a possibility by scanning a QR code with a mobile phone. Kaspi.kz hopes to put Kazakhstan on the global innovation map, said Lomtadze, by holding an IPO at the London Stock Exchange in 2019.

The Kazakh National Bank will conduct the second phase of its programme on enhancing bank financial sustainability, reported its website. The programme aims to minimise systematic risks, find solutions for the sector's long-standing challenges and facilitate the country's economic development through increased bank loans. The first stage involved a prompt restructuring of banks and the second phase focuses on enhancing the banking system as a whole. Significant legislative changes on preventing, not simply mitigating, banking sector problems will enter into force on Jan. 1, for instance. The legislative basis for bank resolution has been revised for greater efficiency and minimising government spending. The programme's preliminary results have proved efficient, with the positive changes reflected in updated forecasts on Kazakhstan's economic growth. The Asian Development Bank's forecast on the country's gross domestic product growth improved from 3.2 percent to 3.7 percent in 2018 and 3.5 percent to 3.9 percent in 2019.

AIFC Academic Council develops broad pool of professionals

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – The Astana International Financial Centre (AIFC) Academic Council is developing a broad pool of financial, legal and HR professionals to help to shape the centre's success and the sustainable economic development of Kazakhstan and the region. Plans are also afoot to educate experts in governance and ICT.

"First of all, let me talk about university-level education. Not everybody will go for a university degree, because not everybody in society needs a university education. What people need are relevant skills given the current and future needs in the local and global business environment," said academic council chair and professor of strategic foresight at IE Business School Alexander van de Putte in an exclusive interview with the Astana Times.

The fourth industrial revolution, which leverages the Internet, is an important trend.

"The growth of global data flows has been exponential. The driver of the first, second and third industrial revolutions were natural resources, but now the future is data. Thus, the blended learning



Alexander van de Putte

method is an important trend today. With the growth of the Earth's population, we are going to have more than 2.5 billion university students. In order to give them a quality education, technology is going to be an important factor to deliver education to where it is needed at the right cost, quality and time," he noted.

Professional qualifications and the commitment to life-long learning are equally important.

"We partner with a variety of professional bodies, such as the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA), the Chartered Financial Analyst Institute (CFA Institute) and the Chartered

Institute of Securities & Investments (CISI). In our fast-paced and increasingly interconnected global business environment, relevant professional skills, Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and a commitment to life-long learning are crucial to success," he added.

The academic council must also focus on developing the well-rounded professional and accountable leadership.

"Accountable leaders make decisions in the face of uncertainty and are able to communicate – both verbally and in writing – a well-structured and logical argument. This also requires not postponing anything to the next day, replying to emails in a timely way, being on time for meetings and making decisions that help improve the long-term prospects of companies, not personal agendas," he added.

Van de Putte cautioned about not forgetting about the power of the apprenticeship. Professional qualifications do not replace experience and experience does not replace professional qualifications; they go hand in hand.

"At the AIFC Bureau for CPD, we are trying to do something similar. We have developed a portfolio of professional qualifications,

which is combined with apprenticeships to ensure business relevance. We focus on the area of specialisation and combining it with professional qualifications," he said.

Kazakh professionals, similar to those in many emerging markets, face the same career development challenges.

"People tend to focus on the hard skills. Today, however, professional success is not only driven by IQ, but also EQ. Emotional intelligence (EQ) is about the ability to communicate, to listen, to collectively solve a complex problem and to deal with uncertainty. At the bureau, we are trying to develop people as well-rounded professionals; it's not just about them being knowledgeable, but about being leaders as mentioned earlier," he said.

Centre students take five leadership courses through Coursera, an online system, focusing on leadership, working in teams, team building and understanding oneself.

"It is not about factual knowledge, but also about the softer skills and how to deal with them in ambiguous situations. I try to teach my students that they have to deal with the fundamentally different world and as result, they

need to have both a compass and radar," said van de Putte.

"The participants of our programmes need to apply to the professional institution, such as CISI or ACCA. At the same time, they also apply to us for the conditional grant programme. There are a number of conditions required for our applicants before applying for a conditional grant. The AIFC Academic Council makes all decisions to be awarded a conditional grant and the AIFC Academic Council also decides whether the conditions have been met," he added.

The academic council consists of six AIFC representatives and, as its chair, van de Putte signs the grants, but "it doesn't mean that I make the decisions on my own."

"There are always two council members who conduct the interviews. In the interviews, we are focused not just on IQ, but also on EQ, because we want to develop a pool of professionals. We take a positive approach to people development, including awarding conditional grants," he said.

"Most of the people that came to interview with us have actually received a conditional grant. That is substantially more than 50 percent. The key is that we want to develop a broad pool of financial, legal, HR (and in the future, governance and ICT) professionals to help to shape the success of the AIFC and also the sustainable economic development of Kazakhstan and the region. That is our aim," he added.

Kazatomprom launches IPOs on London and Astana stock exchanges

By Aidana Yergaliyeva

ASTANA – The Kazatomprom national atomic company, one of the world's largest uranium producers, placed 15 percent of its shares worth of \$451 million Nov. 13 on the London Stock Exchange. It became the first Kazakh national company on an international stock exchange.

The company approved the final price range prospectus at \$11.60 per GDR and 4,322.74 tenge per common share Oct. 13. The demand for shares exceeded supply by a factor of 1.7. Kazakh investors acquired 47.5 percent of the total shares.

Kazatomprom said in a statement that it will finalise all the dealings with global depositary receipts (GDRs) within initial public offerings' (IPO) by Nov. 20.

"Kazatomprom offers investors a unique opportunity to participate in a true global leader: the world's leading uranium producer, with the largest reserves and lowest quartile operating costs."

The company first announced Oct. 22 about its plans to list its 25 percent equity to an initial public offering globally at the London Stock Exchange and to domestic investors at the Astana International Exchange (AIX), the Astana International Financial Centre's international stock exchange.

"We see significant potential for Kazatomprom. Our leading market position, combined with a strong management team, the highest standards of governance and a market-centric strategy, puts us in a strong position to capitalise on the attractive long-term fundamentals of the uranium market. We look forward to sharing our story with prospective investors over the coming weeks," said Kazatomprom Chairman Gallymzhan Pirmatov.

The Kazatomprom's IPO is part of an effort by Kazakhstan to achieve large-scale privatisation to make the domestic economy more efficient and competitive.

For years, the Samruk Kazyna Sovereign Wealth Fund has been the sole shareholder of the company. Thus, in accordance with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) recommendations, the decision to and for a partial privatisation was made as a measure to reduce the state's share in economy.

"It's hugely meaningful for the industry... It makes the industry more transparent," said Rob Crayford, a portfolio manager for uranium-focused fund Geiger Counter Ltd as quoted by bloombergquint.com.

Kazatomprom issued Oct. 31 a prospectus, roughly a 700-page long document, reporting insights into its activity.

"We have been encouraged by the initial response to our proposed IPO from prospective institutional investors around the world. Kazatomprom offers investors a unique opportunity to participate in a true global leader: the world's leading uranium producer, with the largest reserves and lowest quartile operating costs," said Pirmatov.

Next to follow up on Kazatomprom's example of privatisation are major companies such as Kazakhtelecom and Air Astana, as well as the biggest company of them all, KazMunayGas.

According to the current legislation, at least 20 percent of the total shares and GDRs were offered to institutional and retail investors in Kazakhstan. The offerings will be conducted in accordance with the rules and regulations of AIX.

The offering and the AIX offering has been set at the price range \$11.6-\$15.4 per GDR or per share, that can bring an equity value for the company between \$3-\$4 billion.

Samruk Kazyna secured 38,903,491 Kazatomprom shares in a sale, which is 15 percent of Kazatomprom's issued share capital for the global offering.

To note, uranium prices have started to recover after years of steep fall because of Fukushima disaster in 2011. Kazatomprom and other atomic companies made a production cut which increased prices by more than 30 percent.

"In recent years we have pursued a much more market-centric

strategy, shifting our focus from volume to value," said Pirmatov as quoted by bloombergquint.com

Credit Suisse and J.P. Morgan are joint global coordinators and

joint bookrunners in connection with the offering. China International Capital Corporation, Halyk Finance and Mizuho International are also joint bookrunners. Numis

Securities Limited is co-manager.

Halyk Finance, the subsidiary of Halyk Bank of Kazakhstan, is leading the effort at the AIX offering.

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EDITORIAL&OPINIONS

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 21, 2018

Day of First President honours leadership of Nursultan Nazarbayev

National leaders, no matter how important, don't build a country or economic and social progress. These are delivered through the combined efforts of millions of people. That is why President Nursultan Nazarbayev has stressed repeatedly that Kazakhstan's achievements over the last 27 years are the collective product of the country as a whole as will be the case with the hoped-for successes of the future.

But national leaders certainly can, through their vision, example and personality shape this journey for good and bad. A leader who has his country's interests at heart can accelerate progress by helping provide a framework through which these collective efforts are focused. They can also provide a stable, re-assuring environment that encourages people to work together towards common goals when, as inevitably happens, set backs occur along the way.

No one can fairly claim that President Nursultan Nazarbayev has not played this positive role to the full in Kazakhstan's history over the last three decades. Appointed as party secretary in the last chaotic years of the Soviet Union and popularly elected the first President of the soon-to-be fully independent nation on Dec. 1, 1991, he has ever since provided calm, consistent and determined leadership through the most challenging circumstances and turbulent times.

So far has Kazakhstan come, as we have suggested before, that it is easy for outside observers to forget the progress made and problems overcome. It is not a mistake that those citizens who remember those first difficult years of independence make. It is why there is such widespread respect and affection for the man who was at the helm when, with an economy in free fall, storms threatened to capsize our young nation.

Kazakhstan has, of course, been helped by its rich natural resources and, particularly, the discovery and harnessing of its oil and gas reserves. But these natural windfalls have all too often led to frustration, anger and conflict in a good number of countries rather than the transformed living standards and public services that our country now enjoys.

These divisions can be a particular threat when a country finds itself in an unstable region. But the steady leadership provided by President Nazarbayev and, of course, the sensible moderate nature of the Kazakh people, explains why this fate has been avoided. Kazakhstan is rightly seen instead as a model of stability and harmony.

There is, however, one area where the personality and qualities of a leader can make an even bigger difference. A nation's international status and influence can rest to a huge extent on the person who represents it abroad. It is hard to imagine that Kazakhstan's profile on the global stage would be at the level it is today without the respect earned by President Nazarbayev from his fellow leaders.

The decisive steps he has taken, such as shutting down one of the world's largest nuclear test sites, renouncing nuclear weapons and promoting dialogue and respect for international law have defined Kazakhstan in the world. This approach and the friendships forged at the highest level have helped our country, for example, be elected to the UN Security Council, a major step not just for Kazakhstan but also the entire region. It is to Kazakhstan's huge advantage that the country has such good relations with all the major powers as well as nations of all sizes and every stage of development.

President Nazarbayev continues to set the direction and to challenge Kazakhstan to build on the progress it has made. He remains determined, as in the goal to join the top 30 developed countries, that young Kazakhs will enjoy even greater opportunities and prosperity. And, in voluntarily giving up powers to Parliament last year, he has shown his desire for further political reform.

So while it may seem a little odd for those outside Kazakhstan for a sitting President to be honoured every year through a public holiday, as is the case on Dec. 1, it does not seem strange to his fellow citizens. It is both a small tribute to a leader who has guided our country through its first decades as an independent nation and also a chance for reflection and celebration on what the Kazakh people have achieved together.

Finnish Business Hub brings vibrant technologies to Kazakhstan, encourages local companies to go global

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – The Astana-based Finnish Business Hub provides practical help and strengthens beneficial agreements between Finland and Kazakhstan business communities. The Astana Times spoke exclusively with head Mukhtar Mankeyev to learn about its activities and projects.

Founded in 2013, the hub is designed to boost commodity turnover between the countries, attract bilateral investment projects and invite highly-qualified specialists from both nations.

"We continue promoting collaboration on new business operations and joint product development, technology and know-how transfer. The main areas for 2018-2019 are education and innovation development. We plan to dedicate most of the events to this concept," said Mankeyev.

Since its inception, the centre has developed a strong network of partners.

"We see that there is an opportunity for Kazakh companies to enter the Finnish market and then, the European and international markets. We just need to be brave and build unique products. The hub will always support any initiatives of Kazakh-Finnish businesses to establish a new collaboration and be a single contact point for them," he added.

The hub's major projects include implementing the domestic solid waste management system in the West Kazakhstan region, producing energy-efficient construction materials, transferring hazardous waste recycling technology in oil and gas and introducing Building Information Modelling (BIM) technologies, smart city strategies and master-plan design.

The Digital Academy project was launched recently to implement BIM technologies and virtual design. The team consists of experts with experience in digital economy and smart city projects.



Head of Finnish Business Hub Mukhtar Mankeyev.

"We see a huge potential in the near future for the BIM sector, as our government has approved a programme to switch the designing process into BIM by 2020. Thus, the Digital Academy has developed a special training programme for BIM managers and technicians and adopted innovative BIM-SPACE solutions according to our standards and needs. All our products have intellectual property right. By taking part in our project, companies will get access to the latest innovative solutions and can develop their own products according to particular projects," he said.

The academy also aims to increase literacy in innovative information technologies and provide new tools for effective project management and interaction.

As regional cooperation is a priority, a BIM centre of excellence was opened at the Uralsk oil and gas college. Finnish companies also invested in the solid waste management project, presenting both at EXPO 2017.

"We have very active cooperation and interest related to digitisation, medical technology and general innovation development. Kazakhstan

can benefit from Finnish knowledge economy. For instance, Finland is among the most research-intensive countries. Universities play a significant role in the research and development (R&D) process and provide a real sector of economy with concrete and practical projects to be funded and implemented. We invited the president of Nazarbayev University to visit the University of Oulu, which is one of the leading universities in Finland and has built a fruitful innovative ecosystem in cooperation with business and science. Now, we are discussing collaboration ways between the two universities," said Mankeyev.

Annual R&D spending in the region is 6 billion euros (US\$6.8 billion), which translates to approximately 3.5 percent of the Finnish GDP. Recognising and generating commercially-viable ideas into practice has been identified as a national priority and cooperation among companies, universities and research institutes in the form of various partnerships is an integral element of Finnish innovation.

The Kazakh government plans to spend up to 10 percent of its GDP in the social sphere, including science and R&D.

"Thus, we have to utilise our partnership with Finland and start to switch our economy in an innovative way," he said.

Mankeyev also spoke about cooperation in education. The hub organised a seminar for schools in April and recently conducted the master class for Nazarbayev Intellectual Schools.

"We are trying to introduce some modules of phenomenon-based learning in Kazakhstan. We expect that current reforms of primary education would get some ideas from Finland as well. The idea already proved its worth and brought results. As a hub, we are ready to share Finnish experience and build cooperation between schools and systems," he added.

Paramount Group's Kazakh defence industry venture pioneers to export globally

By Dilshat Zhussupova

ASTANA – Paramount Group, a South Africa-based global defence and aerospace company, operates in countries in the Middle East, South America and Africa. Its joint venture Kazakhstan Paramount Engineering (KPE) produces advanced armoured wheeled vehicles, such as the Arlan 4x4, Nomad 4x4, Barys 6x6 and Barys 8x8, in the country.

Paramount founder and executive chairperson Ivor Ichikowitz recently spoke exclusively to The Astana Times on KPE's further land, maritime and aerial production line expansion, which was announced in September at the 2018 Africa Aerospace and Defence Exhibition.

KPE's Astana factory has become one of the world's most advanced military equipment factories and part of Paramount's global supply chain.

"Over the two to three years that the factory has been operating, we have trained a very capable workforce with levels of efficiency and quality that are as good as, if not better than, our production facilities around the world. It is natural that we would eventually be in a position to incorporate our Kazakhstan production capabilities into our global supply chain," said Ichikowitz.

This incorporation translates into the factory's increased capacity so that it may serve both domestic and international demand. Kazakhstan is thus poised to become a competitive exporter in the global defence and aerospace industry.

"Many people are under the impression that you cannot be competitive in export businesses in Kazakhstan due to the challenging geography. We're in the process of proving that that is not the case. The logistics are problematic but can be overcome if you have a high-level technology product with sufficient value added in Kazakhstan," he added.

KPE's facility has excelled in both quality and efficiency, standards that are non-negotiable because people's lives depend on them.

"Our products' build quality takes many years to perfect. The quality of human capital available in Kazakhstan is such that KPE truly gets the concept of finessing quality. We also have the right mix of skilled operators producing quality products and, at the same time, not compromising on speed of production. We are very pleasantly and positively impressed by what our team in Kazakhstan is able to achieve in comparison to

what we are able to achieve elsewhere in the world," he noted.

KPE currently produces the Arlan 4x4, a localised version of Paramount's Marauder 8x8 used by many defence and peacekeeping forces worldwide.

"Kazakhstan is to become one of the primary production vendors for the Marauder 8x8 in global sales," said Ichikowitz. "We will also soon go into production on the world's most sophisticated 8x8 mine-protected armoured vehicle, which will be called the Barys 8x8 in Kazakhstan and the Mbombe 8x8 elsewhere. Kazakhstan is to become one of the key centres of excellence for the Paramount Group's production of 8x8s, which we are very excited about because these are very sophisticated armoured vehicles and not simple pieces of technology at all."

The Barys 8x8 has undergone rigorous testing primarily in Kazakhstan, with involvement from Kazakh customers and armed forces who helped in refining the vehicle and its

technology based on real world operational experience in a harsh climate.

"It is our intention to migrate more technology into Kazakhstan's production factory. At the moment, our focus is on armoured vehicles. Next, we are probably going to focus on unmanned autonomous systems," he added.

Defence industrial capability is a key driver of broad industrial development. In building a strong foundation, a country also develops its human capital and fosters a culture of innovation.

"For Kazakhstan to truly industrialise and develop an alternative to its oil-driven economy, it needs to develop a culture of innovation. We do that extensively in the defence industry and that will rub off. That takes time, but through cooperation with universities and research institutes and by proving to both Kazakh industrialists and the global market what can actually be achieved in the country, you create a new impetus for its industrialisation," he said.

Ichikowitz finds many countries that are just beginning to embark on a path of industrial development often exhibit self-doubt.

"I think that the biggest benefit that a strong, visible defence industrial capability brings to Kazakhstan is a complete rubbing of this concept that the country doesn't have the ability to become a strong defence industrial country. I can tell you that Kazakhstan is up there with the best in the world in terms of capability; all that is missing is a strong sense of self belief," he said.



Photo credit: informburo.kz

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72-hour visa-free transit for Chinese and Indian citizens increases tourist flow to Kazakhstan

By Arystanbek Mukhamediyuly

Kazakhstan in recent years has been intensively turning into a Central Asian transport hub. Our country is often called the bridge of Eurasia, based on the geopolitical location in the centre of a vast continent.

The construction of logistics centres, international airports, terminals, cross-border cooperation centres, road infrastructure and other objects that have become integral elements of the Silk Road Economic Belt enabled Kazakhstan to take a favourable geographical location within the Belt and Road Initiative.

For instance, the transnational infrastructure project and Western Europe-Western China transport corridor are designed to strengthen the links between Europe and Asia. A similar strategic goal is pursued by the Khor gos Kazakh-Chinese cross-border cooperation centre for building the commodity distribution infrastructure on the South-East-North-West international economic corridor. The Khorgos centre receives 21,000 visitors per day, 6,000 from the Kazakh side and 15,000 from China.

Thus, the country's unique transit capabilities increase the potential of tourist and other flows every year.

Kazakhstan, located at a distance of a five-hour flight with China and



Photo credit: prminister.kz

India, has a very favourable geographical position in terms of attractiveness for tourists. This aspect creates new opportunities for the development of the tourism industry in Kazakhstan and contributes to strengthening the strategic and economic partnership between Kazakhstan and these countries, with an important component – tourism.

In this regard, by the decision of the Kazakh government a 72-hour visa-free transit regime for staying in Kazakhstan was introduced in the beginning of 2018 for Chinese and Indian citizens travelling through Astana and Almaty international airports.

At the same time, the availability of valid air tickets of Kazakhstan airlines for flights to Kazakhstan and further to third countries is an obligatory condition for such transits.

Earlier, the citizens of the Peo-

ple's Republic of China enjoyed a similar regime during EXPO 2017. Then, the number who availed themselves of this option reached 4,361 Chinese citizens (3,743 passengers came through Astana and 618 came through Almaty), which is about 30 percent of the total number of transit passengers from China.

Astana is the capital of the Great Steppe, a modern city that is attractive for tourists and comfortable for residents and visitors of Kazakhstan. Today, Astana is not only a major political centre of Kazakhstan located at the intersection of the main development networks of the country, it is a leading city that sets the tone for the innovative development of Kazakhstan, but at the same time preserves the national characteristics. Ethnoaul complex near Kazanat racetrack offers tourists Kazakh national culture and art. The National Museum is the most modern museum of Kazakhstan. Baiterek Monument remains a true symbol of Astana. The Pyramid (the Palace of Peace and Harmony) is a symbol of unity of different religions, ethnicities and cultures, the openness of our people and state to the whole world. Hazrat Sultan Mosque is built in the classical Islamic style with the use of traditional Kazakh ornaments.

Similarly, in the southern city of

Almaty, a large number of attractions entice foreign guests. The oldest park of the city, the Park named after 28 Panfilov Guardsmen, is one of the most picturesque town planning ensembles of the city. Kok-Tobe is one of the original symbols of the city and its highest structure. Medeu ice rink is a state monument of urban planning and architecture of international importance. Shymbulak is the most popular ski resort in Kazakhstan. Charyn Canyon is a natural monument composed of sedimentary rocks, where the most interesting place is the Valley of Castles. Tamgaly-Tas, which means "stones with signs," is an outstanding monument of art, history and culture.

The regime in place now is a pilot regime and is valid until the end of 2018. Following the results of its approbation, the issues of its extension and application to the citizens of other countries of the first priority from the point of view of inbound tourism will be considered.

At present, the key markets for Kazakhstan are countries such as Bahrain, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and other countries of the Middle East.

The potential of the 72-hour visa-free regime for transiting Chinese and Indian citizens from the point of view of passenger flow is very high. Today, judging by the results

Today, Astana is not only a major political centre of Kazakhstan located at the intersection of the main development networks of the country, it is a leading city that sets the tone for the innovative development of Kazakhstan, but at the same time preserves the national characteristics.

of the first nine months of the year, it demonstrates a steady growth of arriving transit passengers, which, in its turn, has a positive outlook for the results of the full year. The total number of citizens of China and India using the regime exceeded 19,000 people, who according to the most conservative estimates provided income to the economy of Kazakhstan for a total of more than \$14 million.

In addition, the above-mentioned decision of the Kazakh government significantly simplified the process of registration of foreigners entering Kazakhstan with visas. A foreigner who has a visa is exempted from applying to the migration service for registration, since information about the place of his/her stay in Kazakhstan and the route of travel have already been submitted in the invitation. The possibility of electronic registration of foreign guests in the visa-migration portal has been introduced at Kazakhstan hotels.

Currently, within the framework of the preparation of the state programme for the development of the Kazakh tourism industry until 2023, the Ministry of Culture and Sports in cooperation with international experts is considering the issue of prolonging the regime for an indefinite period and expanding the list of countries with an increase in the conditions for a one-time stay in Kazakhstan from 72 to 120 hours.

Meanwhile, it should be noted that Kazakhstan has introduced a visa-free regime with 63 countries. The work continues on the introduction of electronic visas (e-visas) for foreign citizens. The pilot project is expected to be launched before the end of 2018 in Astana and Almaty.

The author is Kazakh Minister of Culture and Sports.

Suleimen: BRI can help Kazakhstan attract investments not only from Singapore, but also from other countries in South-East Asia

By Karlygash Ezenova

Is democracy a prerequisite for economic growth? What is a Singaporean democracy? How can the problem of tri-lingualism be solved? What are the prospects for cooperation between Kazakhstan and Singapore, given the implementation of initiatives such as the Belt and Road Initiative? Kazakh Ambassador to Singapore Usen Suleimen spoke about these issues in this interview.

There was an active public debate in Singapore about the power transfer to a new generation of leaders. In fact, the new government was formed with the participation of society.

By and large, the reshuffling in the government was not large scale. Only four people who reached retirement age left the government; however, this had no effect on their influence. In this regard, a very thoughtful strategy should be noted. For a long time, the government was headed by Emeritus Senior Minister (ESM) Goh Chok Tong, a vocal supporter of Lee Kuan Yew. Over the 14 years of his management, he raised the GDP per capita from \$13,000 to \$34,000. It conveys a great deal to me. Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong may resign in 2021 under the constitution. Despite the fact that there are still three years, the process of preparing the fourth generation of the country's leaders has begun. It is already clear that priority will be given to younger politicians aged 40-55 years. The new government thanked the country's leadership for the trust and promised to propose a prime minister candidacy within these years. The country's leadership takes the issue of continuity of power very seriously, while four candidates for the post of head of government are being discussed in society. They are now 40-47 years old and they will reach the 50-year threshold in 2021.

I like that they choose people who are ready to work in a team. There is no competition among them; they are ready for any candidacy, just to be in a single team, knowing that, whoever they choose, he or she will treat them as equals. This is a role model of political ethics. This system is



Usen Suleimen

very well-thought-out for many years to come.

Perhaps, the secret is in that they have motivation. They say ESM proposed raising salaries for government officials.

Goh Chok Tong is the person who, even after leaving his post, is still as popular in the country as before. He is responsible for Singapore's investment policy. He travels around the globe and advises whether Singapore businesses should invest in one country or another. In 2016, he visited Kazakhstan and gave us very good recommendations. Recently on Facebook, he urged the state to consider the possibility of increasing salaries for officials, because many of them are coming from private entities; thus, they are seriously losing income. He cited the example of a minister who, prior to his appointment, worked in a private company and earned \$2 million a year and now receives \$500,000.

He expressed concern that many may refuse to be civil servants, because in private business they earn much more. This caused a certain stir and now there are robust discussions. I do not exclude that a new generation of leaders will raise their salaries and there will be nothing surprising in this. This is because they can afford it.

Is it true that it was Lee Kuan Yew who advised our President on the principle "first economy, then politics"?

Yes, our President has repeatedly mentioned this in his interviews. Few people know that the West for a long time called Lee Kuan Yew a usurper and an autocrat, accusing him of paying little attention to human rights issues. Neverthe-

less, 10 years later, when Singapore became an advanced country, the U.S. Congress applauded him with a 10-minute standing ovation. The world loves a winner. After all, Singapore ignored the requirements to comply with the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) standards and Freedom House; there is still no foreign NGOs here and there probably never will be.

But it does not mean that human rights were violated.

It depends on what is considered as such. Disputes on interfaith and inter-ethnic topics are maximally minimised. But at the same time, housing policy is designed so that apartments are equally distributed between the three major ethnic groups, Indians, Malays and Chinese, so that they live mixed. I worked in the OSCE and consider their standards to be ideal, but the implementation is always crucial. You cannot follow the imposed clichés without taking into account local mentality features. The meaning of human rights is interpreted here as ensuring all its needs: the right to work, education and healthcare. At the same time there is nothing for free, no pensions. A person should personally take care of his or her future as much as possible. Paternalism is excluded at the level of state policy.

Nevertheless, social networks in Singapore are an active channel of communication between the government and society. Even high-level officials are not averse to social networks. This indicates a fairly high level of democracy in the society.

Absolutely! The prime minister places posts on his feed daily. This indicates a high level of democracy in the true sense of this notion.

Consequently, Singapore has broken all the stereotypes of the West, which claims that it is so important to develop civil society. In simple words, there is no civil society in Singapore. There is no opposition in its classical sense, but there is discussion; there is a fairly high level of openness – there is what is called ensuring succession. At the same time, the population, in a good way, is highly politicised and behaves like shareholders, overseeing the

work of the board of directors.

The point is that there is no criticism here, but the comparison of the level of professionalism. Corporate culture is over-friendly. Last year, the prime minister delivered a message to the people covering only three topics. The first is an increase in grants-in-aid for treating old people with diabetes, the second is an increase in grants-in-aid for pre-school education and the third is an increase in grants-in-aid for the development of a smart city. All other issues have already been resolved. Mechanisms are thought out 15 years ahead; the system runs like clockwork. They wish to have all the best in the world. This is some kind of comprehensive perfectionism in terms of ensuring human self-realisation.

In essence, this is a normal social contract based on trust between the authorities and society. The authorities honestly work for their country and its citizens follow the rules of the game. Was this the essence of the country's strategy?

They never forget that the population is small, only five million. Therefore, they decided to focus on quality. The icon of Singapore is high technology; it is the formation of a "smart nation." This is an ideal thing that can lead to an even more ideal thing. Here, almost everything is automated and digitised, from medical services to government instructions. The country already lives in another dimension.

How was the language compromise reached? All the three dominant ethnic groups are bearers of ancient and far from identical cultures.

Here is absolute pragmatism. My daughter goes to a public school, a local public school. Everything is in English, but you can choose any foreign language – Malay, Hindi, Chinese. And you know what? It happens that the Malays choose Chinese, the Chinese choose Hindi and the Indians choose Malay. There are no restrictions.

You have mentioned that the former prime minister "blessed" Singaporean business to work with Kazakhstan. Nevertheless, the trade turnover between our

countries, unfortunately and mildly speaking, is small. What are the constraints for growth?

The small turnover is due to the following. One of the largest financial centres in the world, called Singapore, works with large volumes and projects and Kazakhstan is rather a small market for it. Some businesses go for the projects, albeit risky, but large, where they can fulfil their potential to be a major player.

But after all, Singapore is a much smaller market. Nevertheless, they were able to attract investment.

First of all, Singapore is located at a very important sea hub; millions of tonnes of cargo pass through the Malacca Strait. Second, there are oil refineries that process crude oil crossing the strait. If I am not wrong, the two oil refineries provide one-third of the budget revenue. Thirdly, the world's largest container port is here and finally, there is a leading financial centre with unprecedented preferences for foreign banks and companies.

But most importantly, our region is terra incognita for them; their knowledge about Kazakhstan is very limited. The country is mainly focused on developing relations with the countries of South-East Asia.

However, recent geopolitical changes associated with the U.S. withdrawal from the Trans-Pacific Partnership (12 Asian countries had high hopes for it) could trigger interest in our part of the world. It is natural to assume that China will now immediately take advantage of this, promoting an initiative of comprehensive regional economic partnership through the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). This means that its presence in the South-East Asian markets will grow even more, including in Australia and New Zealand. In this context, the Belt and Road Initiative can help Kazakhstan attract investments not only from Singapore, but also from other countries in this region. The use of the Lianyungang port's capacity makes it possible to speed up on-land delivery by half compared to sea. Given that almost half out of the 7,700 km falls on our territory, our country can earn at least \$5 billion due to

transit taxes received from container transportation alone. If we attract money to the infrastructure, then even greater opportunities are available.

That means that the sanctions are beneficial in a certain sense.

Moreover, even sanctions against Turkey are beneficial to us. Given the commonality of our roots, the Turks can redirect some of their investments in our region. But in general, everything is very fragile. Too many ifs ...

However, there are some unbreakable rules; for example, risk diversification. In particular, the level of Beijing's presence in Central Asia, and especially in Kazakhstan, is simply off the scale. At the same time, the share of trade with the United States and Europe is falling. Probably, there is a need to work more with Asia without China. I do not think that something worse would happen.

It will not be worse. If we analyse the trends in the development of relations between ASEAN countries, the statements that China conquers most of the economies of this region is more and more often heard.

Obviously, this makes ASEAN worry, but no one can openly oppose such a strong player as China. However, there is no point for China to aggravate relations. Therefore, we now have a chance to attract attention to ourselves, but this requires Central Asia to create an attractive market for investments. The first steps to this end have already been taken – there is an active formation of a free trade zone between Singapore and the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU).

But this is mostly the Russian market...

Of course, Russia is the most promising market for them. But we can derive big dividends from it. Another thing is that this process will be slow and largely depend on how the situation in Russia, Kazakhstan and its neighbours will unfold.

Karlygash Ezenova is the editor-in-chief of Exclusive.kz. This interview first appeared in that magazine.

EURASIA&WORLD

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Weeding out fake news is important, say OSCE Central Asia Media Conference participants

By Aidana Yergaliyeva

ASTANA – Discussions among media professionals on how to collaborate in news production, improve content quality, fight fake news and increase media literacy, as well as the issue of media freedom, were on the agenda at the 20th Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Central Asia Media Conference on The Future of Journalism held Nov. 7-8 in the Kazakh capital.

Harlem Désir, OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, noted the opportunity for Kazakhstan and the Central Asian region to be able to openly discuss media freedom is a significant achievement after the last OSCE summit in the city in 2010. Despite the fact the system still has its flaws, the two-



Minister of Foreign Affairs Kairat Abdrakhmanov (L) and Harlem Désir, OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media.

day conference should serve as an instrument for progress in the area.

“I hope that during this two-day conference there will be the opportunity to discuss it with representatives of the government and

officials coming from all the countries... We had a very constructive meeting today with the Minister of Communication [of Kazakhstan]. I think it is very important that he came to open this confer-

ence and listen to participants and the contribution of my office and what OSCE can bring to the development of the media reality in Kazakhstan,” he said referring to a meeting on the same day with Minister of Information and Communication Dauren Abayev.

The agenda for the first day included the global decrease in the quality of media content in the face of the rapidly-increasing quantity of information sources in the digitised era. Amid the chaotic flow of information, tackling the problem of so-called “fake news,” including disinformation, hate speech and terrorist propaganda, has never been as important. Many countries choose to punish people spreading fake news on the legislative level.

“Of course, the government is preoccupied with these trends of violence on social media and they adopt

legislation which restricts unlawful content. But the risk is that it will also affect the freedom of expression and freedom of the media,” said Désir.

He noted the Kazakh criminal code has room for improvement to be more in line with OSCE standards. In particular, he indicated articles 174 and 274 related to inciting the population are too broadly defined.

“So, we [as OSCE] will provide the government with legal advice and expertise to improve this legislation and to ensure more protection for media freedom,” he added.

The event participants represented the media, government and civil society from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, as well as several international experts. Participants also discussed the tools for effective fact checking and journalistic ethics.

Norway’s practice shows collaborative fact-checking initiatives such as Faktisk prove their effectiveness in producing higher quality news. The collaboration of major media agencies was essential in its progress in a small country, according to Faktisk journalist and fact-checker Tore Bergsaker.

Factcheck.kz, a similar independent fact checking initiative funded by the Soros Foundation, has been actively debunking suspicious information in Kazakh mass media. The project is the first of its kind in Central Asia.

Other equally important steps in reporting quality news are media literacy and well-thought legislation, as well as introducing a media ombudsperson, noted Gulnara Babadzhanova, director of the Preparatory Centre for Journalists in Uzbekistan.

Comprehensive infrastructure development to strengthen Central Asian economies, says scholar

By Dilshat Zhussupova

ASTANA – Central Asian governments must consolidate their legal, regulatory, fiscal and physical infrastructures to enjoy greater economic development, said a prominent American scholar while on a recent visit to Astana.

Ariel Cohen, Atlantic Council Senior Fellow, International Tax and Investment Centre (ITIC) Energy, Growth and Security Programme Director and International Market Analysis boutique risk consultancy founding principal, explained the findings of a new ITIC report he co-authored with James Grant titled “The Future Is Calling: Infrastructure Development in Central Asia.”

The report was presented at the fourth annual Astana Club meeting Nov. 13, an event which gathered 50 leading experts, politicians and diplomats from 33 countries to discuss the region’s challenges and opportunities.

In the report, the two authors explore infrastructure investment projects in Central Asia and analyse their potential for transformative economic development.

“Infrastructure is the foundation for economic development – these are roads, railroads, airports and ports. You can go East to China, West to Russia, to Georgia on the Black Sea or to Pakistan’s Gwadar port on the Indian Ocean – but to trade, Central Asia needs to access ports,” said Cohen in an exclusive interview for this story.

Building infrastructure for information technology (IT) and energy is equally important.

“The way of the future is, of course, renewables – wind and solar, with gas compensating for intermittency disruptions. Kazakhstan, with so much uranium, may also think about nuclear energy.”

“Kazakhstan is a leader [in IT infrastructure] in the region, but not relative to the developed world. Eighty-five percent of Kazakh families have a computer, whereas it is only 14 percent in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan and maybe a little bit more in Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. Still, broadband penetration is very low... Energy generation is still up to the last century’s standards. Kazakhstan

is also the only country to have 70 percent of its energy coming from coal. Other countries have a mix, such as Uzbekistan, or all of their energy comes from natural gas, such as Turkmenistan. The way of the future is, of course, renewables – wind and solar, with gas compensating for intermittency disruptions. Kazakhstan, with so much uranium, may also think about nuclear energy,” he added.

Beyond the hard infrastructure for IT, energy and transport, Cohen emphasised the importance of soft infrastructure for sustainable economic development.



Ariel Cohen

“You have to have a regulatory framework for people to start and operate businesses in a safe and secure way – that the bank will not steal your money and disappear, the construction company will build an apartment building that will not, God forbid, collapse and the pharmaceutical company will produce real medications that help people and not fake pills,” he added.

An exploration of the region’s infrastructure would be incomplete without a look at the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which exemplifies the ways in which external partners bring both risks and rewards to the region.

Cohen identified four ways of interpreting Chinese investment in Kazakhstan. The first narrative is that Kazakhstan is a transit country within the long-standing Silk Road that connects East and West and has plenty to offer to China and Europe, such as oil and gas, raw materials and services. The second is that China is a major economy aiming to invest in its neighbouring countries’ development.

“The less benign narrative is that China, with its massive industrial potential, has a big, underserved internal industrial capacity and wants to export goods and services around itself. We see that they are building Astana Light Metro, they seek to sell their manufactured solar panels and wind turbines and they would like to use Kazakhstan’s agriculture to grow food for Chinese consumers,” the scholar said.

“The even less benign explanation, that people in the U.S. put forward, is that China is exporting

financial dependence... The more you borrow, the more dependent you become on your creditor – some Central Asian countries already owe 50-60 percent of their public debt to China,” he said on alternative interpretations.

In his Nov. 13 address at Astana Club, Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev outlined the U.S.-China-Russia geopolitical rivalry, U.S.-China trade war, military confrontations in the Middle East, cyber security threats, global terrorism and poverty as key risks to the region.

“Your President was prescient, having known in advance that the big wave of instability is coming. I remember him talking about it two or three years ago, that we are entering an era of political turbulence, which we are already in. I am very worried about the conflicts between great powers... Kazakhstan made the right choice, a long time ago, to strike a balance – to not be in the pocket of Russia, China or the U.S. Still, the fact that the U.S. did not find a good modus vivendi with either China or Russia, and vice versa, means that there is dangerous friction,” noted Cohen.

According to the report, Kazakhstan leads in attracting foreign investment and in per capita investment and IT.

“Kazakhstan could take its coal-fired plants and convert them into natural gas ones. You have a lot of uranium and could consider a nuclear reactor, although it costs a lot of money and involves a lot of capital expenditure. It is also very important to develop renewable energy capacity. Nazarbayev understands this, and in fact hopes to achieve 50 percent renewable energy generation in the next 30 years, as outlined in his Strategy 2050. If Kazakhstan can become a global and regional leader in renewables, it will place itself into an advantageous position,” he said on strengthening the country’s expertise in wind and solar.

“[The report] was very well received and I received very good feedback [at the Astana Club],” he added. “The only thing that disturbs and saddens me is that there is a great sense that, as the President warned, the world is moving in the wrong direction – toward insecurity and instability. The challenge for everybody right now is to build systems for preventing increasing conflicts, because there are costs to doing business and to development – be it an arms race, bigger military budgets that you cannot ‘eat,’ higher insurance rates, scared investors and the many ways in which political risk undermines growth.”

The soon-to-be-published report may be accessed on www.iticnet.org.

Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan plan joint oil and gas venture

By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan are studying the possibility of creating a joint oil and gas enterprise, said Kazakh Minister of Energy Kanat Bozumbayev and Azerbaijani Minister of Energy Parviz Shabbazov during their meeting in Astana.

“We are now considering the opportunity of setting up a joint enterprise in the oil and gas industry because Azerbaijan, similar to Kazakhstan, has a rich history of oil and gas industry development. Today, Kazakhstan has big projects in oil and gas exploration and we can consolidate these efforts to establish a joint venture with mutually beneficial conditions,” said Shabbazov.

The two oil-rich countries are using the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) pipeline, a 1,768-km trans-Caspian export pipeline opened in 2005 which Kazakhstan joined the following year. Oil exports through the BTC were suspended from the second half of 2015 until last year, when Kazakhstan opted to resume them.

“It is important what my colleague said. Azerbaijan has developed oil engineering, but as you know, we support our content. We are now ne-

gotiating the construction of such a plant in Kazakhstan involving Azerbaijani capital, their experience, skills and technologies to subsequently supply these products to oil companies,” said Bozumbayev.

Construction of a liquefied gas production plant in Aktau is also on the agenda, he said.

Shabbazov noted possible cooperation in other fields, including agriculture and tourism.

“As for agriculture, we would like to introduce new components as part of our working group. We did a good job and trade grew largely due to grain exports to Azerbaijan,” he added.

Bilateral trade reached \$141.5 million from January-July, showing 94.6-percent growth compared to last year’s \$72.7 million. Exports of \$112.4 million also witnessed a 98.9-percent hike from last year’s \$56.6 million, while imports grew 79 percent from \$16.2 million to \$29 million.

Shabbazov referred to his country’s vast agrarian experience, noting it “has always been an agricultural country.”

“We have many products that we can export to Kazakhstan and we agreed to continue our activities in

this area. Based on this, we want to boost our trade again in the near future,” he said.

In October, Kazakhstan expanded the list of products that could be exported to Azerbaijan.

“The analysis of global imports to Azerbaijan juxtaposed with the data on global Kazakh exports as well as exports of Kazakhstan to Azerbaijan revealed Azerbaijan has a definite potential for the export of Kazakh products,” said a statement released by the Kazakh Ministry for Investments and Development.

The ministry included 37 trade positions with high export potential such as metallurgy (ferrous metal pipes, flat-rolled iron or non-alloy steel and metal structures), chemistry (pharmaceuticals and polypropylene), equipment (gas shut-off valves, switchboards, transformers and static converters) and the food industry (chocolate, soft drinks and water).

Shabbazov noted the potential of the Caspian Sea in developing tourism, such as cruise routes.

Simplifying the visa regime is also on the agenda, he added. At present, Kazakh citizens can stay in Azerbaijan for a maximum of 90 days without a visa and Azerbaijanis enjoy a 30-day visa-free stay in Kazakhstan.

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Karakalpaks’ unique culture worth celebrating and preserving in Kazakhstan, says community leader

By Dilshat Zhussupova

ASTANA – The Karakalpak ethno-cultural centre Zhaikhun has consolidated the Karakalpak community’s cultural development in the capital since 2016, said the community’s leader Tazabike Saliyeva.

The Karakalpaks, an ethnic group native to Karakalpakstan in northwestern Uzbekistan, number approximately 620,000 worldwide, 56,000 of which reside in Kazakhstan. The group settled on the Amu Darya river in the 18th century and may also be found in significant numbers in Russia and Turkmenistan. Their name comes from the words kara (black) and kalpak (hat).

Kazakhstan’s Karakalpak community began to develop in its first years of independence. Twenty-six years ago, the Karakalpak association Alayar Zholy was established in the Mangyshlak region. Later, similar associations emerged in Almaty – Bes Kala and Amiyu Zhahasy, Atyrau – Yedil Zhaiyk and Shymkent – Amiyu Sheshke-leri.

“The Karakalpak ethno-cultural association Zhaikhun was established in Astana Dec. 9, 2016. Since then, we have been actively participating in all events held by the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan in the capital,” said Saliyeva.

The Karakalpaks’ language, customs and material culture are similar to other Central Asian groups, particularly that of the Kazakhs. The group uniquely preserves its



Tazabike Saliyeva and Karakalpak community members.

rich folklore through oral folk art, with many tales and epics set to music. Interestingly, it is dance that brought the community and its leader together in Astana.

“As a choreographer, I have worked with many national centres in the capacity of a dance director. I was sad to discover that, among these centres, there was not a single Karakalpak centre showcasing the group’s rich culture,

history, customs and literary heritage. For instance, 156 volumes of Karakalpak oral folk art have been preserved. We thus decided to create our own centre, the Karakalpak ethno-cultural association Zhaikhun,” said Saliyeva.

“The centre actively participates in charity, dance, fashion and music events” and seeks to expand its activities, she noted.

“We aim to find as many repre-

sentatives of the Karakalpak nation as possible and help them preserve their language, customs and culture. In my opinion, this aim is pursued by every association in the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan,” she said.

The centre is located at 17 Zhanibek Tarkhan Street and more information can be found on Instagram at @kk_centre_zhaihun and @kk_centre.kz.

Art activism to revive contemporary art

By Saltanat Boteu

ASTANA – Kazakh contemporary artist Suinbike Suleimenova presents a documentary about artist Lidia Blinova as a part of Focus Kazakhstan project that lasts Oct. 2018 – March 2019. For her, the film is an achievement of art activism that contributed to the revival of Kazakh contemporary art history and women artists’ representation.

The movie was made for Berlin’s Bread and Roses exhibition and continued to be shown in Kazakhstan. The display was dedicated to four generations of Kazakh women artists. One of the participants of the exhibition, contemporary artist and Suinbike’s mother Saule Suleimenova, devised the idea for a movie about Blinova, wife of artist Rustam Halfin. The two artists made the movie for the exhibition and presented it in the capital.

“She [Lidia] is a bridge between avant-garde and contemporary art.

Among the art movement that existed during that time – socialist realism, modernism – she made something close to avant-garde and [slowly] distanced herself from avant-garde to contemporary art along with Rustam Halfin,” said Suinbike Suleimenova. “In the Soviet times, being an artist always had to entail official portraits, pastoral landscapes or working in the style of social-realism in any way, all of which Lidia successfully avoided and never wanted to be associated with.”

A major part of the film consists of interviews with Blinova’s friends and colleagues.

“People interviewed in the movie are those who knew her well because there are many people who know Halfin [but little who knew Lidia],” she noted.

She indicated the movie had several tasks to fulfil, among which the main one was to find the origins of the Kazakh contemporary art.

Continued on Page B3

Kazakh orchestra completes European tour

By Saltanat Boteu

ASTANA – The Kazakh Philharmonic Chamber Orchestra named after Zhambyl gave concerts in Dublin, Manchester, London, Milan and Rome during their recent week-long tour across Europe.

The tour started in Dublin and continued in Manchester, London, Milan and Rome. The Kazakh folk music played at the concerts brought the traditional sounds of the Great Steppe to the European audience. Politicians, business executives, cultural experts and members of the diplomatic corps who attended the concerts showed interest in classical Kazakh music and in the orchestra’s performance. The orchestra performed under the guidance of the Kazakh conductor Yerbolat Akhmedyarov.

According to Canadian violinist Lara St. John, who is currently one

of the best performers of Vivaldi’s “Four Seasons” in the music world, she enjoyed performing with the orchestra.

“We had an amazing time with the Kazakh Chamber Orchestra. It was so great. I hope it was not the last time,” said the violinist, according to 24.kz.

According to Kazakh Ministry of Foreign Affairs, at the concert in Manchester, the Kazakh Ambassador in the U.K. Yerlan Idrissov thanked the orchestra participants for their contribution to bringing Kazakh culture to the world.

The tour also included the orchestra’s live performance at the In Tune programme on BBC Radio 3, which invites the best orchestras of classical, jazz and folk music from around the world. The recording of the performance will be available on the BBC website for a month.

Continued on Page B3

Young people from low-income families study in-demand professions

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – We Art, a creative centre designed to help young people from socially vulnerable families train for modern, in-demand professions free of charge, recently opened at Narxoz University in Almaty. The project is supported by the Bulat Utemuratov Foundation.

“At We Art, our foundation allocated a 21 million tenge (US\$56,200) grant. This centre will help young people from low-income families and orphans to realise themselves. This is a good opportunity to

get not only relevant professional skills, but also personal qualities, which many of them do not now get enough of,” said foundation director Marat Aitmagambetov.

We Art is a platform to develop creative potential, a kind of forge of talent. The centre not only has qualified teachers, but also mentors who help young people with social adaptation. They follow the graduates after the end of the course and help them find an interesting job, reported TengriNews.

The three-month training is divided into three main stages. Centre staff and professional

psychologists help young people develop personal and creative skills, then concentrate on professional training and internships. The first student is studying in the digital and filmmaking programme with teachers including professional directors, screenwriters and New York Film Academy graduates Dias Azimzhanov and Zhanel Sariyeva.

The centre will be launching digital marketing in partnership with DAR ecosystem and is planning to offer courses in culinary arts, industrial design and other popular professions.

Founded in 2014, the Bulat Utemuratov Foundation col-

laborates with many non-profit organisations, volunteer groups and government agencies involved in childhood development in Kazakhstan and abroad. The foundation develops socially beneficial and effective projects, focusing on creating and stimulating system changes to provide better access to more people. It does not provide targeted assistance, but collects money for programmes that solve significant social problems.

This year, the foundation has five projects worth 499 million tenge (US\$1.3 million), each of which differs significantly from typical Kazakh charity projects.



Photo credit: tengrinews.kz.

THINGS TO WATCH & PLACES TO GO

ASTANA OPERA

- November 22 at 7 p.m. Birzhan – Sara, opera
- November 30 at 7 p.m. Mikhail Fokine’s Ballets
- December 5 at 7 p.m. Kyz Zhibek, opera

ASTANA ARENA

- November 29 at 9.50 p.m. FC Astana - FC Dynamo Kyiv, UEFA Europe League

BARYS ARENA

- December 1 at 5 p.m. HC Barys – HC Avtomobilist Yekaterinburg
- December 3 at 5 p.m. HC Barys – HC Metallurg Magnitogorsk

ASTANA BALLET

- December 1, 2 at 6 p.m. Love’s Lost Idols

Travelling is natural freedom, says bicyclist and alpinist

By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – Travelling is a life changing experience. For Almaty native and experienced alpinist Magzhan Sagimbayev, the first Kazakh to travel the world on a solo bicycle trip, it is a natural freedom.

Sagimbayev, also project manager at Kazakh Geographic Society, is among the country’s 100 New Faces, representing exemplary individuals throughout the country whose sustained efforts inspire other citizens.

Sagimbayev is known for his Bike the Earth trip, travelling through 22 countries in 380 days. His course wound through China, Australia, Cambodia, Vietnam, Laos, Malaysia, Thailand, Ecuador, Columbia, Spain, Portugal, France, Austria, Hungary, Bulgaria, Serbia, Iran, Turkey, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan.

“I came up with this idea in 2013, when two cyclists from France, Marc and Gotye, visited Kazakhstan. I liked their story and their photos. They inspired me. In 2014, I welcomed Carolina from France to the city, who got here by foot and it took her two years. This was a ‘wow’ for me. She showed me photos; she was a great photographer. I have rarely seen such photos anywhere,” he said in an interview for this story.

Sagimbayev wrote “Nomad on Two Wheels,” where he narrates his journey in notes taken during the trip. He will present the book Nov. 24 at Dostyk Plaza in Almaty. “The book includes notes that I



Magzhan Sagimbayev

wrote daily. There are more than 200. We have been working with my editor Ulpan Ramazanova for more than a year. The book is in print now,” he added.

The stories of different people motivate the Kazakh traveller.

“People inspire me, their stories. Every person motivates you to achieve a new goal and I was inspired, too. We read many books when we were children. This child curiosity helped in adult life. Why not see the world, meet new people and see how they live there?” he said.

“There is also one great movie ‘Into the Wild.’ This story was found by journalist Jon Krakauer and then directed by Sean Penn. This story of Chris McCandless [an American hiker known for giving away all of his possessions and heading to Alaska’s wilderness] is really great. The film inspires a person to freedom, freedom from civilisation, freedom from this

world. Something at that moment happened in my mind and I decided to launch such a project,” he added.

Travelling has always been a part of people’s lives, said Sagimbayev, noting explorers James Cook and Christopher Columbus opened entire continents.

“It was the desire of people to discover the world, see new people, visit new lands and now people, and me personally, travel to open the world for ourselves,” said Sagimbayev.

He believes travelling is a big school and does not necessarily entail crossing a border.

“It inspires and gives you wings and knowledge in terms of language, culture, culinary, traditions, outlook and communication with people. I believe this bundle instils new values. You have something to compare, too,” he noted.

“The world is diverse. Some live a rich life, for example, in Europe,

America or Australia, and some live very poor. When you see all this, something changes in your world perception. I believe that is why I love travelling and because a person can escape from routine daily life,” he added.

An experienced alpinist, Sagimbayev is also known for his mountainous adventures, where a person “can get closer to nature, closer to real and return to a natural habitat,” he said.

He plans to complete the famous Seven Summits challenge, an ultimate lifetime achievement, where the goal is to climb the highest peaks in each of the seven continents. To date, he has scaled Aconcagua (the second highest of the Seven Summits), Kilimanjaro, Elbrus and Vinson and plans to climb 6,194-metre Denali Peak in North America. He has also been part of an expedition to the South Pole and plans to reach the North Pole.

Sagimbayev travels with the Kazakh Geographic Society team that has completed several expeditions in recent years. The group has finished Uly Dala Eline Sayahat (Tour across the Country of the Great Steppe), Expedition 25 celebrating the 25th anniversary of Kazakhstan’s Independence and the Zhetisy expedition.

“Each trip is unique and interesting in itself. I gain new motivation and knowledge from each journey,” he said.

“I cannot sit in one place. I want to do active things and feel that you experience this path. This is a challenge in itself. Any climbing is hard, but these trials make you stronger and you feel you truly live,” he added.

Photo exhibition commemorates St. John Paul II, Władysław Bukowiński



Photo credit: inform.kz

By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – “Polish Advocates of Freedom – Saint John Paul II and Blessed Father Władysław Bukowiński,” a photo exhibition recently opened in the capital, pays tribute to two significant religious figures both in their historical homeland Poland and in the world.

“We brought 12 stands; of those, 10 are devoted to St. John Paul II and his visit to Kazakhstan in 2001. Two weeks ago, the exhibition was organised in Vilnius and a week later in Lvov. There, we showcased materials from his journey to Lithuania and Ukraine. All three exhibitions display stands that are about the apostle of Kazakhstan and priest Władysław Bukowiński,” said Magdalena Okai, programme director of the Pomoc Polakom na Wschodzie (Aid to Poles in the East) Foundation, which organised the event.

“We brought 12 stands; of those, 10 are devoted to St. John Paul II and his visit to Kazakhstan in 2001. Two weeks ago, the exhibition was organised in Vilnius and a week later in Lvov. There, we showcased materials from his journey to Lithuania and Ukraine.”

Born in 1920 in Wadowice, a southern city not far from Krakow, St. John Paul II was the first Polish pope. He is better known in the country as Karol Wojtyła. St. John Paul II paid an official

visit to Kazakhstan only days after the tragic 9/11 terrorist attacks in New York. During the trip, he repeatedly expressed words of blessing for the country and its people emphasising its important task.

“Kazakhstan, you have the mission of being a bridge between religions, between nations and continents,” he said.

Bukowiński was born in 1904 in Berdyczów, now Ukraine. He served 13 years, five months and ten days of hard labour in a labour camp and was exiled to Karaganda in 1954.

Though he had an opportunity to return to his homeland, Bukowiński chose to stay in Karaganda where he continued his mission until his death in 1974. He also travelled to remote regions of the country.

Bukowiński visited Poland several times, where he met St. John Paul II, who expressed interest in his priest mission, pastoral care and charity work in Kazakhstan. During his visit to the capital, St. John Paul II said he learned about the nation from Bukowiński.

Polish Ambassador Selim Chazbijewicz, Archbishop of Metropolitan Archdiocese of Saint Mary in Astana Tomasz Bernard Peta and professor Dominika Żukowska-Gardzińska of Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw were among the guests attending the opening.

“I am studying and promoting the lessons of the Pope among students at Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw and The Centre for Thought of John Paul II, which I am representing today. I am glad to be back in Kazakhstan. I visited the country four years ago with my husband. We travelled from Poland to Kazakhstan by bicycle and drove 26,000 kilometres within six weeks. This journey certainly helped me think deeper about the Pope’s trip to Kazakhstan,” said Żukowska-Gardzińska.

Inspiring diary of climber Anatoli Boukreev released in Russian

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – “Above the Clouds,” a diary-based book about mountaineer Anatoli Boukreev edited and translated into Russian by Sergei Boiko, was presented Nov. 17 in Moscow. Boukreev’s companion Linda Wylie initially released “Above the Clouds – Diaries of a High-Altitude Mountaineer” in the U.S. in 2001.

“I am interested in history and peoples’ life stories. I was interested to know more about Anatoli Boukreev not as a mountaineer, but as a personality. I read books about him and became interested in his story. I thought that the story about Boukreev was not complete. Two years ago, I found a post by Kazakh mountaineer Asset Daniyalov, who was also wondering why this book was not available in Russian. I told him that I was ready to translate Boukreev’s diaries. It turned out that he knew Linda Wylie and later we discussed the opportunity to publish diaries in Russian with Linda,” said Boiko in an interview for this story.



Sergei Boiko

Boukreev and his achievements became widely known after the tragedy on Mount Everest in May 1996, when participants from several commercial expeditions encountered a disastrous blizzard. Boukreev saved three people and the amazing story became the basis for the film “Everest,” directed by Baltasar Kormákur in 2015.

The diaries reveal more than just the details of the rescue. What is mountaineering for climbers? Could you conquer the mountains or do you just climb? What is the price for a person’s life at a height of eight kilometres? Is an oxygen

tank in the death zone a guarantee of safety or an illusion? Boukreev provides the answers to these and many other questions.

The book also contains the memories of Italian mountaineer Simone Moro, Boukreev’s partner and participant on his last expedition. Boukreev was killed in an avalanche in 1997 during a winter ascent of Annapurna in Nepal.

The original diaries, extended and supplemented, are now available to the Russian-speaking audience.

“I am incredibly fascinated by this story and I wanted to tell more about his life. I am also attracted to the mountains and countries where they are located starting from mountaineering stories to the history of countries, politics, ethnography and other things,” said Boiko.

A news editor by trade, Boiko is fascinated by writing and translating books. His first venture was translating “The CIA’s Secret War in Tibet” by Kenneth Conboy and James Morrison.

“Linda Wylie’s book is well

structured and I wanted to do the same in Russian, but I faced some difficulties. The book was published in 2001 and since then, some of the original diaries were lost. The book also included not only what Boukreev wrote in the middle and late 1990s, but also at the time when he lived in the U.S. There were some difficulties in synchronising materials. I thought that the work on the book would take several months, but in the end, it took more than a year,” he said.

Boiko also plans to organise a book presentation in Kazakhstan.

“It was interesting to me how a high-class climber explains his desire to go to the mountains. I found this out in his diaries. It was interesting to learn how the climbers perceive what mountaineering generally gives them for personal development. The reader can find the answer to what mountaineering gives to a person. It will be interesting for a wide range of readers. Boukreev and his unique story still attract readers. I hope that the book will be available in Kazakhstan soon,” he said.

Almaty and Astana hold events dedicated to Denis Ten’s memory

By Yerbolat Uatkhonov

ASTANA – Almaty and the capital recently honoured the memory of figure skater Denis Ten, the 2014 Olympic bronze medalist and first Kazakh to stand on the podium at multiple world championships, who was murdered this summer during a carjacking attempt. The former city installed a memorial plaque on the house where he was born and raised, while the latter presented a photo exhibition dedicated to his memory. His family, colleagues and fans attended the ceremonies.

“He wanted to live only in this country and glorify only this country. Unfortunately, it so happened that he died in the country... He

glorified his homeland. Millions of people who watched all his speeches searched for Kazakhstan on the map, because everyone knows where he is and everyone has learned [about the country] through him,” Russian trainer Tatyana Tarasova said through tears.

“He worked in Moscow under the leadership of Lena Vodorezova for a long time. She invited me and I helped... and I was so happy, you know... I ran him at full speed every day for training, because communication with such a talented person makes you happy,” she added.

Almaty authorities are planning to hold a tournament in his name, noted Deputy Akim (Mayor) Arman Kyrykbaev.

“The bright memory of Denis will always be in the hearts of all



Tatyana Tarasova (L) and Denis Ten’s mother.

Photo credit: spain.kz

Kazakh people and we will do everything to make it so,” he said.

“We consider Denis our common achievement... The flight of the star was interrupted cruelly, treacherously. It made us all stand still, from all [that has] happened. We, Russians, will always remember him,” said Yevgeny Bobrov, Consul General of the Russian Federation.

The plaque was mounted on the house at 46 Nazarbayev Avenue and the D10 world exhibition opened Nov. 10. Participants noted they came not to grieve, but to honour the memory of the outstanding athlete.

Minister of Culture and Sports Arystanbek Mukhamediuly noted Ten was and remains an example for the younger generation. For ten days, fans will be able to see photographs from various events

taken during the athlete’s lifetime, as well as a special video project created by his colleagues and friends. Entrance is free.

“Personally, it is difficult for me to be here, because Denis was my friend. Emotions are very mixed, but the exhibition is very beautiful. It was very hard now to watch the video from the show Denis Ten and his Friends, because it was just recently. Of course, Denis was a great athlete, the hero of his people, and he will always remain in our hearts,” said Russian skater Yelena Radionova.

Ten was attacked on one of Almaty’s main streets July 19 as he tried to detain the thieves with mirrors from his car. He was taken to the hospital, where he subsequently died from blood loss. Ten was 25 years old.

CULTURE

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 21, 2018

Astana Opera premieres “Abai” in Genoa

Staff Report

ASTANA – The Astana Opera presented “Abai” Nov. 8 and Symphony No. 9 by Ludwig van Beethoven Nov. 10 at the Carlo Felice Theatre in Genoa, reported the theatre’s press service.

The opera, created by Latif Khaimidi and Akhmet Zhubanov, was also broadcast live in 40 countries. Astana Opera principal soloist Sundet Baigozhin performed the main part of Abai, with Nurlan Bekmukhambetov as Aidar and Maira Mukhamedkyzy as Azhar.

“Presenting our Kazakh music, performing a national opera abroad is one of the main goals of Kazakh artists. The opera ‘Abai’ is the epitome of the true Kazakh spirit, the life of our ancestors. We, the performers, must convey



Photo credit: Astana Opera.

the whole essence of the opera to the European listeners. I know that the opera ‘Abai’ was staged in the German language in Germany, but it will be performed in Italy in Kazakh for the first time... Abai is a legendary person for the Kazakh people; he is an outstanding poet, educator and philosopher who became the nation’s spiritual teacher. This is why it is a great responsibility for me to perform this role in Italy, even though I have often portrayed the character of the great Abai in our country,” said Baigozhin at the press conference prior to the tour.

The national opera features the rich traditions of the Kazakh people through virtuoso performances of artists and national dances. The set design emphasised the beauty of the great steppe and the audience especially admired the yurts

(traditional dwellings for nomads) with their golden embroidery under the high blue sky.

“I was greatly impressed by the scene where Aidar is dying. The soloist [Nurlan Bekmukhambetov] sung his aria lying down, which requires special training, because singing in this position is not easy. Sundet Baigozhin in the role of Abai was certainly one of the best performers. He has a very beautiful and resonant baritone and from an acting point of view he was able to show his character’s wise nature. Overall, I liked the performance very much. It is a great joy for us to get acquainted with Kazakh opera for the first time, to learn about your art. I was surprised that animals were involved in the production and everything was very spectacular,” said audience member Gustavo Neri.

Abstract realist brings back nomadic romance

By Aidana Yergaliyeva

ASTANA – Painter Adilgali Bayandin, a member of the Union of Artists of Kazakhstan, classifies his works as abstract realism, a seemingly oxymoronic term that makes sense only after one sees his work. His favourite genre is historic romanticism, for many of his paintings transport the beholder to the romance of the nomadic lifestyle.

“Kezdesu” (“Meeting”) conveys the story of a young couple on horseback, as he put it, “being drunk in love” in the Kazakh steppes with the bustling atmosphere of a traditional nomadic household in the background. The realistic scenario is infused with elements of abstract art that make it especially vivid and vibrant. The contradiction of abstract realism has become his signature.

In addition to his scenic paintings, Bayandin is also recognised and praised for his portraits. He is especially proud of his paintings of Bauyrzhan Momysheuly (a Kazakh-Soviet military officer) and Kazakh composer Shamshi Kaldayakov, as well as several portraits of his students.

“A portrait painting requires strenuous effort. A painting should depict the character of a person, his or her inner world,” he said.

His portrait of Kazakh fashion designer Dinara Satzhan holds a special place in the artist’s heart. Bayandin noted he was able to see and show her creative inclination long before she started to make a name in the industry.

His ultimate source of inspiration is music, as he feels melodic composition and painting have many similarities.

“First of all, I work with colours. I try to reveal the secrets of colours. It is closely correlated with music. A colour has its tonality. If you misplace a single note, then the whole sound gets spoiled. Similarly, if you misuse a colour, it will disrupt the harmony and leave you with a sense of incompleteness,” said Bayandin.

He is also influenced by poetry and nature.

“Once I read a poem and just in a few words the poet phrased the

thought that I couldn’t express in my painting for weeks. Then, I was inspired and drew it right away,” he added.

The process of inspiration is reciprocal for those in the art world, as Bayandin recalled composer friends who would write music moved by his paintings. He believes poets, composers and artists should create a hub where they could more closely interact.

Creating such space and, thereby, supporting artists is important, as art has often been the source of human progress, change and innovation. Leonardo Di Vinci’s “Mona Lisa” not only altered art practice, but elevated the role of women in the medium. Banksy’s “Les Mis” raised questions of people’s power and political pressure. Art dictates fashion, questions politics and raises social problems, he said.

As an artist, Bayandin is always in search of new techniques and styles. In the last four years, his works have evolved from slow and calm to energetic and thrilling. The key to a great painting, however, is the “inner state of a painter.”

“We are like scientists. We have to know a lot. Mistakes in anatomy and geometry are harshly criticised. Scientists are driven by a pure knowledge, while we painters have to use knowledge along with our hearts. Sometimes, it is only your heart that helps you to paint and then you end up with a fascinating piece of art,” he said.

His exhibit, “Through the eyes of the artist,” was shown last fall in the First President’s Library museum. He is now preparing “a concept” of his paintings to organise another showing next year.

Bayandin was born Dec. 14, 1966, in the small village of Kyzylzhar in the Aktobe region. He graduated from the Kazakh State Academy of Arts in 1994.

He won numerous fine arts exhibitions, festivals and symposiums in Kazakhstan and abroad. His works can be found in museums in the Baltic states, Germany, Kazakhstan, South Korea, the U.S. and other countries, while some are held in private collections. Bayandin has also illustrated the books “Kobylandy,” “Kotibar” and “Tailak batyr.”



Adilgali Bayandin and his painting “Kezdesu.”

Kazakh literature to be translated into United Nations languages

By Saltanat Boteu

ASTANA – As a part of the Contemporary Kazakh Culture in a Global World project, the Kazakh National Translation Bureau is facilitating the translation of Kazakh literature into the Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Spanish and Russian languages.

According to the bureau, the project, part of the Rukhani Zhan-gyru (Modernisation of Kazakhstan’s Identity) programme, seeks to present the achievements of Kazakh literature, music, visual arts, choreography, cinema and theatre during the years of independence to the world. Two anthologies of contemporary Kazakh prose and poetry are currently being translated and prepared for publication. Each anthology will be approximately 600 pages and include 30 Kazakh authors.

The anthology will be made in hard copies, electronic and audio editions.

The content of the editions was approved at a meeting of the Kazakh Writers Union in Almaty. Aida Balayeva, head of the President’s Administration Internal

Policy Department, leads the project.

The signing of the agreements with partner organisations from the United Kingdom, Spain, France, Russia, China and Egypt took place in May-October. The partners of the bureau will contribute to the distribution of the anthologies in their own countries and countries speaking the language of translation.

The first partnership for the translations was made with the Cambridge University Press and British Council for English language publications.

“We believe that presence of the British Council’s support, and co-operation with such well-known organisation as Cambridge University Press that has 500 years history, will undoubtedly serve for our project’s success,” said Balayeva during the signing of the agreement.

The partnership for the Spanish translation was made with the Ministry of Culture of Spain. The Cervantes Institute acts an advisor for this work.

“We pay great attention to the quality of translation for contemporary Kazakh literature to reach

the hearts of Spanish people. I hope that the joint work of our creative teams will make a great contribution to the strengthening relations of the Kazakh and Spanish culture,” noted Balayeva.

The French translation is prepared with the cooperation of the City Hall of Paris and the National Book Centre of France that acts as an external observer of the translation’s quality. The Michel de Maule publishing house that has more than 30 years of translation and publishing experience in the sphere of art and literature was chosen to work on anthologies. The Prestige Communication Global Communications Agency, which is widely known in the French-speaking environment, will help promote the anthologies.

“This project will give the French reader a good opportunity to get to know the new culture,” said founder of the publishing house and French correspondent Thierry de la Croix.

The Russian anthologies will be prepared with the Moscow State University (MSU) Publishing House and Russian Writers Union’s Moscow community. MSU

Publishing House Director Alexander Vereza said the university would make every effort to implement the project. Russian Writers Union Moscow City Council Chairman Vladimir Boyarinov added the process of preparing the translation for anthology would positively impact cultural interaction, especially among writers.

The Chinese and Arabic translations’ agreements were signed during the same ceremony with Chinese Nations Publishing House and Egyptian Centre for Culture and Education.

Nations Publishing House is a state organisation specialising in translations. It annually publishes approximately 20 fiction books for 56 ethnic groups living in China. Since 1953, the Kazakh department is operating in the publishing house.

The Egyptian Centre for Culture and Education is widely promoting the Arabic language and culture. It is one of the organisations engaged in strengthening cultural and humanitarian ties between Egypt and other countries. The centre has representative offices in 25 countries.

Art activism to revive contemporary art

Continued from Page B1

“[First,] how a woman artist exists, [why and when] she calls herself an artist then and now. Then, the other no less important issue is how we archive and preserve, where all these [artworks] disappear. Also, a connection between these two ideas – between heritage and the feeling that you are important enough to preserve and archive your works. If there is not enough self-confidence, [your] heritage will disappear, especially when it’s an artist who treats her works carelessly,” she added.

To show Halfin in the movie was strategic.

“It was a contrast to show how much is known about him and how little about her. [...] I hope that the movie touched upon [the theme of] what belongs to a group of artists and the group takes the name of one artist,” said Suinbike Suleimenova.

Saule Suleimenova, contemporary artist Almagul Menlibayeva, and centre director Roza Abenova discussed art conditions in Kazakhstan for the first time last year at the Contemporary Art Centre of the Kazakh National Museum. Saule Suleimenova expressed Kazakh art community’s concerns and recommendations in a petition sent to Kazakh Prime Minister Bakytzhan Sagintayev.

“This is a centre for contemporary art, so some things need to be clear for everyone: what contemporary art is, what kind of media it uses, what themes are discussed in contemporary art,” Suinbike Suleimenova said to The Astana Times.

The petition brought productive results.

“Ruhani Zhan-gyru (Modernisation of Kazakhstan’s Identity) programme held roundtables and invited artists to the discussions about the conditions of Kazakh art. They invited all artists, members of the [Kazakh] Artists Union, artists from different cities of the

country, from various fields such as graphic artists, painters and of different generations including contemporary art who were under-represented before,” she added.

The discussions were a form of art activism, when artists supported certain social groups and reacted to acute social issues to attract people’s attention. In turn, the roundtable led to organising the Focus Kazakhstan project as part of the programme.

“When Focus Kazakhstan appeared [...] there was a decision to organise [art] residences for Kazakh artists. Two groups of artists were sent to Momentum Worldwide in Berlin,” said Suinbike Suleimenova.

The practice, known as the artists in residence programme, offers them the opportunity to travel abroad to study and create their work. Professional artists’ residences require the individual to have a portfolio and an idea. The artist picks several courses and, at the end, produces a work

based on the idea and using the skills acquired during his or her residence.

The host country or organisation usually funds all spending or artists pay the costs themselves. In this case, the Kazakh government funded the groups in Berlin for two months.

“It was the first time for an artist in residence to practice in Kazakhstan,” she noted.

The residence was organised by curators David Elliot, Menlibayeva and Rachel Ritz Volloh, who were also the curators of the Bread and Roses exhibition.

Suinbike Suleimenova is interested in different spheres such as music, poetry and cinematography. Although genres are necessary, she believes they might make an artist stick to their frames and rules. Therefore, she prefers to call herself an author in Russian, the equivalent of an artist in English. She is the organiser of the FemAgoraCA festival, FemFilmCA and MEDIA Rights initiatives.

Kazakh orchestra completes European tour

Continued from Page B1

The concerts were organised by the Kazakh Ministry of Culture and Sports with the support of the Kazakh Embassy in the U.K. The tour is a part of the Contemporary Kazakh Culture in a Global World project under

the Ruhani Zhan-gyru (Modernisation of Kazakhstan’s Identity) programme and dedicated to the celebration of the 25th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Kazakhstan and the U.K. and Ireland.

The soloists of the concerts were Kazakh clarinetist Bekturgan

Zholaman and St. John who gave an Oct. 20 concert in Almaty before the tour.

The first concert before the European tour was held for the Almaty audience with the Canadian Embassy support. The repertoire of the orchestra included Kazakh composer and folk artist Kurman-

gazy and composer and dombra (Kazakh musical instrument) player Dauletkeyev’s compositions “Balbyraun” and “Kerogly”, Antonio Vivaldi’s “Four Seasons”, Edward Elgar’s “Serenade for Strings” and compositions of Gioachino Rossini and Fabian Müller.

Investment into geology and subsoil use industry to be heavily incentivised, says minister

By Dilshat Zhussupova

ASTANA – The geology and subsoil use industry is a significant contributor to Kazakhstan’s economy, accounting for approximately 50 percent of investment inflow, and is undergoing major reform, said Kazakh Minister for Investments and Development Zhenis Kassymbek at a Nov. 13 government meeting.

The recently adopted and implemented code on subsoil and subsoil use corresponds to international approaches to geology and subsoil use regulation and is

an example of the industry’s major regulatory reform.

“Under the code, the first-come, first-served principle was introduced, terms for granting subsoil use rights were reduced, the state subsurface resources management programme was adopted, freer access to geological information was provided and many administrative barriers were eliminated,” said the minister.

In the Fraser Institute’s recent ranking on investment attractiveness in geology and subsoil use, Kazakhstan improved from 73rd to 24th place among 104 countries. Kassymbek put forward that re-

form of imposing royalties on the sale of raw materials in place of the existing mineral extraction tax would allow for further improvement. Save for Kazakhstan and Russia, countries with a booming mining industry have adopted this practice.

A national database of mineral resources will also launch in late 2019 under the Digital Kazakhstan programme. Funded by Kazgeology, the data bank will increase investment inflows through easing investors’ access to subsoil use and ensuring accurate information and the transparency of state bodies and subsoil users’ activities.

“These kinds of databases exist in all the leading countries of the mining and metallurgical industry. This system will combine all historical geological data and deliver it in a modern format,” said the minister.

In addition, the ministry is to allocate grants for geology training and retraining and update training programmes with the Ministry of Education and Science, given the industry’s shortage in human resources despite more than 1,600 Kazakh university students training in geology and 41 studying under the Bolashak programme abroad.

“There is a gap in continuity,” said Kassymbek. “The average experienced geologist is close to retirement, while young professionals have only recently completed training.”

The minister noted that electric vehicle engines and smartphone fillings have sharply increased rare earth metal demand. Given the industry’s new trends and technologies, “additional budget financing is needed for geological exploration and incentivising investment in the search for rare earth elements to improve Kazakhstan’s competitiveness,” he said.

Investments have been attracted

through public-private partnership projects with Kazgeology, with market leaders, such as Rio Tinto conducting research and transferring technology in the country. Investors are usually interested in pre-studied objects, necessitating early-stage research in the country.

“The increase in state funding of early-stage exploration to 20 billion tenge (US\$53.47 million) annually will improve the sites’ investment potential,” he noted speaking about the 1.2 million square metres available for geological study in Kazakhstan.

Upon hearing the report, Kazakh Prime Minister Bakytzhan Sagintayev called for greater efficiency in replenishing the country’s mineral resource base. He emphasised the importance of fully utilising Kazgeology in realising these goals and tasked the Ministry of Finance with securing additional financing for the industry.

Economy ministry to build on business environment progress

By Dilshat Zhussupova

ASTANA – Kazakhstan has entered the top 30 countries in the world in ease of doing business and will continue fostering a dynamic environment, said Minister of National Economy Timur Suleimenov at a Nov. 6 government meeting chaired by Prime Minister Bakytzhan Sagintayev.

Kazakhstan jumped from 36th place last year to 28th in the 2019 World Bank Doing Business Report, the 16th in a series of annual reports investigating the regulations that influence domestic firms’ activities in 190 countries. In the Ease of Doing Business score, the country ranked higher in enforcing contracts, starting businesses, trading across borders, enforcing contracts dealing with construction permits, getting credit and resolving insolvency.

Kazakhstan shifted from 41th to 36th place in starting new businesses, having simplified the process by eliminating post-registration procedures such as tax registration, social security registration and licensing. This, in turn, reduced the time needed to open a business from nine to five days. In addition, the nation moved from 123rd to 102nd place in international trade, having introduced the ASTANA-1 IS electronic customs declaration system and trimmed customs administrative fees. The changes reduced the time and costs of border and documentary compliance for export.

Regarding the improvements, Suleimenov noted the number of documents for customs declaration was reduced to one, adding the financial costs of customs clearance for goods and vehicles have also been minimised. As of October, more than 600,000 declarations on goods have been issued electronically and without the participation of customs officials.

Kazakhstan shifted from sixth to fourth place in enforcing contracts, having simplified the process by providing open access to court decisions and statistical reports and expanding court automation so that the proportion of electronic applications is now in excess of 90 percent. The country also moved from 52nd to 35th in dealing with construction permits.

“Three suggested reforms from the WB have been taken into account,” said Suleimenov on Kazakhstan’s performance on contract enforcement and acquiring construction permits. “First, eliminating the need to obtain additional building permits from local executive bodies in the case that a customer has rights to the plot of land. Secondly, reducing the timeline for draft design approval by Almaty’s department of architecture and urban planning from 15 to 10 working days. Thirdly, providing the option for electronic construction commencement notification, which now takes no more than 10 minutes.”

Kazakhstan shifted from 77th to 60th place in getting credit, as it reformed pledged asset description. The country also moved from 39th to 37th place in resolving insolvency and maintained first place in protecting minority investors. Regarding the latter, Suleimenov emphasised the level of trust among companies, shareholders and board of director members has increased while continued improvement is imperative.

Although the meeting concluded Kazakhstan exhibited strong performance on several indicators, the government must continue enhancing its business environment in a systematic manner.

The seventh legislation amendment package is under consideration by the Parliament and the Ministry of National Economy is tasked with passing the draft law before year’s end.

Majilis adopts health legislation amendments

Staff Report

ASTANA – The Kazakh Majilis, the lower house of the country’s Parliament, recently endorsed changes to 11 legislative documents, including the Health Code, Criminal Code, Criminal Procedure Code and Administrative Offences Code.

The amendments cover several areas, said Minister of Healthcare Yelzhan Birtanov. The changes include a new model for the country’s guaranteed volume of free medical care and compulsory social medical insurance package, improved corporate management of medical organisations, introducing a single plan to develop healthcare infrastructure, public health

protection and improved medical education and science.

The model of a guaranteed volume of free medical care will be aligned with World Health Organisation standards to seek universal health coverage.

As part of the plan, medical services such as ambulance and medical aviation, primary health care, emergency outpatient and inpatient care and palliative care will be provided to all citizens, returnees, foreigners and individuals without citizenship permanently residing in the country.

The amendments also deal with socially significant and chronic diseases and provide for consultancy and diagnostic care, ambulance medicine provisions and

medical rehabilitation for patients diagnosed with tuberculosis.

The mandatory social medical insurance covers other medical services including preventive medical check-ups; high-cost laboratory services such as for hormones, vitamins and antigens and high-cost diagnostic services including computer tomography (CT) scans and magnetic resonance imaging (MRI).

“With these amendments in place, we expect certain results. The duties of the state were clearly defined and overload that is common among primary care physicians will be decreased, [including] emergency medical services. For the population, it entails increasing access to medical care and declining out-of-pocket spending as

a result of increasing financing in the health system,” said Birtanov.

Majilis chair Nurlan Nigmatulin stressed the importance of the changes.

“The significance of this bill is that a new model of the guaranteed volume of medical care was developed that encompasses the entire population of the country with basic medical services,” he said.

The bill also stipulated incorporating international standards in medical education and evaluating faculty members’ competency and students’ knowledge and skills.

Integrated academic medical centres and the university clinic system at Nazarbayev University will serve as examples in combining science, practice and education.

Transporting two Kazakh satellites aboard Falcon 9 will cost \$1.3 million

Staff Report

ASTANA – The price tag for Kazakhstan to launch two of its satellites aboard the Falcon 9 launch vehicle will be \$1.3 million, said Minister of Defence and Aerospace Industry Beibut Atamkulov at the Nov. 6 government meeting.

The satellites had been scheduled for take-off Nov. 19 in California, Vice Minister of Defence and Aerospace Industry Marat Nurguzhin announced the previous day at the Digital Bridge international innovation forum in the capital. Falcon 9 is a family of disposable and partially reusable heavy-class launch vehicles developed by SpaceX, an American company owned by Tesla founder Elon Musk.

Atamkulov added the satellites were planned for launch last year, but the Dnepr programme, under which they were developed, was closed. As a result, there was a need to consider alternative launches from other countries.

“As this programme of the Russian Federation was closed, we



Photo credit: 24.kz

looked at the launches of other countries, such as SpaceX, and picked it up since it would be cheaper for the [Kazakh] budget. [SpaceX was cheaper because]

there are double launches in conjunction with other [U.S.] satellites. This is cost effective for the state,” he said.

He did not know the amount that

using SpaceX vehicles will save the budget.

“I can’t compare; it’s cheap enough. It is difficult, capacious work, because some satellites wait three years. It all depends on how long you will keep this satellite on the waiting list,” he added.

The satellites are replacement communications models which will be substituted for existing devices, noted Nurguzhin. The work of Kazakh engineers and designers will be tested, as they will receive a flight history and be able to create and commercialise their own satellites.

“More than 150 engineers have been trained at factories in Europe, England and Russia. They are working here in Kazakhstan and we have created our third space system of scientific and technological importance,” he added.

“Standing down from Monday’s launch attempt of Spaceflight SSO-A: SmallSat Express to conduct additional pre-flight inspections. Once complete, we will confirm a new launch date,” SpaceX tweeted Nov. 17.

Housing construction investments surge 31.5 percent, exceed \$2 billion

By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – Investments in housing construction have grown 31.5 percent compared to 2017, reaching 818.9 billion tenge (US\$2.2 billion), reported Kazakh Minister for Investments and Development Zhenis Kassymbek. Increased construction financing by private developers (53 percent) and the population (43.2 percent) underpinned the growth.

“Per one tenge of state investments, there are eight tenge of private investments,” he said during the Nov. 7 government hour.

Housing construction is growing

rapidly as part of the Nurdy Zher programme launched in 2017 to provide affordable housing for Kazakh citizens. In nine months, 8.8 million square metres of housing were commissioned, an 11.6-percent increase over 2017. Construction rates are highest in the capital (1.8 million square metres), Almaty (1.3 million square metres) and the Mangistau region (910,500 square metres).

More than 77,000 families were able to improve their living conditions.

“This year, we plan to commission at least 12.1 million square metres; of those, 1.3 million or 22,000 apartments will be covered

by state investments,” said Kassymbek.

The national budget allocated 148.6 billion tenge (US\$402.8 million) for the programme in 2018, which will run in several directions. The first stipulates housing construction for socially vulnerable segments of the population and this year’s plan is to build 184,500 square metres of rental housing, or 3,470 apartments.

“As of Oct. 1, 1,176 rental apartments have been commissioned. Regions received 21.3 billion tenge (US\$57.7 million) of the planned 26.9 billion (US\$72.9 million). Of that, 96.7 percent or 20.1 billion tenge (US\$54.5 mil-

lion) was used. In general, in line with the task of the head of state, we plan to increase financing of rental housing construction to 50 billion tenge (US\$135.5 million),” he added.

Mortgage housing construction, the second direction in the programme, received 207 billion tenge (US\$561.2 million) which will be put into circulation every two years as part of bond issues.

In 2016, the National Fund allotted 67 billion tenge (US\$181.6 million) to local executive bodies through Baiterek Holding. The following year, Baiterek contributed 63 billion tenge (US\$170.8 million) and Samruk Kazyna Sov-

ereign Wealth Fund contributed 77 billion tenge (US\$208.7 million) to protect housing loans.

The ministry plans to allocate 100.9 billion tenge (US\$273.5 million) this year to finance 141 projects to build 9,793 apartments.

“As of Nov. 5, the akimats (city administrations) received 93 billion tenge (US\$252.1 million) and 180,500 square metres of housing, or 3,096 apartments, were commissioned. An additional 6,697 will be completed by the end of this year,” said Kassymbek.

The third direction is developing individual housing construction. Nearly 40,000 land plots will be connected to utilities, he noted.

Involving private real estate developers in housing construction, the objective of the fourth direction, is overseen by Kazakhstan’s Damu Entrepreneurship Development Fund. The plan is to provide 152 billion tenge (US\$412 million) in subsidised loans to build

600,000 square metres of housing. To date, companies have commissioned 138,500 square metres.

The quasi-public sector is also involved in housing construction.

“As of today, 9,669 apartments with a total area of 578,400 square metres have been commissioned. Of the 97 billion tenge (US\$262.9 million) allocated in 2016, the Samruk Kazyna fund signed contracts worth 75.9 billion tenge (US\$205.7 million) to build commercial housing. Samruk Kazyna will have to return the remaining 50.3 billion (US\$136.3 million) by the end of this year. These funds will be used to finance mortgage housing construction by local executive bodies,” he said.

Housing construction, noted Kassymbek, is on constant control.

“Construction is going on, which facilitates significant improvement of living conditions of people and development of business initiatives,” he added.

SOCIETY

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 21, 2018

Gender-based violence does not have national borders, says Kyrgyz official

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – More than 60 government, parliamentary and civil society representatives and experts from Central Asia and beyond gathered in Bishkek Nov. 5 for the United Nations (UN) conference on Turning Policies into Action: Eliminating Gender-based Violence against Women and Girls in Central Asia.

“Gender-based violence is a phenomenon that does not have national borders. People can be exposed to it regardless of gender, age, place of residence, education, property or social status and other socio-demographic differences,” Kyrgyz Vice Prime Minister Alтынai Omurbekova said in her opening remarks.

The Kyrgyz government will introduce criminal liability for domestic violence, as a result of the criminal and criminal procedure legislation reforms approved Jan 1. The law on social and legal protection against family violence recognises it as a dangerous and unacceptable phenomenon to be fought on all fronts.

The Kyrgyz National Strategy on Achievement of Gender Equality to 2020 identifies the elimination of gender discrimination and expanding access to justice as priority directions. The Kyrgyz National Action Plan for Gender Equality includes measures to implement the recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, as well as measures to eradicate



Conference participants.

the practice of underage marriages.

“Violence against women and girls is a fundamental violation of human rights with far-reaching negative consequences on development. The Government of Kyrgyzstan is taking decisive steps to implement laws to end gender-based violence and the United Nations will actively support these efforts to build a society free from violence,” said Resident Coordinator of the UN system in Kyrgyzstan Ozonnia Ojelo.

Despite all the efforts and results achieved, women and girls continue to be subjected to gender-based violence, said gender expert and former member of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) Violeta Neubauer. Women and girls are not only victims of violence, they are also victims of indifference and government inaction, she said.

“Eliminating gender-based violence against women and girls calls for pro-active national policy

that is well-defined, holistic and human rights-based. Whatever the differences in country contexts, all national policies must adhere to legally binding norms and standards to prevent violence against women and girls, protect survivors, and punish perpetrators,” she said.

Violence within families is one of the most acute problems at the regional and local level.

“Nearly 30 percent of women in the Kyrgyz Republic and 20 percent of women in Kazakhstan

experienced violence, primarily by their intimate partners. The actual figures are likely to be higher since data remains scarce or outdated and incidents are often not reported. In many parts of the region, early and forced marriage and bride kidnapping remain common practice,” reported the UN Women.

The participants also discussed how to strengthen national policies in line with international standards, ensure that survivors receive quality health, police, le-

gal and social services and transform social norms that perpetuate violence against women and girls.

The two-day conference was organised by four UN agencies including United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in cooperation with the Kyrgyz government.

QS ranks 20 Kazakh universities among top 300 in Eastern Europe and Central Asia

By Aidana Yergaliyeva

ASTANA – Twenty Kazakh universities have been rated among the top 300 in Eastern Europe and Central Asia (EECA) by Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) rankings 2019, reported the Ministry of Education and Science press service.

The British rating agency analysed the activities of higher education institutions in 26 EECA countries. Based on the number of educational institutions, Kazakh universities are the third most represented after Russia and Turkey. Fourteen Kazakh universities were listed in the 2016 ranking; the latest analysis has raised the figure by six.

Al-Farabi Kazakh National University (KazNU), the leading and also the oldest institution in Central Asia, was ranked 19th in EECA and 220th globally. The university, which will celebrate its 85th anniversary next year, counts one of the country’s best academics, as well as a number of ministers, governors, top managers, Parliament members, national corporation executives and Olympic champions, among its graduates.

Kazakh higher educational institutions consistently highly ranked in the last four years include Lev Gumilyov Eurasian National University (Astana), Kanysh Satpayev Kazakh National Research and Technology University (Almaty), Kazakh-British Technical University (KBTU, Almaty) and Kazakh National Agrarian University (Astana).

The universities’ performances were evaluated on indicators such as academic reputation,

employer’s opinion and citation index of publications per faculty member. Other factors included diversity, teaching equipment, social responsibility, innovation, art and culture, availability of distance learning and sports facilities.

Kazakh universities have significantly improved their quality indicators with more universities adopting international standards and increasing the rate of research activities, innovative projects and new technologies invention.

Recently, Kazakhstan launched its own national university rating system conducted by the Atameken National Chamber of Entrepreneurs and Ministry of Education and Science. The main focus is the quality of educational programmes offered by domestic educational institutions. The rating should serve as a filter to eliminate schools that cannot ensure high employability for students after graduation, the ministry noted in August.

“If we see that one or another university produced specialists and they are not in demand on the labour market, then this also means that there are most likely problems with quality at this university. Therefore, we are doing a lot of work on rating educational programmes,” said Vice Minister Askhat Aimagambetov at the Oct. 16 Central Asian International Forum.

The first results of the national rankings in July and September showed KazNU and Kudaibergen Zhubanov State Regional University (Aktobe) were best preparing students in physics, while KBTU programmes showed outstanding results in computer engineering and software.

New UN building will bring Almaty closer to achieving SDGs, says mayor

By Aidana Yergaliyeva

ASTANA – The United Nations regional branch in Almaty, a bigger building equipped with modern facilities, was unveiled during an Oct. 23 opening ceremony. The new headquarters, which will cluster 19 UN agencies and representative offices in one place, will be occupied by the end of the year, reported the Almaty Akimat (administration) press service.

“This new office creates new op-

portunities for interaction not only with international organisations, but also with the talented youth of the country,” said Afshan Khan, United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF) Regional Director for Europe and Central Asia.

The new office, located in the city’s business district, should facilitate achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and humanitarian aid provisions, as well as respond to emergency situations in Central Asia and Afghanistan, he added.

Almaty Akim (Mayor) Baurzhan Baibek, speaking on behalf of the city, said committing to SDGs is the city’s main interest. He added creating a UN regional hub in Almaty was a priority for the mayor’s office.

Baibek cited SDG examples such as Gorod dlya lyudei (City for the people), which resulted in modernising public spaces, especially for people with disabilities. The Ustoichiviyi Transport (Sustainable Transport) project was designed in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

“We are conducting systematic work to make the city a regional hub for international organisations. Considering that the Summit of Mayors is taking place today dedicated to the 40th anniversary of the signing of the WHO (World Health Organisation) Almaty Declaration, I am sure that the presentation of the new UN house will be a golden line in the history of our common cooperation,” he said.

The hub’s status still needs to be revised by the UN Secretariat.

Kazakh team wins TechWomen seed grant to address domestic violence

By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – Five young and successful Kazakh women won a TechWomen seed grant for their Uki.kz project. The award ceremony at Twitter headquarters in San Francisco concluded an intensive five-week programme meant to empower and support emerging women leaders in STEM (science, technology, engineering and math).

The Kazakh team included Zhanargul Izimova, Sberbank retail managing director; Irina Mun, IE Hydro Lab founder; Arai-lym Nurpeissova, a researcher at Nazarbayev University National Laboratory Astana; Nargiza Siyabekova, a senior IT specialist at Kazakhtelecom, and Valeriya Tyo, smart construction projects leader at BeInTech.

The programme offers intensive mentorship and exchange and gives women a chance to boost their professional capacity and develop a network of contacts in their commitment to make a positive impact in their communities.

It also features project-based mentorships at leading companies in the San Francisco Bay Area and



Photo credit: techwomen.org.

Silicon Valley, including Adobe, Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory, Mozilla, PayPal, Twitter and Veritas. The programme, initiated by the U.S. Department of State, has had more than 500 graduates in the past seven years.

The organisers received more than 3,000 applications this year, selecting just 98 to form 20 national teams. Participants were asked to address the question – If you could solve any challenge in your country, what would it be?

The issues raised in the projects reflected a wide array of themes from socialising marginalised communities to critical environmental issues. Many, however, focused on women and children, including the project presented by the Kazakh team.

Uki.kz is designed to support women facing domestic violence and abuse. The platform will run offline and online in Kazakh and Russian.

“In Kazakhstan, 70 percent of

women experience an act of violence by men at least once in their lives. Five hundred women die every year. Others keep silent, because it is shameful in our society to talk about it. We have a widespread thing, ‘if he beats you, it means he loves you,’” said Tyo, presenting the project during the pitch day hosted at Google.

Uki, meaning sacred bird in Kazakh, is an online platform providing a network of support and assistance, including law, where women can reach out for help.

Despite the distressing statistics, support for women is insufficient. The mission is to “break the statement” and create a “community to have a voice.”

“In this platform, we will ask questions like what abuse is and what I can do to get help, where I can get help and where there are other women like me. All these questions will be addressed in this platform’s various sections. We will link them with professionals in psychology, law, education and medicine,” said Nurpeissova.

The \$3,000 seed grant will support the team in implementing its project. They plan to launch the website by the end of 2019.

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 21, 2018

BBC, National Geographic broadcast films about sacred places

By Saltanat Boteu

ASTANA – Thirty short videos and several documentaries produced by the Kazakh government to showcase the country’s sacred geography as tourist destinations have been shown on the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), National Geographic, Viasat history and Discovery channels.

The videos and documentaries were produced by the Kazakh Ministry of Culture and Sports as part of the Sacred Geography of Kazakhstan project, which seeks to showcase Kazakh attractions worldwide.

The 40-second videos in mobile format were produced for social networks in Kazakh, English and Russian languages.

“These videos are business cards of the regions, where sacred objects are located. They are [made] for recognition of Kazakhstan, its cultural context in the world as a country with a rich spiritual his-



Qozha Akhmet Yassau Mausoleum.

tory and long traditions. Also, they contribute to the development of foreign and local tourism,” said Kazakh Culture and Sport Minister Arystanbek Mukhameduly in a meeting to present the project’s results.

The series of films “Sacred Geography of Kazakhstan,” “Golden Warrior,” and “Mausoleums of Khoja Ahmet Yassawi and Aisha Bibi” were also produced with the participation of the BBC World News TV channel. The shooting took place in the cities of Issyk, Ushkonyr, Turkestan and Kapchagai.

The documentary historical films “Kultegin. New Perspective” and “The Land of Nomads,” which were filmed in Eastern Kazakhstan, were made with the American company Castlefilm with the participation of the famous actors Cary Tagawa, Mark Dacascos, Bai Ling and Michael Madsen.

“The film will popularise the tourist cluster of the region, we

need to introduce it to the world’s tourists. Now there is a great interest in the nomadic culture... I think that, other regions following the example of the East Kazakhstan region will consider this idea and many popular stars will visit our country,” said Producer Arman Asenov.

“We want to show the real power of Kazakhstan, because the people are its most important wealth,” added Tagawa, American actor of Japanese origin.

Most of the films were released with subtitles and dubbing in six United Nations languages and broadcasted on Discovery, Viasat history and National Geographic TV channels with an audience of more than 700 million people.

In November, in cooperation with BBC World News, it is planned to launch the Travel Shows of Kazakhstan project, which includes five programmes on tourism opportunities in Kazakhstan.

Air Astana launches low-cost airline

By Zhanat Tukpiyev

ASTANA – Air Astana will be launching a low-cost airline in the first half of 2019. FlyArystan and its fleet will consist of Airbus A320 aircraft with 180 economy class seats. The airline will operate according to the classic low-cost model, following the example of such successful systems as Air Asia, Cebu Pacific, Easyjet and Indigo.

“The creation of the budget airline FlyArystan is an important step in the rapidly changing local and regional air transport market conditions, as well as the result of in-depth research and business planning. The launch of the budget airline will have a positive impact on Air Astana’s mid-term and long-term prospects and, we hope, will be an expected event for domestic tourists who can take advantage of low fares on domestic and regional routes,” said Air Astana President Peter Foster.

Tickets will be twice as cheap as

the current tariffs in the domestic air transportation market. The system is expected to initially expand the airline’s routes to countries within the region.

FlyArystan will begin with four aircraft, with a fleet increasing up to 15 by 2022. The airline plans to operate flights from several Kazakh cities and information about the route network will be provided in the coming months.

The management team is composed of a number of local Air Astana senior managers who the airline has cultivated during the past 16 years. The group will be led by Tim Jordan, who has more than 15 years of management experience with Cebu Pacific and Virgin Blue.

As a division of Air Astana, FlyArystan will operate in accordance with high standards of safety and reliability. The new company will function on a self-financing basis and not attract shareholders’ investments, government subsidies or any external financial support.



Aulie-Ata International launches direct flights connecting Taraz and Yekaterinburg

By Aidana Yergaliyeva

ASTANA – Aulie-Ata International Airport in Taraz launched direct flights Oct. 29 to Yekaterinburg, Russia. SCAT Airlines will be operating a Boeing 757-200 on the route every Monday, making the trip in 2 hours, 50 minutes.

“Private investments in the construction and modernisation of the airport have produced results. Today, Taraz Airport offers more than 100 flights per month,” reported its press service.

This year is the year of new beginnings for the airport, as it also initiated a tourism programme that is expected to develop a route ad-

ressing increased demand of both passengers and cargo. It has also started flights by Volga-Dnepr Airlines.

In addition, Aulie-Ata now provides service for one of the largest AN-124 class aircraft, a jet requiring a certain level of maintenance. The acquisition of special new equipment and reconstruction of the runway has made that possible.

“The maintenance of a transport plane of a class like the AN-124 will expand the possibilities in the field of freight traffic. The selected route confirms the competitiveness of the airport in the field of freight traffic. The airport can integrate transport and logistics services and offers convenient and

competitive conditions,” added the press service.

Since 2016, Kazakhstan has been shipping chilled meat to Iran through Taraz airport on a weekly basis as part of the nation’s agricultural export programme.

The government expects shipping meat products to Middle Eastern countries will provide the needed impetus to develop the livestock industry in the Zhambyl region.

“The fact that our airport accepts one of the largest aircraft is a step towards even greater interest of carriers for flights through the regional centre of the Zhambyl region, which is ready for aircraft maintenance and loading and unloading at the highest level. We

are ready to receive large passenger and cargo aircraft, as we train personnel in servicing all types of aircraft,” said the statement.

In the future, the airport plans to reconstruct its fuel and lubricants complex and construct an A-class cargo terminal.

Founded in 2008, Aulie-Ata International underwent major reconstruction and runway expansion five years later. As a result, the airport could handle all types of modern aircraft, including heavy Boeing and Airbus aircraft, as well as all types of helicopters. In addition, a 5,500-square metre terminal was built meeting all modern standards and requirements.

Tarbagatai National Park opens in East Kazakhstan

By Saltanat Boteu

ASTANA – The Kazakh Government recently opened the Tarbagatai National Park in the Urzhar district in the eastern Kazakhstan to preserve the area’s diverse nature, develop tourism and improve its economy.

The park is Kazakhstan’s 13th national park and covers 143,550 hectares, including 7,183-hectare protected zone. The park includes the southern foothills of the Tarbagatai and the Urzhar, Katynsu and Emil river basins.

Its green area is divided into four parts, two of which are conservation and ecological zones that are protected with visitor restrictions. The territory is accessible with special permission. The other parts of the land are for tourists and locals’ use.

“The third zone is an ecology and

tourism zone. We have big plans for it. We will actively develop tourism in this part of the park. In the fourth zone, along with grazing cattle, mowing grass will be possible. It will also be possible to do apiary. However, all these actions should be coordinated with the park. Now, our staff are visiting the rural districts and carrying out explanatory work with the population,” said Tarbagatai National Park Director Alibek Tokymtayev, according to 24.kz.

The park’s Forester and Department Supervisor Yerezhep Temeshov, who has worked 40 years in the field, believes the park does not have analogues around the world.

“If you were in different parts of the world, then I’m sure that you haven’t seen such a miracle yet. ... Apples grow here (Urzhar Oporto and Malus sieversii apples). Therefore, the opening of this park provides great opportunities. We will



Photo credit: qazaqstan3d.kz.

be able to preserve and increase this flora and fauna,” he said.

The national park consists of six cluster land plots, which indicate the diversity of the landscape and its inhabitants. According to expert-biologist Tatyana Utyasheva, fauna of the Tarbagatai Park includes about 1,640 species. The flora includes 167 endemic spe-

cies. The fauna of vertebrates includes 376 species, including 19 fish, two amphibians, 23 reptiles, 272 birds and 60 mammals’ species. Forty rare and endangered vertebrate animal species of the area are listed in Kazakhstan’s Red Book, which is a list of rare and endangered animals, plants and fungi.

Kazakhstan, Russia to develop bilateral tourism, make border-crossing procedures more comfortable

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – Kazakhstan’s five-year tourism development programme will attract up to 13 million visitors and create more than 60,000 jobs, said Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev Nov. 9 at the 15th forum on Kazakhstan-Russia interregional cooperation in Petropavlovsk.

Approximately 70 bilateral documents were signed at the event. The countries agreed to

strengthen tourism, transport and logistics infrastructure coordination; develop road and railway transportation; study tourism opportunities; provide comfortable border control; improve border-crossing infrastructure and simplify the visa regime with Caspian countries.

The forum was devoted to new tourism approaches and trends in both countries.

“Tourism is one of the key drivers of growth of the global economy in current conditions. The

tourism sector attracts hundreds of billions of dollars in direct investment. It has a multiplicative effect on all key sectors of the economy. Tourism is a tool for economic growth even during global economic crises,” said Nazarbayev.

According to the United Nations World Tourism Organisation, 1.8 billion people will visit popular resorts and cities and historical and cultural monuments by 2030.

“Kazakhstan and Russia need to use the opportunities. We need to

take systematic measures to develop bilateral tourism. It is important to use the geographical proximity between our countries, China and India, which have high growth rates in tourism,” he added.

The head of state noted neighbouring countries on the Caspian Sea should create a cooperation infrastructure to simplify visa and migration regimes.

“We need to increase tourist flow to the Caspian Sea and boost the potential of the Caspian Sea. There is a need to intensify work to

develop the complementary entertainment and recreation infrastructure of the Caspian countries,” said Nazarbayev.

Approximately 1.7 million Russian tourists visited Kazakhstan in 2017. This year, the figure has increased by 2.3-2.4 percent.

“We expect that this indicator will reach two million people as a result of the interaction of our countries in the field of tourism,” said Kazakh Tourism deputy chairperson Timur Duissengaliyev.

The most visited sites in-

clude the Shalkar-Imantau and Shchuchinsk-Borovoye resort zones in North Kazakhstan and Akmola regions respectively, and Alakol, Balkhash and Zhasybai lakes. Fishing and hunting are popular in the West Kazakhstan region. Space tourism is also present at the Baikonur launch sites.

“Some 1.9 million tourists visit the Almaty region annually. We plan to increase the number of tourists to four million by 2019. This will create up to 30,000 workplaces. Deductions to the budget will increase and this will give impetus to the development of small and medium-sized businesses,” he added.

The 16th forum will be held next year in Omsk.

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 21, 2018

FC Kairat reaches final of UEFA Futsal Champions League



Photo credit: uefa.com

By Dilshat Zhussupova

ASTANA – Almaty Football Club (FC) Kairat recently defeated Czech FC Chrudim to reach the final four of the 2018-2019 Union of European Football Associations (UEFA) Futsal Champions League’s four-team finals, reports UEFA.

Kairat beat Chrudim in an elite round match with a 4:2 score. They dominated the game’s first half, striking the opponent’s goal three times. The match got closer in the second half, when Chrudim reduced the lead by two goals.

Kairat’s Pereira Rangel scored in the match’s second minute, John Lennon in the seventh minute, Chingiz Yesenamanov in the 17th minute and Dauren Tursagulov in the 29th minute. Chrudim’s Matěj Slováček scored in the 22nd minute and Max in the 25th minute.

The league’s elite round top scorers include Kairat’s Edson Gomes Dos Santos, Portuguese FC Sporting’s Dieguinho Henrique de Abreu Assis, Serbian FC Ekonomac Kragujevac’s Divanej and Belgian FC Halle-Gooik’s Alessandro Patias, and the season’s top scorer is Polish FC Record Bielsko-Biala’s Michal Kubik.

The UEFA Futsal Champions League is an annual futsal competition for European club teams. Since 2006-2007, the winner is

decided through a final four tournament.

Along with Kairat, Sporting and Spanish football clubs Inter and Barça have secured finals spots after topping their elite round groups. Inter progressed from elite round Group A with 9 points, Barça from Group B with 9 points, Sporting from Group C with 7 points and Kairat from Group D with 9 points.

The finals will be in April 2019 and hosted by either Kazakhstan, or Spain or Portugal. The date and host will be announced by draw Dec. 3. Past host cities include Moscow in 2008, Yekaterinburg in 2009, Lisbon in 2010 and 2015, Almaty in 2011 and 2017, Lleida in 2012, Tbilisi in 2013, Baku in 2014, Guadalajara in 2016 and Zaragoza in 2018.

Inter is a five-time UEFA Futsal Champions League winner and the record holder for the greatest amount of final four victories. Kairat has reached the finals eight times since the 2005-2006 season, which is one more than Inter and two above Barça and Sporting. They took first place in the 2013 and 2015 finals.

Kairat was founded in 1954. In addition to their two league titles, they won eight Kazakhstan Cups and two Kazakhstan Super Cups.

The finals will be broadcast on UEFA.com and the YouTube channel UEFA.tv. Tickets will become available for sale after December.

National boxing team selected after championships in Aktau

By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – The National Boxing Championship recently concluded in Aktau, naming the country’s 20 best boxers and forming the national boxing team.

Boxers from the Turkestan region won two gold, three silver and two bronze medals, followed by the Mangistau region with one gold, three silver and four bronze and the Zhambyl region with one gold, two silver and three bronze ones.

The championship drew both boxing veterans, including Vasily Levit, also silver medallist of the 2016 Rio Olympic Games, and young boxers, such as 20-year-old Orazbek Assylkulov from the



Photo credit: Kazakhstan boxing federation

Akmola region and 21-year-old Saken Bibosynov from the Turkestan region.

Competing in the up to 91-kg category and representing Astana, Levit is now a three-time national champion. He won 5:0 over Bekzat Nurdauletov from the Mangistau region.

“I have not been taking part in the championship of Kazakhstan for a while. The last time was in 2012. After these years, I can say that all contenders are very capable. I reached my main goal and now I will be working on my mistakes,” said Levit at a press conference.

Kyzylorda native Kamshibek Kunkabayev, 27, defeated Nurlan Saparbai from the Turkestan region in 91+ kg weight category.

In an 81-kg category, Bek Nur-

maganbet settled for a gold medal without a fight, after his opponent Mikhail Kohanchik from Rudnyi in the Kostanai region withdrew from the championship due to his injury.

Thirty-one-year-old Zakir Safullin became a champion in 60-kg category winning Samatali Tol-tayev 5:0.

World and Asian champion Abilkhan Amankul, 21, defeated Yerik Alzhanov, also Asian medal winner, in a 75-kg weight division.

Kairat Yeraliyev, 28, from the Turkestan region, was the winner in 56-kg category, beating 20-year-old Orazbek Assylkulov from the Akmola region, who for the first time made it to the finals. Assylkulov was named to the national team.

Twenty-one-year-old Saken Bi-

bosynov, part of the national team, yielded in a fight to Anvar Muzaparov in a 52-kg weight category.

Temirtas Zhussupov, 20, is now five-time national champion in 49-kg category. He beat Yermek Madiyev from the Zhambyl region.

Nineteen-year-old Asian youth champion Sanatali Toltayev was named champion in 64-kg category, where he faced 23-year-old Bekdaulet Ibragimov. The fight, however, ended in a second round, after Ibragimov was injured.

“I can not express how happy I am. Bekdaulet Ibragimov is a very strong opponent. I was preparing hard and I am happy that I won,” said Toltayev.

National team coach Myrzagali Aitzhanov commended the team’s young boxers.

“New athletes in the team are Saken Bibosynov and Orazbek Assylkulov. Of course, several positions changed. Those on the fourth place moved to third ones and second ones. As you know, team captain Adilbek Ni-yazymbetov in the 81-kg category finished his carrier. But most retained positions. Good thing is that this championship had many young boxers and experienced boxers who demonstrated good boxing,” said Aitzhanov.

“I believe, and as many would probably agree, the championship was at very high level. Every day there were intense fights. They fought hard for a victory,” he said.

“Someone may think about the age of Levit or Yeraliyev. They will make the decision to leave on their own, when time comes. As long as they are in the team showing strength, they are showing very high level. 18-year-olds and 19-year-olds will grow with them. There will be continuity. Though it will take one and a half or two years for youth to get strong and continue their path,” said Aitzhanov.

The national team will start preparing for the two key events of 2019 – Asian and world championships – in January that will culminate in 2020 Olympic Games in Tokyo, where the Amateur International Boxing Association (AIBA) plans to cut the number of men’s weight divisions from current 10 to eight.

Kazakh woman among eight best players at 2018 World Chess Championship

By Saltanat Boteu

ASTANA – Zhansaya Abdumalik reached the fourth quarterfinals of the 2018 Women’s World Chess Championship underway Nov. 3-23 in Khanty-Mansiysk, Russia, according to the Kazakhstan Chess Federation. It is the first time a Kazakh made it to the quarterfinals in an adult world championship.

“This is the first adult world championship I’m participating in. I understood that I had to face a serious struggle, because my

opponents were experienced and titled athletes. Before that, I won the World Junior Championships and the World Championships under 20 years, but it was a completely different level,” said Abdumalik.

In the first round, she defeated Indian competitor Ruth Padmini in a tiebreaker, 1.5-0.5. Next, she beat Chinese opponent Zhao Xu by a score of 2-0. She was the victor again in the third round against Polish grandmaster Jolyanta Zavadskaya.

In the quarterfinals, Abduma-

lik faced the world champion, Ukraine grandmaster Maria Muzychuk. The classic and rapid games were played to a tie, with Muzychuk ultimately winning in a blitz, 1.5-0.5.

“Zhansaya showed a brilliant game. For her, this was the first experience of playing in the Adult Chess World Championship. At 18, she managed to defeat the more experienced players. In the six games of the quarterfinals, she was on a par with the former world champion (2015), but in the blitz, a chance often determines the re-

sult,” said the Kazakhstan Chess Federation Executive Director Irina Grishchenko.

Abdumalik, of Almaty, Guliskhan Nakhbaeva (Shymkent) and Dinara Saduakassova (Astana) represented Kazakhstan in the tournament, with Saduakassova also reaching the second round. She played to a tie in two classic games against former world chess champion Antoaneta Stefanova, losing to the Bulgarian in a rapid game, 1.5-0.5.

Competitors play two classic games. In the case of a tie, rapid,

blitz and finally Armageddon games are played until the winner is revealed. The final match consists of four classic games and, if necessary, a tiebreaker. The prize is \$450,000.

Sixty-four of the world’s best athletes from 29 countries came to the Ugra Chess Academy to compete for the title. The competition is held in a knockout tournament system, as one loss removes the player from further participation and half of the contestants are eliminated after each round.

Abdumalik is the Asia and world multiple champion among juniors. In 2013, she became the best chess player in Asia under 20 and a year ago, won the under-20 World Chess Champion title in Italy.

Saduakassova has a number of titles. She is the only four-time World Champion under 14, 17, 18 and 20; Central Asia’s 2015 women’s champion; Asian Women’s Vice Champion in 2016 and Vice World champion in 2007 and 2011. She is the only Kazakh among the top 30 strongest chess players in the world.



Photo credit: kazchess.kz

Zhansaya Abdumalik.



Photo credit: inform.kz

Dinara Saduakassova (R).

Astana’s Diplomatic Christmas Charity Bazaar helps local people, bringing cultures together

By Saltanat Boteu

ASTANA – The 11th annual Diplomatic Christmas Charity Bazaar will take place Dec. 2 at the Astana Radisson Hotel.

The event raises money for children and adults with physical and mental challenges, poor families and orphanages. It also allows dozens of embassies to showcase the culture and products of their countries. Forty-six embassies, charity organisations and schools will participate in this year’s bazaar. Sixteen bazaar tables will be reserved for schools and organisations.

“Mainly there are embassies, but there are also some tables for international schools who can present themselves, (school) children can produce something and sell it. Also, some organisations like the Kazakh National Women Council participate. They also contact many charities and sell items from them. Sometimes there are some commercial stands, which have to pay (for participation). This year, we have a commercial stand that will give a very precious prize for the raffle,” Ambassadors’ Spouses Association (ASA) Chair and the Swiss Ambassador’s spouse Luzia Sebesta Schmid told the Astana Times in a recent interview with



L-R: Ambassadors’ Spouses Association (ASA) Charity Committee Chair and the Finnish Ambassador’s spouse Maria Kivikoski, UN Resident Coordinator’s spouse Hitomi Shimomura, ASA Chair and the Swiss Ambassador’s spouse Luzia Sebesta Schmid, Iraqi Ambassador’s spouse Boushra Al-Zubaidi, and Diana Khrystych, spouse of Deputy Ambassador of Ukraine.

multiple ASA members. The ASA organises the event each year.

The bazaar will feature the annual tombola lottery and a raffle, among other activities. The raffle lottery features baskets donated by each embassy with products from their countries, such as wine and chocolate.

The food and other products are as close to their origins as possible which means the products for

cooking are brought from the country of origin and cooked by the representatives of the countries.

“In Switzerland, we always have raclette. This is melted cheese. We have two machines to melt it, we put potatoes, so you [can] have fresh raclette,” said Schmid.

“Tombola is a gift from each embassy. This year, it’s 46 embassies, which means 460 gifts from all embassies. The ticket for tom-

bola is about 500 tenge (US\$1.3). This year, we will give a chocolate for each of those who didn’t have a chance to win (as a consolation prize),” said the Iraqi Ambassador’s spouse Boushra Al-Zubaidi who oversees tombola lottery.

The grand prize of this year’s raffle will be a Lada car donated by the Russian Embassy. Other prizes include paintings, Italian brand clothes, flight tickets from Air Asta-

na and fur clothes. Raffle tickets will cost 1,000 tenge (US\$2.7) and will be on sale in the Radisson Hotel lobby Nov. 19-21 from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. and during the bazaar.

In addition to raising money for charity, the annual event showcases multiple cultures in one place through the participation of embassies in Astana.

“Being in Kazakhstan, not going abroad, people can buy souvenirs from different countries,” said ASA member and UN Resident Coordinator’s spouse Hitomi Shimomura.

“It’s our way to present our countries to Kazakh people,” added Al-Zubaidi.

“It’s also good to know the other people... This is the possibility to see each other more often, get together to know other countries, cultures and ideas,” added Schmid.

For the organisers, the event holds a special meaning.

“I was there at 9/11, in the building... the day of the terrorist attack. I evacuated from the building. That time, I felt the impact of anger and hatred and, ever since, I have been thinking about it. Therefore, it is very nice to get together with all different people for the same goal. It has been 17 years, every time I think why that happened... We can be powerful as well, to seek peace and to be united. This is a very good opportunity for me and all of

us... It’s good to think what I can do,” said Shimomura.

Ultimately said the organisers, the most important aspect of the event is the good the bazaar does for the community.

“We support different organisations and individuals. Usually the organisations help disabled people, (including) children with difficulties, from poor families (and) – orphanages. Any kind of people who are in need of basic needs, such as food, clothing or medicine, some special equipment for disabled people. ...We have our own rules. We make sure that the money goes where it’s meant to and that it’s really helping people. Also, we make visits, before and after the bazaar. Mostly after the bazaar, we make many visits to see the projects that they are doing with our funds. We make sure that the money helps people in Kazakhstan, all over the country,” said Charity Committee Chair and the Finnish Ambassador’s spouse Maria Kivikoski.

And though they say, the bazaar takes a lot of time and effort to organise, they are happy to do it.

“It’s a lot of work, but it’s a lot of fun also. Everything is for the good. It is absolutely worth it,” said Kivikoski.

The organisation will be accepting additional sponsors for the event until Nov. 20.

Employment Centre to provide grants to create jobs for persons with physical challenges

By Dilshat Zhussupova

ASTANA – The city of Astana plans to distribute state-funded grants to employers who create jobs for and employ persons with physical challenges, reports the city akimat (administration).

These persons include individuals with persistent health impairments of body functions resulting from diseases, defects or trauma and its consequences.

The Astana Employment Centre will provide 280,000 tenge (US\$751.73) state grants to entrepreneurs who provide employment opportunities for persons with disabilities. Grants will not be issued for temporary job creation.

“These funds are to create special workplaces for persons with disabilities who have musculo-

skeletal disorders, including those in wheelchairs. The equipment to be provided for persons with disabilities include tables and chairs with height and angle adjustment, computers, footrests, walking aids and devices for grasping and holding objects,” said an employment centre representative.

Special workplaces are those equipped in accordance with persons with disabilities’ needs. For instance, a workplace for persons with hearing impairments, including those with complete hearing loss, will be provided with appropriate lighting, flashing lights in case of danger or evacuation and sound-to-light conversion equipment.

To receive subsidies, businesspersons may register at www.enbek.kz and submit an electronic application form, a state registration certificate copy and an equip-

ment cost estimate to the city’s employment centre. Inquiries may be made at +7 7172 95 44 21.

According to a 2016 report by the Kazakh Ministry of National Economy’s Committee on Statistics, 651,924 persons with disabilities were registered across the country and comprise approximately 4 percent of the total population, most of whom reside in Astana. The 2017 Ministry of Labour and Social Protection report found that 17,963 persons with disabilities were employed across the country, 608 of whom were working in Astana. Low employment levels are an acute problem because these groups miss out on social integration, self-affirmation and financial independence.

Kazakhstan’s measures include the 2012-2018 National Plan for Ensuring the Rights and Improv-

ing the Quality of Life of Persons with Disabilities, which focused on enhancing their rights. Four thousand six hundred persons with disabilities were employed in permanent positions and 1,300 were employed in temporary jobs as part of its Employment Road Map 2020 programme.

To enhance their competitiveness in the labour market and engagement in entrepreneurship, 280 persons with disabilities have completed professional training, 491 have received micro credits and 156 opened their own businesses. In 2011, an inventory of existing public facilities and transport infrastructure was conducted to determine which would be subject for adaptation for persons with disabilities, and approved regional plans for adaptation are posted annually on www.enbek.kz.

Astana plant produces innovative street light stanchions



Photo credit: inform.kz

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – Maxvidl, which manufactures industrial fibreglass items, has begun making street light stanchions. The company, which outfitted its capital plant with up-to-date equipment, will be investing more than 1 billion tenge (US\$2.7 million) in production.

“Our company’s products have several advantages in comparison with iron and reinforced concrete street lighting stanchions. They are durable, time-proof and non-corrosive. They are lightweight, which gives savings in transportation and installation, and are resistant to chemicals,” said director Askhat Rakhimov.

Production capacity is more than 10,000 street light stanchions per year, according to the city akimat (administration) press service. Incorporating European technology, the plant makes them using the winding method, which helps achieve high quality.

The unique nature of the equipment also lies in its versatility. It can be used not only to produce urban lighting stanchions, but also massive foundations for electricity lines and any fibreglass products with a rounded shape and diameter up to 1,200 mm, such as pipes and tanks widely used in various industries, from housing and utilities to oil and gas.

“The investments of Maxvidl in Astana became a thoughtful

and long-term step aimed at developing the company’s business, thanks to the preferences provided by the city administration and a state grant. We are negotiating with Kazakhstan’s road-building companies, housing and public utilities departments in the city administration, with companies working in engineering utility networks and sewage systems. We are negotiating with large construction companies in Russia as well,” said Rakhimov.

The fibreglass stanchions will replace the current galvanised and concrete poles. The work is the result of a joint project between Maxvidl and Mashspetsstroj, a Russian developer and manufacturer.

Yerlan Bekmurzayev, deputy director of the capital’s Department for Investment and Entrepreneurship Development, highlighted the cost-effectiveness and innovation of the operation.

“A unique production is opening in our city – a plant for the production of lighting stanchions made of composite materials. We haven’t had such a plant in Kazakhstan before. About 10,000 stanchions will be produced at the plant per year. The company’s management plans to further export to foreign markets,” he said.

The plant provides jobs for 40, with plans to expand. The city administration is supporting Maxvidl with a free land plot in its free economic zone.

Government approves draft roadmap to ensure domestic food supply to city

By Dilshat Zhussupova

ASTANA – Government officials approved Nov. 6 a 2018-2021 roadmap draft to ensure a domestic food supply for the nation’s capital.

Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev directed the Ministry of Agriculture to develop the stable supply of domestic food products to Astana, for which a two-year road map was initially drawn out.

The 2017-2018 road map for Astana’s food belt spanned 17 districts of the Akmola region and four districts of the Karaganda region, said First Vice Minister of Agriculture Arman Evniyev.

Thirty-six milk stations, 56 feeding grounds and one meat processing plant were set up in the Akmola region in 2017. In 2018, 19,400 tonnes of meat, 1,500 tonnes of sausage products, 41,600 tonnes of processed milk, 601 tonnes of butter and 651 tonnes of cheese and cottage cheese were produced.

In the Karaganda region, 38 feeding grounds and 12 meat processing plants were set up in 2017 and eight milk stations were created in 2018. This year, 10,700 tonnes of meat, 3,500 tonnes of sausage products, 9,500 tonnes of processed milk, 368 tonnes of butter and 1,243 tonnes of cheese and cottage cheese were produced.

Evniyev also reported that 92 projects within 50 kilometres of Astana were identified and implemented, which the Ministry of

Agriculture’s project office monitored on a weekly basis.

The 2018-2021 draft roadmap centres on developing production within the food belt zone, ensuring a stable supply of food products from other regions that are not feasible to produce within this zone, building trade and logistics infrastructure and implementing protections against unsafe products.

At the meeting, Prime Minister Bakytzhan Sagintayev specified areas of improvement regarding the draft roadmap.

Although the roadmap addresses food availability, the prices at which products reach the final consumer must not be overlooked. The agriculture and national economy ministries and city akimats (administration) are to keep the food belts’ prices under special control.

In addition, more than 20 measures on Astana’s stable food supply were put forward in the updated road map, for which the ministries and city akimats are to establish performance indicators to assess efficacy. Also, construction of Astana’s wholesale distribution centre is to continue at a quicker pace, according to the latest roadmap.

