



President of Iran Advances Economic Ties on Visit to Astana



President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev (l) and President of the Islamic Republic of Iran Hassan Rouhani in Astana on Sept. 9.

By Malika Orazgaliyeva

ASTANA – President of the Islamic Republic of Iran Hassan Rouhani paid an official visit to Kazakhstan on Sept. 9 to meet with President Nursultan Naz-

arbayev. The parties negotiated avenues to develop and strengthen Kazakh-Iranian cooperation and oversaw the signing of a number of agreements.

During the meeting at the Akorda presidential residence, the two leaders focused on cooperation

in economic matters, energy, infrastructure development, agriculture and transport and transit. The heads of state also exchanged views on issues on the international agenda.

The Kazakh head of state noted that relations between his country

and Iran have evolved steadily and today cooperation between the two countries has great potential for development. He added that Kazakhstan considers Iran one of its most important partners, both in the world and in the Caspian region.

Continued on Page A8

UN General Assembly Renews Calls for Nuclear Test Ban

By Tolegen Issatayev

NEW YORK – Top UN leaders, ambassadors from dozens of countries and a delegation from East Kazakhstan renewed calls for a total ban on nuclear-weapons testing at a special session of the UN General Assembly observing the International Day Against Nuclear Tests on Sept. 10.

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, First Deputy Akim (Governor) of East Kazakhstan oblast Yermek Kosherbayev, UN High Representative for Disarmament Affairs Angela Kane, permanent representatives to the United Na-

tions, other officials and civil society activists participated in the event.

In 2009, the UN General Assembly unanimously passed a resolution proclaiming Aug. 29 International Day Against Nuclear Tests. Aug. 29 is the day in 1991 when the President of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev, shut down the Soviet nuclear test site at Semipalatinsk in eastern Kazakhstan by his decree. It also marks the date in 1949 that the Soviet Union tested its first nuclear weapon at the site, a test followed by 455 more over the following four decades.

Continued on Page A3

Kazakhstan, Qatar to Implement Joint Project to Help Nuclear Test Victims

By Artur Abubakirov

DOHA – Kanat Saudabayev, Director of the Nursultan Nazarbayev Foundation for Culture, Education and Social Programmes, and Dr. Ahmed bin Mohamed Al Murai-khi, Director General of the Qatar Development Fund, signed a memorandum of understanding and cooperation on Sept. 4 between the two foundations.

According to the document, the foundations will cooperate in such areas as culture, education, health-care and social development.

Saudabayev presented his counterpart with a project to construct a rehabilitation centre in Semey for victims of nuclear tests at the Semipalatinsk test site and those affected by radiation in one way or another.

Continued on Page B2

U.S., Kazakh Experts Call for Stronger Ties, U.S. Presidential Visit

By Daniel Massow

WASHINGTON, DC – Against the background of a changing geopolitical environment in Eurasia and the ongoing withdrawal of U.S. troops from Afghanistan, U.S. and Kazakh experts have called for more structured relations between Washington and Astana and a visit by the U.S. president to Kazakhstan as key measures needed to further strengthen the dynamically developing and wide-ranging partnership.

U.S. and Kazakh analysts addressed a high-level audience on Sept. 8 at Johns Hopkins University in Washington, D.C., to present the report, “Looking Forward: Kazakhstan and the United States.”

A team of six authors, three from the U.S. and three from Kazakhstan, prepared the report. Members of the team included Dr. S. Frederick Starr and Dr. Svante E. Cornell of the

Central Asia-Caucasus Institute at the School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) at Johns Hopkins University; S. Enders Wimbush of StrateVarious LLC; Professor Bulat Sultanov, director of the Kazakhstan Institute of Strategic Studies under the President of Kazakhstan; Dr. Askar Nursha of the Institute of World Economy and Politics; and Dr. Fatima Kukeyeva of Al-Farabi Kazakh National University.

During extensive discussions, the scholars set forth a number of specific measures to further strengthen mutually beneficial cooperation between Kazakhstan and the United States, including through increasing the number of high-level visits. Representatives of the U.S. State Department, top-level officials, public figures and experts, as well as representatives of major media sources, attended the launch of the report.

Continued on Page A8

Kazakhstan, EU Close to Completing Talks on New Partnership and Cooperation Agreement

By Malika Orazgaliyeva

ASTANA – Senior officials and diplomats from Kazakhstan and the European Union held what is expected to be the final round of negotiations on a new enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) between Kazakhstan and the EU in Astana from Sept. 9-12.

The PCA is meant to provide a framework for political dialogue between the parties, supporting the development of political relations, trade and investment ties in order to foster sustainable economic development. It also provides the basis for legislative, economic, social, financial, civil, scientific,

technological and cultural cooperation.

“We have 29 areas of cooperation, including such important chapters as economy, trade and investments. The agreement does not mean a free trade area, but nevertheless, it is a substantial update for the economic relations of Kazakhstan and the European Union,” Gunnar Wiegand, the European External Action Service (EEAS) director for Eastern Partnership, Russia, Central Asia Regional Cooperation and Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) countries, told the media following the talks in Kazakhstan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs. “In addition, European Union companies are the largest

trade investors in Kazakhstan,” he said.

Participants in this eighth round of negotiations noted that major work in the negotiating process had brought good results.

A key element of the new agreement, according to Kazakh Foreign Minister Erlan Idrissov, is a modernised trade and investment section that takes into account the development of the Customs Union and the Eurasian Economic Union, as well as Kazakhstan’s eventual accession to the World Trade Organisation (WTO).

“The new agreement will be comprehensive. It will reflect the existing mature and equal partnership between Kazakhstan and the EU, based not only on common

interests, but also on shared values, on mutual understanding, mutual respect and mutual benefit. It should provide a solid basis for taking Kazakhstan’s cooperation with the EU countries to a higher level,” Idrissov said on Sept. 10 at a meeting with Wiegand at the Foreign Ministry.

During the talks, Kazakhstan and the EU also agreed that in addition to the new agreement, which will form the legal basis for cooperation, “road maps” and sectoral agreements to deepen cooperation in specific areas might also be developed. Idrissov noted that Astana attaches particular importance to the development of cooperation in innovations, science, education and competitiveness.

Continued on Page A3

New Law on Rural Cooperation to be Finalised this Year

By Doszhan Nurgaliyev

On President Nursultan Nazarbayev’s instructions, the government of Kazakhstan will finalise a new law “On Rural Cooperation” this year. The bill will provide the legal framework for governing ag-

ricultural activities in the country. Kazakhstan’s agricultural industry is currently very underdeveloped despite the country’s vast amounts of arable land, quality production facilities, strong workforce, ample state support and deep resources.

Continued on Page A4

Promoting Dialogue of Religions When It Is Needed Most



Ever since Kazakhstan convened the first Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions in 2003, the country has been pushing forward with promoting this new format of dialogue of religious leaders. In 2006, 2009 and 2012 it hosted the subsequent congresses and is now preparing for the fifth one in 2015. To do that, the Secretariat of the Congress has been meeting regularly and its next session is now due to take place at the Palace of Peace and Harmony on Sept. 17-18. To learn more of the work of the Congress and of the views of its participants from various religions, read our special report “Dialogue of Civilisations” on Pages B4-B5.

INSIDE

EURASIA & WORLD

In Astana, Canadian MP Sees Great Opportunities for Investment and Partnership A3

ECONOMY & BUSINESS

U.S. Congressmen Want Ties with Kazakhstan Strengthened A4
Pavlodar Hosts EBRD Workshop on Benefits of Consulting for Entrepreneurs A5

EDITORIAL

Staying Competitive in a Toughening External Environment A6

OPINIONS

IDRISSOV: Of Land- and Sea-Lockedness, and the Pursuit of Happiness A6
AMANZHOLOVA: Kazakhstan Optimistic about Progress at Upcoming Caspian Summit A7

NATION & CAPITAL

“Birzhan-Sara” to be Performed at Silk Road Festival B1
New Talent-Management Principle Seeks to Train More Effective Civil Servants B1

NATION

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 2014

President Nazarbayev Opens New Session of Parliament, Lays Out New Priorities

By Zhanara Abdulova and Malika Orazgaliyeva

ASTANA – President Nursultan Nazarbayev delivered a statement at the opening of the fourth session of the Kazakh Parliament's fifth convocation on Sept. 2, laying out new priorities for the next year and saying the focus should be on preventing possible negative challenges to the national economy and security.

In his remarks, Nazarbayev said the new session starts against the backdrop of global economic uncertainty and deepening geopolitical risks, including those related to aggravated international relations over the situation in Ukraine. "Reciprocal sanctions imposed by countries responsible for a total of 60 percent of the global GDP bring substantial adjustments and changes to long-established economic ties. This leads to a slowdown of partner economies and has a certain effect on us," he noted.

"It is of paramount importance to prevent any possible negative challenges to the national economy, people's welfare and the country's security. To effectively take advantage of the current opportunities, the parliament and the government should [coordinate] their efforts. One of the major goals is to ensure Kazakhstan enters the top 30 most developed countries of the world," he said.

"To achieve that goal it is necessary to continue the administrative reform in order to create an effective system of governance with a professional and compact state apparatus. As you know, a decision has already been made on the new structure of the government. The decree on delimitation of powers between various levels of government has already been implemented," Nazarbayev noted.

The President mentioned six major fields that require serious structural reforms and appropriate legal provisions. In particular, these involve the adoption of the new entrepreneurial code and civil code and further development of arbitration legislation that would work in compliance with the existing international standards.

Along with that, the President stressed that it is necessary to



The session of the Parliament of Kazakhstan addressed by President Nursultan Nazarbayev.

simplify the provision of public services to citizens and businesses through the development of e-government.

"I instruct the government to integrate all existing government systems and databases into an e-government platform until 2017. We should further simplify the registration process for legal entities. I task the government to widen the use of a single window principle for investors, beginning January 1, 2016. For those investors who have signed investment agreements in the priority fields this principle should be applicable beginning January 1, 2015."

The head of state noted that the fourth goal is to reduce the number of permissions procedures by 50 percent.

"Fifth, we need to simplify our customs procedures. Until the end of this year, in order to support domestic exporters, the government should develop measures to reduce the cost of transporting goods and reduce the time of customs clearance. I task the government to initiate changes in the Customs Union agreement on common principles and rules of technical regulation for international recognition of certificates of conformity. This will significantly reduce expenses for our business circles," Nazarbayev said.

According to the President, another important draft law should deal with the problems people face in their everyday life. "It is necessary to revise the legislation to narrow the requirements for notarising documents. The government should take into account this aspect while working on the draft law to improve the business environment. I instruct the government to submit a draft law to parliament in September of this year," Nazarbayev said.

The head of state also noted that there are a number of reforms in the legal field aimed at effectively fighting corruption. However, it is not enough, he said. Nazarbayev tasked the government to introduce an anti-corruption strategy through 2025 before the end of the year.

"The state should create condi-

tions under which it will be impossible to use official powers for personal gain," he said.

According to Nazarbayev, the highest risks of corruption remain in the field of public procurement. To solve the problems of entrepreneurs and reduce the risks of corruption, he asked the government to develop and submit the new edition of a draft law on public procurement to parliament.

Addressing the session, the President stressed that there are a number of priority draft laws that should be considered by parliament. These include a draft law on mineral resources, which will provide a significant simplification of procedures for obtaining the right of subsoil use, reduction of administrative barriers and transparency in decision-making.

The President paid particular at-

tention to the development of the agro-industrial complex. In his words, the development of agriculture requires legislative support. He said that the government has developed a unit change in the tax laws to increase productivity in the agricultural sector. Nazarbayev instructed the Mazhilis (lower house of parliament) to develop a draft law on agricultural cooperation before the end of the year and submit it to parliament.

The President also asked the members of parliament to carefully approach the issue of improving management in academic education institutions.

As a fourth priority, Nazarbayev instructed the government to provide a draft law on education in September which foresees the mandatory internship in enterprises. Nazarbayev also drew the deputies' attention to the draft law on migration and instructed parliamentarians to prepare an appropriate draft bill before the end of this year.

"Today we are implementing the Kazakhstan 2050 Strategy, which is a crucial phase in our development. The fourth session has its own specific features, as the Senate deputies elected in October 2008 are completing their terms in office. The election of new members is scheduled for October 1," the head of state concluded.

Prime Minister Karim Massimov, members of the government, Secretary of State Adilbek Zhaksybekov, Chairman of the Supreme Court Kairat Mami and Chairman of the Constitutional Council Igor Rogov attended the session.

At the end of the session, the new members of parliament took an oath, making a pledge to serve decently in their new positions.

NATIONAL NEWS IN BRIEF

"A national council for literature and art and an intersectoral arts council will soon be established," said Vice Minister of Culture and Sport Askar Buribayev at a Sept. 10 briefing following a government meeting. "In hoping to transform the industry, we will set up a national council on art and literature, as well as arts councils. The national council will be the main advisory body for cultural policy," he said. According to him, the most significant provisions of Kazakhstan's cultural policy are the seven main components of "Zheti Kazyna," including heritage, traditions, customs, language, family, the economic system and holidays. The plan also entails the development of creative and cultural tourism clusters.

The public council for law enforcement of the General Prosecutor's Office of Kazakhstan held a meeting at the Kazakh Defence Ministry on Sept. 11. The meeting was attended by members of parliament, representatives of the Prosecutor's Office, the Ministry of Defence, the Council of Veterans of the Armed Forces, the Internal Forces of the Defence Ministry and various prosecutor's offices. Head of the administrative department of the Defence Ministry of Kazakhstan Rakhat Bekkadamov discussed how the armed forces have been dealing with requests from the public. According to him, the majority of requests submitted to the military regard the draft, military service and social aspects of military life. The number of written applications decreased due to an increase in the number of requests submitted via the defence minister's blog and local military authorities. As the head of the department said, all the requests and applications are registered and considered in a timely fashion during the specified time frame. In addressing attendees, member of the Mazhilis (lower chamber of parliament) and Chairman of the Public Council for Law Enforcement Abai Tasbulatov talked about improving consideration procedures for appeals and requests and hastening how quickly submissions are considered and returned. Summing up the meeting,

According to the Ministry of National Economy's statistics, as of Aug. 1 the population of Kazakhstan reached 17.3 million people, increasing 0.9 percent since the beginning of the year.

"It is necessary to continue structural reforms in accordance with the best international practices if Kazakhstan is to join the ranks of the 30 most-developed countries," said Deputy of the Senate of Kazakhstan Serik Akylbai at a Sept. 11 Central Communications Service (CCS) media briefing. According to Akylbai, it is necessary to finish adopting new entrepreneurship and civil procedure codes. "As you know, a code is a systematized act uniting all norms of a particular sphere of law. It is a set of rules and principles united by a common subject, the type of public relations. The issues regarding development and support for business will be regulated by the code, which, unlike the other laws, has greater legal force," Akylbai said. The adoption of the civil procedure code is important as well. The code, according to the senator, will regulate important public relations, emerging during the administration of justice by the courts.

"Neurosurgery has greatly improved in Kazakhstan," Honorary President of the World Federation of Neurosurgical Societies Alexander Kononov said at a Sept. 10 media briefing. The 10th Asian Congress of Neurosurgeons is currently ongoing in Astana. Leading surgeons from 50 countries are taking part in the event. Speaking at the meeting, Kononov said that he remembered when neurosurgery first came to Kazakhstan. "It began in Almaty. There were several departments in the city. Many years have passed since that time. Drastic improvements have taken place in the quality and scope of Kazakhstan's neurosurgery capabilities over the past six years. I am confident that Kazakhstan's neurosurgery capacity is world class and now many diseases can be cured in your centres," he said.

Cambridge Professor Suggests Cooperation on Seismology Programme

By Julia Rutz

Almaty Akim (Mayor) Akhmetzhan Yessimov met with renowned scientist, professor of the Department of Earth Science and head of Bullard Laboratories at the University of Cambridge James Jackson on Sept. 3 to discuss cooperation between Kazakh and British scientists on seismology.

"We would like to work with local scientists on analysing earthquakes. Apart from traditional seismology, we have experience in geological research conducted with the help of space technology. We also would like to train young Kazakhstan scientists capable of participating in our future joint projects to exchange information and experience. I am sure that Kazakhstan can become a leader in seismology efforts," Jackson said.

The Cambridge professor also noted that contemporary science cannot predict earthquakes. The main prevention measure is the construction of earthquake-proof buildings, as well as raising public

awareness about how to respond to earthquakes.

During the meeting, holding a global conference on seismology under the aegis of the University of Cambridge, the University of Oxford and UNESCO in Almaty next year was suggested. The initiative was supported by the Almaty mayor, who also expressed his belief in the need for additional cooperation between local and foreign scientists in this sphere.

Almaty is already working on seismology matters with UNESCO. A UNESCO international conference and a seminar on seismology took place in Almaty in May. It was one of the largest seminars of its type to ever be held in the Commonwealth of Independent States.

Almaty has become a centre for earthquake research because of its location in a seismic zone. The city administration is constantly financing measures to earthquake-proof the city, especially schools and hospitals. New buildings must meet earthquake-related building standards. Moreover, a map of seismic micro-zones was recently renewed.

KAZAKHSTAN
UNITED FOR GLOBAL SECURITY

The Republic of Kazakhstan is seeking a seat on the United Nations Security Council as a non-permanent member for 2017-2018. Our priorities within the United Nations reflect four primary issues facing the world today: Food Security, Water Security, Energy Security and Nuclear Security.

In the 22 years since our independence, Kazakhstan has worked tirelessly to address these issues in our own country and beyond. Among many other initiatives and achievements, Kazakhstan is currently:

- ▶ ONE OF THE WORLD'S LARGEST GRAIN PRODUCERS AND WHEAT EXPORTERS. WE HAVE DISTRIBUTED WHEAT AND FOOD TO NATIONS IN NEED.
- ▶ A CONSTRUCTIVE INNOVATOR IN WATER SECURITY COOPERATION AND TECHNOLOGIES. WE HAVE MADE GREAT STRIDES IN THE RESTORATION OF THE ARAL SEA.
- ▶ AN ACTIVE SUPPORTER OF DEVELOPING A GREEN ECONOMY AND ALTERNATIVE ENERGY SOURCES THROUGH OUR GREEN BRIDGE INITIATIVE AND AS HOSTS OF EXPO 2017, THEME OF WHICH IS "FUTURE ENERGY".
- ▶ A GLOBAL LEADER IN NUCLEAR NONPROLIFERATION, DISARMAMENT AND SECURITY. AN INITIATOR OF ADOPTING A UNITED NATIONS DECLARATION ON A NUCLEAR-WEAPON-FREE WORLD AND A SPONSOR OF THE ATOM PROJECT, A WORLDWIDE PETITION CAMPAIGN TO PERMANENTLY END NUCLEAR WEAPONS TESTING.

These issues are complex and interdependent. They require global cooperation and relationship building. Kazakhstan has come a long way in a short time because we know that cooperation is the key to success. We are dedicated to knowledge and resource sharing in order to help make the world a better, more secure place for its citizens.

The achievement and maintenance of international peace and global security are paramount to the success of the planet and its people. In Kazakhstan, we are ready to do our part to ensure that success as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council.

EURASIA&WORLD

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 2014

EXTERNAL NEWS IN BRIEF

The United States and Kazakhstan are deepening their partnership in the fight against nuclear smuggling. A multiagency delegation of U.S. officials met with their Kazakh counterparts in Astana on Sept. 8 and 9 to advance U.S.-Kazakhstan mutual efforts to counter nuclear smuggling, a goal both countries have highlighted at the Nuclear Security Summits in Seoul and The Hague. The meeting provided an opportunity to deepen the ongoing bilateral partnership in this area under the U.S.-Kazakhstan communiqué on improving Kazakhstan's capabilities in combating nuclear smuggling, which the two countries signed in 2006. During the meeting in Astana, the sides agreed to cooperate more closely in Kazakhstan's effort to develop a training curriculum on illicit trafficking at the Nuclear Security Training Centre, an initiative that President Nursultan Nazarbayev announced at the 2012 Nuclear Security Summit in Seoul. Specifically, U.S. and Kazakhstan officials discussed how to use ongoing and proposed training opportunities at the centre to strengthen national competencies in nuclear forensics, radiation detection and law enforcement investigations. In addition, the governments reviewed overall progress in implementing the 2006 communiqué across a broad range of cooperative activities to work with Kazakhstan to prevent, detect and respond to nuclear and radiological material trafficking incidents.

The armies of Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) member states participated in the CIS Armies Championship, which began on Sept. 12 in Astana. The championship includes service pistol shooting and an officers' triathlon. Opening the event, Major General Mukan Dyussenov called the event symbolic for the sports and military life of CIS member states' armies. "These events serve as a bridge between CIS member states," Dyussenov said, adding that applied military sports, including service pistol shooting and the officers' triathlon incorporate the fundamentals of officership into sport. He wished all participants the best of luck in life and in their athletic endeavors. The head of the sports committee under the Council of the Defence Ministers of the CIS, Colonel Yerlan Talasbayev, addressed the participants. Servicemen representing the armies of Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Kazakhstan competed in service pistol shooting and the officers' triathlon. The purpose of the championship is to strengthen friendship and develop cooperation between the armies of the CIS states through sport, promote sport amongst servicemen and increase their professionalism. It should be noted that these events are also aimed at promoting sports and exchanging experience in training for world military athletics competitions. The championship lasted until Sept. 13.

"Economic growth and an impressive growth in neurosurgery capabilities in Kazakhstan are why Astana was chosen as the venue for the 10th Asian Congress of Neurological Surgeons," Chairman of the Board of the National Scientific Centre of Neurosurgery Serik Aksholakov noted during a Sept. 10 briefing at the Central Communications Service (CCS). "I believe that today, the economic growth seen in Kazakhstan makes Astana an attractive host city for such an event. The increase in neurosurgery capabilities in Kazakhstan has become enough of a reason to choose Astana," Aksholakov said. The 10th Asian Congress of Neurological Surgeons was held in Astana from Sept. 9 to 12. "If we talk about the scale and significance of this congress, more than 700 participants from 50 countries were involved. This proves the importance of the congress. Astana has become a global platform for the discussion of neurosurgery," the head of the Neurosurgery Centre said. The Asian Congress of Neurological Surgeons was founded in 1993 in Japan. It is held once every two years. Previously, the congress was held in China, India, Indonesia, Malaysia and Turkey.

In Astana, Canadian MP Sees Great Opportunities for Investment and Partnership

By Zhanara Abdulova

ASTANA – A Canadian parliamentary delegation led by Leon Benoit, co-chair of the Kazakhstan-Canada Friendship Group and Chairman of the Committee on Natural Resources of the House of Commons, visited Astana on Sept. 10. During the visit, which also took the Canadian delegation to Almaty, the Canadian parliamentarians also met with Chairman of the Senate Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, Chairman of the Mazhilis Kabibulla Dzhakupov and Foreign Minister Erlan Idrissov to discuss bilateral cooperation in a wide range of areas.

Following their meetings, Leon Benoit shared his vision of Kazakhstan-Canadian relations in an interview with The Astana Times. The head of the Canadian delegation emphasised that Kazakhstan and Canada have strong diplomatic ties and share many common interests, which suggests huge potential for further development of cooperation in a number of areas.

What are your first impressions of Kazakhstan and your assessment of the preliminary results of your visit?

Kazakhstan is a beautiful place to come. I am so impressed with the cities, the landscape and people. There are some obvious areas where Canada can expand partnership with Kazakhstan. To me, the obvious ones are agriculture, production, processing and other value-added sectors in agriculture. In agriculture, an opportunity lies in stock breeding, animal genetics. Actually that's happening now but that could be expanded way



Leon Benoit

beyond what it is. Another area is mining, of course. There really are opportunities across all sectors of economy. I guess what will determine more than anything else how fast this happens will be things like a regulatory system you could rely on, security in investment, so that companies are confident that their investments would be secure. Another is skilled workers. Some of the very top technical people would come from Canada but others would be counting on having people trained here. These are the things that companies need. There is no doubt that Kazakhstan has made a lot of progress in all of these areas and as we've been told it seems there are still ways to go. But that doesn't mean that Canada can't continue to increase its investment and partnership with Kazakhstan. I also believe that a terrific tourism industry should be developed in Kazakhstan because this is truly a gorgeous country and it should be a prime target for tourism.

How did the idea of the Kazakhstan-Canada Friendship Group come about?

Well, I initiated an idea on the Canadian side, but quite frankly your

ambassador to Canada, Konstantin Zhigalov, is very active; he is an excellent ambassador and an excellent representative. He talked to me on several occasions. I would say he was the one who encouraged us to make the group more active and then come visit Kazakhstan. And I accepted his offer immediately.

Parliamentary cooperation can be bilateral, but it can also be multilateral. The first thing that comes to mind is the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly. How do Kazakhstan and Canada cooperate under the auspices of such multilateral parliamentary organisations?

I have been a member of Canadian NATO Parliamentary Assembly delegation for some time. We do have 35 observer countries to NATO PA as well [Kazakhstan has the status of Parliamentary Observer in the NATO PA]. But there are many other groups where Kazakhstan and Canada can cooperate. I would stress that just very few years ago, probably there was very little knowledge of each other, but over the past couple of years in particular there's been a real focus on Kazakhstan. We've seen four ministerial visits in the last two years or so. That shows a real interest and we had several delegations from Kazakhstan visit Canada with different business interests in mind. In summary, I would say that the relationship between Kazakhstan and Canada is at the early stages but that it is growing rapidly now. I think we are going to see great things in the years ahead.

You pointed out the importance of tourism. For a Kazakh national, getting a Canadian visa is quite an issue, as we have to go

to Moscow to obtain it. What are your plans in this field?

The first thing is that there are delegations that can get visas here in Kazakhstan, but generally that's right. The embassy that issues visas is in Moscow right now. And these are issues that have been brought to our ministers' attention by your ministers. I was aware of them before. I think parliamentarians may help to move along these issues. I know the Canadian ambassador to Kazakhstan really wants to see the visa process sped up – so do I – and I will talk to the appropriate ministers about it. In Canada, we have two MPs sitting at each desk and my desk mate is the immigration minister. That certainly is an ample opportunity to talk to him on this issue. We have seen a lot of very positive reactions to small groups of MPs promoting issues like this. Our government is very responsive in this. I'm hoping we can do something about it, which will cost more money, but the payoff will be a stronger relationship and more trade, better business.

Another important issue for Kazakhstan is Canadian peacekeeping experience. In this area, Canada is one of the global leaders and has a long and proud history of peacekeeping. Kazakhstan has just made a decision to send twenty peacekeepers to various hot spots. Can Canada share its peacekeeping experience with Kazakhstan?

Absolutely. Canada is, first and foremost, a country that really wants peace. But the reality is that a strong army is required to make peace in most cases. Over the last 10 years we've improved the quality of our military dramatically

in terms of quality, numbers and equipment. We've spent tens of billions of dollars on new equipment and our soldiers now are among the best trained on Earth. Part of what makes them good in peacekeeping is when Canadian soldiers went to Afghanistan or to the Balkans, they worked with the local people much better than soldiers from most other countries. In fact, the Americans have learned a lot from Canada while in Afghanistan. Of course, the next step is the military training of people in various components of civil service, along with building a judicial system. Canada is involved in all of those things. I think we do have some expertise to share and we are happy to do that. But there's one thing that we won't do when it comes to peacekeeping. Never again will we put our men and women into a situation like we did in Africa and in the Balkans while cooperating under the United Nations rules. They have rules of engagement that are completely inappropriate for the situation. Our men and women can't stand there literally and watch women be raped and people be killed. The United Nations rules they are operating under allow them to do nothing. Eventually they just did it anyway but never again are we going to put our men and women at that kind of situation. We will continue offering services as requested as advisors and we will work with other countries, who have very professional armies and who operate under rules that are reasonable, and I am sure in the future we'll be working with Kazakhstan.

The full version of the interview is available online.

UN General Assembly Renews Calls for Nuclear Test Ban

Continued from Page A1

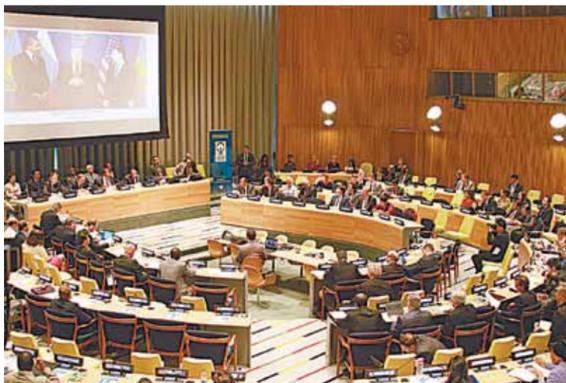
Addressing the audience, the UN Secretary-General emphasised the importance of observing the day and praised the vision and courage shown by President Nazarbayev through his decisions to shut down the Semipalatinsk nuclear test site and renounce the nuclear arsenal Kazakhstan had inherited from the collapsing Soviet Union. Ban Ki-moon also shared personal impressions from his visit to the former test site in April 2010, when, standing near the epicentre of the first atomic explosion there, he called on the international community to bring a halt to nuclear testing. "If anyone of you goes there, you will have the same feeling and commitment which I am calling for," he said.

Ban Ki-moon went on to urge more resolute action to achieve a world free of nuclear tests and nuclear weapons and specifically called on the states that have not yet signed or ratified the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) to do so without delay to make sure it enters into force as soon as possible.

In his remarks, Kosherbayev noted that Kazakhstan and President Nazarbayev made a most important contribution to the process of nuclear disarmament in the world. The world's largest nuclear test site was closed 23 years ago by the decree of Kazakhstan's head of state. The adoption of a resolution in 2009 declaring August 29 International Day Against Nuclear Tests has become the common contribution of the international community to reducing the global nuclear threat and implementing the CTBT, he said.

He also noted serious consequences of the nuclear tests for people in eastern Kazakhstan, as well as the ecological damage done to the unique and diverse region of the country where the tests took place. Kosherbayev noted that the government of Kazakhstan has allocated more than \$600 million for the rehabilitation of the region since 1999.

Kazakhstan is grateful to the international community for its assistance in overcoming the conse-



A special session of the UN General Assembly observing the International Day Against Nuclear Tests on Sept. 10.

quences of nuclear tests, including the human and ecological rehabilitation of the region, Kosherbayev said. He listed major donors such as Japan, Norway, Russia, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States, as well as regional organisations such as the European Union and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), and also noted assistance provided by aid agencies including the Canadian International Development Agency, the Korean International Cooperation Agency, the Red Crescent Society in Kazakhstan, UNICEF, USAID, the UNDP and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

According to the Kazakh official, Kazakhstan calls on the states upon whose actions the CTBT entry into force depends to sign and ratify this crucial document as soon as possible. This will become one of the key steps in the effective implementation of the Treaty on the Nonproliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the important document on which the security of all mankind rests.

A high-level interactive panel discussion on the theme "The Path to Global Zero" took place as part of the General Assembly session. Speakers included Angela Kane; Geoffrey Shaw, representative of the IAEA Director General; Permanent Representative of the Philippines to the UN Libran Cabactulan; Per-

manent Representative of Canada to the UN Guillermo Rishchinsky and representative of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom Felicity Ruby. Permanent Representative of Nigeria to the UN Joy Ogwu moderated the discussion.

The session covered President Nazarbayev's recent initiative, the ATOM Project, and its goal of galvanising global popular support for a full and complete legal ban on nuclear tests in the world and for the CTBT's entry into force. Delegations voiced support for the timely campaign, which aims to draw the attention of global leaders to the threats and consequences of nuclear-weapons tests.

The discussion provided an opportunity for UN member states and invited guests from civil institutions to exchange views on various issues of nuclear nonproliferation and the need for the international community to achieve the ultimate goal of a nuclear-weapons-free world. Calling for the CTBT to enter into force, delegations specifically stressed the need for its prompt signature and ratification by the states listed in Annex 2 of the treaty: China, Egypt, India, Iran, Israel, North Korea, Pakistan and the United States. The CTBT, already signed by 183 states and ratified by 163, can only enter into force after it is signed and ratified by these specific eight countries.

Kazakhstan, EU Close to Completing Talks on New Partnership and Cooperation Agreement

Continued from Page A1

At a Sept. 12 press briefing following their talks with Wiegand, Kazakh Deputy Foreign Minister Alexey Volkov said, "Today we completed the talks which have lasted for more than three years – since 2011. Negotiations were not simple. Since Kazakhstan is not a member of the European Union, our legal frameworks are considerably different, but this agreement will bring our legislations closer to a common denominator."

According to Volkov, the political and general parts of the negotiation process are completed, though a number of details remain to be solved in the working process, including the political, legal, technical and linguistic expertise of the PCA.

"Before the end of the year, we plan to come up with the final version of the agreement, which will be available for consideration by governments and parliaments in Kazakhstan and the European Union countries," Volkov said.

"This agreement is a modern and dynamic document that corresponds to the modern realities of the partners. Kazakhstan and EU countries have excellent relations. I want to thank the Kazakh team and Mr. Volkov for the excellent work that we have done together since 2011," Wiegand said. "We have completed the negotiations and believe there is no need to hold additional rounds as only a handful of issues remain unresolved. In the nearest future, we will finalise the text of the agreement."

The new agreement is a mutual acknowledgement of the growing interest in establishing closer, privileged and mutually beneficial cooperation in all spheres, which will create a favourable climate for the active participation of Euro-

pean businesses and investments in the development of Kazakhstan's economy, as well as open up new opportunities in various spheres.

At the press briefing, Wiegand commented on EU sanctions directed at Russia.

"We appreciate the efforts of Kazakhstan and a number of other countries for their contribution to de-escalating the crisis in Ukraine. The sanctions we directed at Russia... We do not have any direct and indirect sanctions on Kazakhstan, and we want to develop the full potential of our relations," he stressed.

Over the past few years, the EU has been the leading trade and investment partner for Kazakhstan. In 2013, trade turnover between the partners amounted to \$53.4 billion, and the volume of trade between Kazakhstan and the EU in the first half of 2014 was \$28.4 billion, 54.7 percent of the total foreign trade turnover of the country.

Meanwhile, 49 percent of the foreign capital in the economy of Kazakhstan has European origins. From 1993 through the first quarter of 2014, the inflow of direct investment from the EU to Kazakhstan amounted \$92.7 billion.

During the talks between Idrissov and Wiegand earlier in the week, Idrissov noted that the intensification of travel between Kazakhstan and EU countries and the growth of political, economic, commercial, cultural and business contacts between Astana and European capitals calls for the simplification of visa requirements. Idrissov stressed that Astana consistently works to facilitate visa regimes for citizens of Kazakhstan at the global level, especially in the Schengen Zone and Europe as a whole. He noted that the free movement of people is the key to further developing friendly relations.

ECONOMY

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 2014

U.S. Congressmen Want Ties with Kazakhstan Strengthened

By Malika Orazgaliyeva

ASTANA – President Nursultan Nazarbayev met with members of the United States Congress Dana Rohrabacher and Gregory Meeks on Sept. 5 in Borovoye, 250 kilometres north of the Kazakh capital.

During the meeting, the strategic nature of Kazakh-American relations was noted, as well as the dynamic progress of trade and economic cooperation. International issues were also discussed.

The U.S. congressmen expressed hope for the further strengthening of the mutually beneficial partnership between the two countries.

At a press briefing following the meeting, Rohrabacher noted that during the visit, members of Con-

gress held a number of important meetings.

“The people of the United States and other countries of the world should realise that Kazakhstan is now a significant player that will largely determine the contours of upcoming developments. In the future, Kazakhstan will have a significant impact on the processes of economic growth and, in this context, we discussed mutually beneficial cooperation between our countries,” Rohrabacher said.

He also noted that the desire of the Kazakh and American people to work together is due to the strategic goal of the United States to be a reliable partner of Kazakhstan.

“With this promise, we will return back to the [United States] House of Representatives and consider fur-

ther steps to develop our cooperation,” the congressman said.

In turn, Meeks discussed the intention of the American side to visit Kazakhstan together with the representatives of American business again in order to show an example of close and effective cooperation.

Also on Sept. 5, the U.S. congressmen had a meeting with Kazakh Foreign Minister Erlan Idrissov. With Idrissov, who spent five years as Kazakhstan’s ambassador in Washington, D.C., they discussed the current state and outlook for cooperation between Kazakhstan and the United States in politics, economic matters and trade.

The congressmen were accompanied by a delegation of business people, which included rep-

resentatives of such companies as Newport Convertible Engineering (innovative design and engineering solutions for international auto concerns), Aerospace (development and production of innovative modern airships), Oppenheimer Information (implementation of joint projects in the field of science and technology, technology transfer and innovation) and General Atomics (development of modular nuclear reactors).

The congressmen discussed the readiness jointly with U.S. businesses to offer shared projects in non-oil sectors of Kazakhstan economy.

The Americans also supported Kazakhstan’s accession to the WTO and the economic development strategy of the country. The two sides underlined their coop-

eration in global security issues, primarily in non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and regional security issues, including the situation in Afghanistan.

Earlier in Almaty, the congressmen had a meeting with members of the American Chamber of Commerce. Also on Sept. 3, they met with Mayor of Almaty Akhmetzhan Yessimov. During that meeting, Yessimov informed the visitors about his plans to visit New York City on Nov. 12 in the framework of the world premiere of the Almaty Symphony Orchestra headed by Marat Bissengaliyev.

Yessimov asked Meeks, who is from New York, for assistance in arranging his meeting with the mayor of New York City to study the experience of the management of urban resources and the establishment of direct links between the business communities of the two cities. The mayor said he was willing to include prominent business people from Almaty into the Kazakh delegation for the November trip.

ECONOMY NEWS IN BRIEF

The Sept. 11 government meeting chaired by Kazakh First Deputy Prime Minister Bakhytzhan Sagintayev included a discussion on the issues of attracting business in the organisation and operation of the international exhibition EXPO 2017. The meeting was attended by the heads of central government agencies and representatives of the National Chamber of Entrepreneurs. The meeting considered the action plan to attract business in the organisation and conduct EXPO 2017 and included elaboration by the Ministry of National Economy in cooperation with the National Chamber of Entrepreneurs. Following the discussion, Sagintayev instructed state agencies and the akimat (mayor’s office) of Astana to continue to work within the plan.

“In the context of Kazakhstan’s accession to the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) and World Trade Organisation (WTO), special attention should be paid to improving the competitiveness of Kazakh companies in international markets,” Kazakh Minister of National Economy Yerbolat Dossayev said on Sept. 10 after the meeting of the government. The minister noted the deterioration of Kazakhstan’s position in the international rankings compared to last year due to poor development in the field of technology and innovation. In particular, Kazakhstan moved down on the World Economic Forum’s (WEF) Global Competitiveness Report on such indicators as procurement of high-tech products, ability of companies to use modern technology, foreign direct investment and technology transfer and collaboration between universities and businesses in research and development. The limiting factor in institutional development is still a high level of corruption, Dossayev noted. “Kazakhstan moved down 15 places to 80th place on the informal payments and bribes indicator. According to WEF surveys, the areas most prone to corruption are the housing and utilities sector, judiciary system and customs procedures,” he said. According to him, low positions among the macroeconomic indicators at the end of 2013 were on the share of imports in the GDP, with a reduction from 22.8 percent to 21.8 percent, and average annual rate of inflation, with an increase from 5.1 percent to 5.8 percent. He noted that in order to improve Kazakhstan’s position in the international rankings in February, consideration must be given to the government-approved master plans to improve the republic’s competitiveness in five areas – macroeconomics, institutions, business, technology and innovation and human development.

“According to the World Economic Forum’s (WEF) Global Competitiveness Report, Kazakhstan maintains leading positions in the effectiveness of the labour market and macroeconomic environment,” Kazakh Minister of National Economy Yerbolat Dossayev said at a Sept. 10 briefing following the meeting of the government. “The leading factors in 2014 are labour market efficiency (15th place) and macroeconomic environment (27th place),” Dossayev noted. He also said that in the report, Kazakhstan retained 50th place out of 144 countries with an average score of 4.42 points (4.41 points and 50th place in 2013, 4.38 points and 51st place in 2012) and remained in the group of countries that are in transition from the second stage of effective development to the highest, third stage of innovation development. “The World Economic Forum ranks economies on the basis of 12 factors, in two of which Kazakhstan is among the top 30 countries,” the minister said.

“GDP growth in Kazakhstan was 4.1 percent for eight months of 2014,” Kazakh Minister of National Economy Yerbolat Dossayev noted at a Sept. 10 media briefing in the Central Communications Service (CCS) after a regular meeting of the government. “According to the forecast, for eight months this year the GDP amounted to 104.1 percent as compared to the beginning of the year,” he said. According to him, the physical index of industrial production for eight months was 99.9 percent. The growth was observed in agriculture (102.5 percent), construction (104.7 percent) and communications (109.7 percent). Growth of investment in fixed assets was up to 105.7 percent. Inflation over the past month was 0.4 percent; on an annualised basis, 5.4 percent.

New Law on Rural Cooperation to be Finalised this Year

Continued from Page A1

Since 1999, Kazakhstan’s GDP has increased by 16 times, but despite this remarkable growth, agriculture remains only a very small segment of the national economy. The share of the agricultural sector in GDP fell from 29.5 percent in 1991 to 4.6 percent in 2013. At the same time, during those two decades, Kazakhstan built a developed and urbanised economy, which transformed the country and its demography. Previously, agriculture was the country’s economic engine; today, this role is played by the service sector and industry, which reached 54.2 and 28.4 percent of GDP last year respectively.

Meanwhile, many of the development goals Kazakhstan hopes to achieve by 2050 pertain to growing the agricultural sector and dealing with the challenges such growth poses.

How to Overcome Major Problems

According to the official opinion of the representatives of the Ministry of Agriculture, one issue in agriculture is the low level of commodities caused by the presence of many small farms. According to 2012 data, about 78 percent of all livestock originated on private farms, agricultural corporations produced 12 percent and farms – 10 percent.

The situation is similar when it comes to crops; 27 percent of all crops are grown on household plots, 44 percent on farms. Agricultural enterprises grow 29 percent.

Kazakhstan is looking to development as a way to grow its agricultural sector into something more than a patchwork collection of small scale operations, which grew out of the country’s prolonged industrialisation. Change of this sort in the agricultural sector does not come quickly, but Kazakhstan has been addressing this issue for many years already. According to the heads of the Ministry of Agriculture, small rural farmers do not want to join cooperatives and villagers with plots have become disinterested in the programmes because of pervasive rumours about them. People tend to wait for top management to make decisions here, but with time, the agricultural sector will find its way.

As of Jan. 1, 1,463 rural consumer cooperatives, 498 rural water user cooperatives, 46 agricultural associations and 1,463 production cooperatives were registered in the country, which is less than 1 percent of the total number of the agricultural enterprises in Kazakhstan.

According to Ministry of Agriculture experts, among the main barriers to increasing rural cooperation is a lack of profit sharing in agricultural cooperatives, which are generally set up as nonprofit organisations. Excessive and confusing legal regulations were cited as a problem as well.

The lack of a specialised tax regime and no concessional lending policies for rural consumer coopera-

tives and agricultural water users associations, a lack of transparency in cooperatives, prevalent distrust and corruption in cooperatives are currently major issues. According to experts, this field is characterised by overregulation and excessive internal procedures, as well as the inability of entities to participate in cooperatives.

In order to address the above barriers, the Ministry of Agriculture drafted the bills “On Agricultural Cooperation” and “On Amendments and Additions to Certain Legislative Acts on Agricultural Cooperation.” These legal reforms include the creation of agricultural cooperatives by entities and individuals. The new legislative framework allows profit sharing and a special tax regime for agricultural cooperatives without restrictions.

In order to eliminate intra-cooperative issues, the legislation provides pro bono audits, as well as the introduction of the “one member – one vote” principle on a variety of subjects, including in setting prices.

Since Aug. 23, the Ministry of Agriculture has sent the above-mentioned bills for approval to the relevant state authorities, including the Ministry of Finance and the National Budget Commission.

According to developers, this legislation is designed to increase agricultural cooperation. New guidelines allow the benefits of cooperative farming in rural areas to be maximised. At the same time, they contain incentives for consolidation and integration of small producers into a single cell structure, including measures for the effective use of land resources, storage organisation, processing and sustainable marketing of products.

Integrating Principle

Speaking about contributing factors to increased agricultural production, experts often point to the need to develop intersectoral and inter-regional integration. Several years earlier, a special event in Ust-Kamenogorsk attended by delegations from East Kazakhstan, Almaty and the Pavlodar and Karaganda regions was held on the matter. Constituting 40 percent of the total area of the country, these areas provide nearly a quarter of the gross regional product of Kazakhstan and determine a fifth of the country’s foreign trade.

A draft food security programme was proposed at that forum. Attention was paid to the three types of agricultural products that are imported the most: fruits and vegetables, meat and milk.

Currently, vegetable processing in these four regions of the country does not exceed 4.2 percent of what is consumed. Meat is at 28 percent, milk 35 percent. For example, the production capacity of milk plants in the Almaty region allows the processing of up to 218,000 tonnes of milk per year, but only 45 percent of that capacity is realised. The lack of quality raw materials and sometimes excess materials which result in a reduction in prices, hurt small scale



agricultural producers. It was noted that a long-term partnership in supplying raw materials from the border region of the Karaganda and East Kazakhstan regions would allow enterprises in the Almaty region to improve self-sufficiency and increase dairy exports to 20 percent.

Integration and cooperation in the agricultural sectors of developed countries allow them to remain top international food producers. It is known that in these countries, multinational corporations play an important role in agriculture. They act as integrators

in the agricultural industry and help drive its destiny.

At the current time, the state is most capable of leading integration, not private business, although the latter does have a vested interest in creating local sustainable sources of raw materials.

BUSINESS

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 2014

BUSINESS NEWS IN BRIEF

“Twelve hundred new jobs will be created in the Aktobe region within the State Programme of Accelerated Industrial and Innovative Development (SPAID). This is going to be the result of implementing 10 projects of the state programme. They will allow for the creation of jobs in the region,” said Akim (Governor) of the Aktobe region Arkhimed Mukhambetov at a Sept. 12 Central Communications Service (CCS) media briefing. As he noted, the first five-year stage of the programme will be completed this year. “Presently, 76 investment projects in our region totaling 51 billion tenge (US\$280.3 million) are included in the Industrialisation Map. We have already implemented 70 projects in the last four years. They have allowed for the creation of 5,000 permanent jobs. There is a plan to implement not fewer than 10 projects amounting to 200 billion tenge (US\$1.1 billion) this year. They will allow for the creation of another 1,200 new jobs,” Mukhambetov noted. According to him, 14 priority factors that are to be considered during the second stage of implementation have been determined. “All the mistakes that were made during the implementation of the first five-year stage of the programme will not be made again,” he added.

“The Kazakh National Chamber of Entrepreneurs asks the Kazakh Food Corporation to announce the price for grain harvested this autumn,” Deputy Chairman of the Chamber Rakhim Oshakbayev said at a Sept. 11 media briefing. According to him, experts of the chamber have analysed the current situation at the grain market and believe that the fair price for third-class wheat this autumn should be at the level of 35,000 tenge (US\$192.37) per tonne. Moreover, the National Chamber considers it expedient to increase the presence of the state at the grain market by increasing the procurement of grain for the state reserves to the level of one million tonnes. In 2013, this indicator was at the level of 280,000 tonnes and the harvest equaled 20.8 million tonnes. Oshakbayev also suggested taking taxation aspects into consideration when setting the price for grain purchase from farms and LLPs. The National Chamber also requested differentiating the price for grain depending on the quality, i.e. set different prices for standard wheat and high-quality wheat.

“Our society has to be oriented to increasing the social status and gradual increase of the role of women in the economic sphere, especially in rural areas,” president of the Kazakh Association of Business Women Raushan Sarsembayeva said on Sept. 10. During the media briefing she also noted that the association, with the support of the Kazakh Ministry of Healthcare and Social Protection, launched a new project on awareness-building among women, with the purpose of increasing the level of women’s awareness about protection of rights in the social and labour sphere. “As a result of the project, 50 women from three regions who took part in the Employment Road Map 2020 and who opened their businesses will be selected for training,” Sarsembayeva added.

“In September 2014, [the] Samruk Kazyna [National Welfare Fund] plans to tender 14 companies. Presently, the procedure of evaluation of these assets is nearing completion,” Deputy Chairwoman of the Board of Samruk Kazyna Yelena Bakhmutova said at a Sept. 10 media briefing. According to her, the fund plans to tender nine companies entering Kazakhstan Temir Zholy, two companies entering Kazakhstan Engineering, one subsidiary company of KazMunayGas and two companies of the Samruk Kazyna fund. The assets of Kazakhstan Temir Zholy will be sold by means of electronic tender. Among the conditions of the tender will be preservation of the company’s profiles and jobs. The other assets are planned to be sold by means of electronic auction without any conditions. She also noted that the fund took the necessary measures to ensure maximum transparency of the process. Samruk Kazyna established a commission for the sale of assets and facilities of the fund consisting of parliament members and representatives of the Kazakh National Chamber of Entrepreneurs in order to ensure transparency of the privatisation process.

Chevron Provides Special Support for District Where It Builds Wind Park

By Andrei Cherepanov

In support of plans to develop the Samal Wind Park, 150 kilometres northeast of Astana, Chevron in partnership with the Ayala Charity Foundation, has donated equipment to schools, healthcare and social institutions in the town of Ereimentau in the Akmola oblast. The donations are part of Chevron’s social investment philosophy of supporting people in the communities where the U.S.-based company is active.

Chevron’s donations have included a fully equipped chemistry classroom and a sports area at two secondary schools; specialised medical equipment, including inhalation therapy, infant incubator, automated dipper and bed side monitors and gynecological examination equipment; mechanical wheelchairs, a hoist to lift people



In support of plans to develop the Samal Wind Park, 150 kilometres northeast of Astana, Chevron in partnership with the Ayala Charity Foundation, donated equipment to schools, healthcare and social institutions in Ereimentau, Akmola oblast.

with disabilities; and a large playground installed in the centre of the town for all Ereimentau children. “Investments in children are

long-term investments in the nation’s health,” said Gulbaram Sarsenbayeva, director of Ereimentau town’s Kazakh secondary school during the ceremony honoring Chevron’s social contributions. “Our school was established in 1958, but for the first time in our history, we have received professional chemistry equipment. With the help of this new class, we will train potential workers not only for national, but international companies.”

Since the early 1990s when Chevron began operations in Kazakhstan, the company has provided support to educational, medical and social institutions in the country.

“Under our social investment programme for Samal Wind Park,” noted project manager Kara Cox, “last year, we purchased an interactive whiteboard for each of 30

comprehensive secondary schools [in the Ereimentau district], procured state-of-the-art surgical operating room equipment and instruments for the Central District Hospital and also supplied 15 wheelchairs and special accessories to Ereimentau residents. We plan to continue this work in the future.”

For almost five years, Chevron has successfully partnered with the Ayala Foundation to implement social investment projects. Ayala is well known for large-scale charitable projects in Kazakhstan. The foundation focuses support on medical and educational institutions for children including, hospitals, polyclinics, maternity hospitals, health resorts, infant orphanages, remedial kindergartens and boarding schools, as well as boarding schools for children from low-income families.

Pavlodar Hosts EBRD Workshop on Benefits of Consulting for Entrepreneurs

By Azat Abyroi

More than 50 entrepreneurs from Pavlodar city and region took part in a one day workshop organised by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD). The event focused on the use of services offered by outsourced consultants, how they can benefit companies and the opportunities consulting can bring regarding increased effectiveness and the development of small and medium business.

The workshop, Consulting Opportunities for Entrepreneurs from the Pavlodar Region, entailed a series of free presentations, master classes and business games describing modern innovation in business management. The programme of the event also included sessions dedicated to project and business process management, marketing, lean manufacturing, Kaizen (Japanese for “good change”) and small and medium-sized (SME) business automation and human resource management.

Business people from the Pavlodar region, as well as their peers from Karaganda, Kostanai, Almaty and Astana, learned about the importance of external expertise for business development, increasing the overall performance of an enterprise, developing administrative processes, improving the knowledge and skills

of businessmen and increasing the efficiency and competitiveness of the enterprise.

The event coincided with the beginning of a new EBRD information campaign in Pavlodar focused on the importance of consultancy and external advice for small- and medium-sized businesses. The Know How Campaign, as it is called, is being offered in 25 countries across southern and Eastern Europe, Central Asia, North Africa and the Middle East, including Russia and Mongolia, in 2014.

In addition to financing, the EBRD provides business advice and industry expertise to small and medium-sized enterprises as part of a three-year programme funded by the Kazakh government called Business Road Map 2020. The bank is very involved in a state programme called Strengthening the Potential of Enterprise. Representatives of the EBRD in Kazakhstan explained to businessmen how they can get a grant covering up to 75 percent of the full cost of such consulting up to a maximum of \$12,950 (€10,000) per project.

The EBRD in Kazakhstan has been advising small and medium-sized firms across the country on business matters since 1998. To date, it has helped almost 1,000 enterprises by utilising more than \$18.1 million (€14 million) in donor funding and \$8.2 million (€6.3 million) in cost-sharing contributions from client enterprises.

PIT Expansion Underway

By Dinara Yussupova

ALMATY – More than 150 companies implementing high-tech projects will be opening in the Park of Innovative Technologies (PIT), a special economic zone near the city.

The PIT expansion is planned in the next five years, as the need for additional space has increased. Quality growth areas for projects will be provided, due to the formation and development of the innovation cluster and active implementation of the second stage of the State Programme of Industrial and Innovative Development (SPAID).

Visiting journalists recently saw the implementation of the plans during a presentation of the new Centre of Innovations Support, opened by Alatau technopark and PIT.

The centre covers several blocks, according to Nurlan Kopbosynov, chairman of the board of the special economic zone. One of the blocks is the consultation office, which will be receiving requests from new and acting enterprises. The second block is contract and the third, a service block. There is also a multifunctional co-working office, which will work to arrange the participating companies on the park tract. This will allow for organising the activity on the one-stop-shop principle and giving faster consideration to inventors’ applications.

The opening included demonstrations of interesting developments, which will likely be implemented, for example, the project Personal Box Office of the certified system of momentary payments, Box Office24.

Astana Technology Commercialisation Centre Seeks Grant Proposals

By Michelle Witte

ASTANA – Astana’s Technology Commercialisation Centre (TCC) issued a new call for proposals on Sept. 16 as part of its efforts to support the commercialisation of innovative technologies in Kazakhstan.

Applications are being accepted for two types of grants: a six-month proof of concept grant of \$120,000 for earlier-stage technologies and a 12-month grant of \$400,000 to develop an industrial prototype for technologies further along in their development. The application deadline is Oct. 15.

Originally planned for early next year, the new call for proposals

was moved up to this fall because of the great interest in and success of the first round, TCC Lead Expert Erik Azulay said. More than 500 applications were received by the centre for the first round of grants last year; 16 were selected for funding after a multi-step peer review process that evaluated them on their scientific and commercial merit. The first round of funding, 710 million tenge (US\$3.9 million), was distributed in August.

The TCC was created by the Kazakh Ministry of Education and Science as a separate, private organisation to help scientists and innovators bring their ideas to market. The grant programme, which is tasked with creating closer ties

between science and markets in Kazakhstan, is funded in part by the World Bank. International experts provided by CRDF Global and trained Kazakh colleagues mentor grant recipients in the commercialisation process, from research to the creation of start-up companies to full commercialisation.

The TCC was created by the Kazakh Ministry of Education and Science as a separate, private organisation.

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EDITORIAL & OPINIONS

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 2014

Staying Competitive in a Toughening External Environment

Kazakhstan achieved its goal of entering the top 50 most competitive countries in 2013 and has maintained its position in the 2014-2015 World Economic Forum Global Competitiveness Report. Largely thanks to the sound macroeconomic policy of President Nursultan Nazarbayev and the Kazakh government, the country is ahead of other states in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) in almost all of the report's pillars of competitiveness, including institutions, infrastructure, macroeconomic environment, higher education and training, goods market efficiency, labour market development, financial market development, technological readiness, market size, business sophistication and innovation, lagging behind only in the category of health and primary education. The Global Competitiveness Index gives a score from 1 to 7 in each of these pillars, and Kazakhstan earned an overall score of 4.4.

The report takes into consideration many factors and defines competitiveness as "the set of institutions, policies, and factors that determine the level of productivity of a country. The level of productivity, in turn, sets the level of prosperity that can be reached by an economy."

The report is not a retrospective account but rather one that looks forward to a realistic vision of an economy, appreciating that "a more competitive economy is one that is likely to grow faster over time." Kazakhstan has no reason to be pessimistic about its prospects for growth: the economy is stable and the society is vibrant.

Kazakhstan's institutions earned a score of 4 out of 7 in the report. The population of Kazakhstan is confident in its leaders and public trust in politicians earned a high mark. President Nazarbayev is popular throughout the country and his leadership is key to the country's development. As the country goes through its transition from a stage two economy (efficiency driven) to stage three (innovation driven), the stable course of progress must continue to ensure stability. The government earned good marks for transparency of government policy-making as well as for keeping wasteful government spending low. The worst score of the institution pillar in Kazakhstan is the reliability of police services, an issue that the government needs to address.

Infrastructure earned an overall score of 4.2, dragged down by low grades in the quality of roads and ports but receiving very high marks for mobile telephone subscriptions and fixed telephone lines. The government is upgrading road infrastructure and investing in new highways, including the Western Europe-Western China corridor, to improve the situation, but the construction and maintenance of such massive endeavours takes time and money. In the ninth-largest country in the world, a mobile communication network must be valued as highly as concrete freeways.

Kazakhstan received the highest mark for its macroeconomic environment pillar, an impressive 5.7, almost a whole point more than all of the other CIS

countries. In the government budget balance category, the country is ninth out of 144 countries in the index. Having sailed through the global financial crisis, the government fares well in ratings of gross national savings, general government debt and the country's credit rating.

The pillar of health and primary education is lower than the average CIS score, but still a high 5.4. Kazakhstan's higher education and training received a score of 4.5. Enrolment in secondary education institutions is high, but the report gives a poor mark for the quality of management schools.

The pillar of good market efficiency earned a score of 4.5, suggesting healthy market competition. According to the report, having such competition "both domestic and foreign, is important in driving market efficiency, and thus business productivity, by ensuring that the most efficient firms, producing goods demanded by the market, are those that thrive."

In buyer sophistication, Kazakhstan ranked 28th out of the 144 countries in the index, indicating that customers are very demanding when it comes to purchasing goods and services. This makes companies work harder to become more innovative and customer oriented, creating an important competitive advantage. All categories in the labour market efficiency pillar were ranked highly, including in the sections on cooperation in labour-employer relations, pay and productivity and the ratio of women to men in the labour force. The country's capacity to attract talent is a notable 37 out of 144, but the capacity to retain talent is lower than in 71 countries.

The report gives a score of 3.7 to Kazakhstan's financial market development pillar. The highest ratings there went to ease of access to loans and venture capital availability. Overall, the country's improvement in credit ratings gave a boost to the marks in this pillar.

The technological readiness pillar is improved by mobile broadband subscriptions, but the country is lagging behind in the FDI [foreign direct investment] and technology transfer category.

The pillars of market size, business sophistication and innovation are among the lower-scoring sections for the country, but the Kazakhstan 2050 Strategy is focused on exactly these issues. The President's strategy for creating a knowledge-based economy is now the main goal of the government.

Given the adverse external economic environment in the immediate future, especially in light of the tit-for-tat sanctions between Russia and the West over Ukraine, it seems that achieving Kazakhstan's development goals will be tougher than expected. Through several crises in the past, however, Kazakhstan's economy has shown its resilience, agility and ability to weather economic storms. Having reached the goal of joining the 50 most competitive economies, maintaining and improving Kazakhstan's global standings, and, more importantly, maintaining the positive trends in the economic development, look to be achievable and realistic aims.

Britain and Kazakhstan: Partners in Business Development

By the Rt Hon Alderman
Fiona Woolf



Any comparison of Kazakhstan and the United Kingdom would bring to light many differences between the two countries: one is an island kingdom and the other is the world's largest landlocked country. One is a rapidly developing nation, while the other is a G7 country and part of the European Union, but both share a global outlook.

Yet, as an elected Lord Mayor and as a lifelong international lawyer specialising in infrastructure projects, my view is that Kazakhstan and the United Kingdom have much in common. The delegation and I made this trip to Astana and Almaty in hopes of deepening the bonds between our two nations.

This visit, of course, builds on those of my predecessors, Lord Mayors Wootton, Stuttard and Luder.

Our first shared interest is in building a good business environment together, as business is a crucial component of the bedrock of any sustainable society. Much work in this area has already been done. Kazakhstan and Astana are key partners for the U.K. and London; over the next decade, there will be an estimated \$50 billion dollars worth of commercial opportunities in the energy sector alone. The U.K. is already one of largest investors in Kazakhstan with more than \$15 billion invested. On the London Stock Exchange, you can already find 20 Kazakhstan based companies on the main and AIM markets, with £500 million (\$816 million) raised on AIM alone. London is a world-leading international financial centre and Almaty, with ambitions to establish itself as a regional financial hub, is trying to build links and learn from London's experience. My view is unashamedly globalist: Almaty and London are not competitors, but rather two cities that can nourish each other and grow their expertise, infrastructure, markets and investment pools in a mutually beneficial direction.

Over the last two decades, the U.K. has been one of largest investors in Kazakhstan with BG Group, our largest British investor, playing a significant role in our growing relationship. Part of that

establish stronger governance, because businesses everywhere value stability, predictability and clarity, free and open markets and a level playing field for both international and local businesses. Investors want transparency and good standards of corporate governance and they are, as you would hope of people often charged with looking after our pensions, quite dispassionate about choosing or dropping a home for their capital.

In our complex financial world, consulting experienced professionals to further your own knowledge and manage your assets is a necessity. Not taking full advantage of consulting services, even for the sake of saving money, is not wise. Many global experts in law, project delivery, public-private partnership, infrastructure, etc., are based in London. Working with London based global experts can often be the easiest way to access global expertise. Many non-U.K. firms are based in London because of its connectivity, central time zone and of course, its access to the English commercial legal system, which is recognised internationally as being fair and efficient.

partnership is BG's contribution to the new Centre for Energy Research – including the inspirational Scientific Library and Café. Nazarbayev University and the Centre for Energy Research in particular will make major contributions to U.K.-Kazakhstan cooperation. Our links are much broader than one firm, and the future energy focused EXPO 2017 in Astana, will bring many UK-based firms to begin and deepen relations with the region.

Kazakhstan's leadership has rightly emphasised the need to develop the country's human capital because of the economic, cultural and political benefits to be reaped from increased partnership between the two countries.

Foreign investment is a key issue for Kazakhstan as it tries to diversify its economic base, establish its competitive edge and acquire important new technologies and key infrastructure. Not only is the U.K. one of largest investors in Kazakhstan, but London is a major global centre for investors from around the world with many global funds and fund-managers based there.

The Kazakh economy is foreign direct investment (FDI) intensive, with an extremely favourable FDI/GDP ratio, one of the highest among rapid-growth markets. This means that sharing my know-how of how to please global funds with my Kazakhstan colleagues was an important aspect of our recent trip. Investors focus on such issues as investment governance, meeting the interests of all shareholders and transparency in the marketplace. The U.K. is working hard to help

One relatively new entrant to the global stage is Islamic finance, a field in which London is developing considerable expertise. Islamic finance is estimated to be a \$1.45 trillion industry worldwide. Islamic finance has shown resilience and the U.K. is the leading Western provider of Islamic financial services and has access to a globally buoyant sukuk market. Issuance is up two-thirds to \$139 billion in 2012 and there are now 49 sukuk bonds with a combined value of \$34 billion listed on the London Stock Exchange. Additionally, seven exchange traded funds and two exchange traded products are also listed on the London market. I am working closely with TheCityUK and UKTI on their activities in this field.

Opportunities for U.K. based firms and Kazakhstan to expand relations are both plentiful and lucrative and I was very glad to represent London during my most recent visit.

The author is the Right Honourable Lord Mayor of the City of London.

Of Land- and Sea-Lockedness, and the Pursuit of Happiness

By Ertan Idrissov

In 1997, Jared Diamond wrote a Pulitzer Prize-winning book called "Guns, Germs and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies." The book explained in easily understandable yet well-argued prose why the world turned out to be what it is today - a Europe-centric, or rather a Eurasian-centric world - and why it did not come to revolve around other civilizations in, say, the Pacific islands.

Crediting guns, germs and steel, not to mention their stronger societal organization, Diamond explains why it was mostly Europeans that took over other continents, and not vice versa, ensuring the dominance of their values, systems of government and economic organization, etc. Yet, one of the points Diamond is keen to stress is that this dynamic of development, which has played out over past millennia, does not mean that people in Europe or in other developed countries live happier or more fulfilled lives. According to the author, while those in the West and North live more prosperous lives on paper than those in the South and East, many people in 'developing' countries live lives that are more content and closer to their 'truer selves'. In other words,



they live lives that make them just as happy, if not more.

Having just visited Samoa for the Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States (SIDS) on September 1-3, I would say that I agree with Diamond's point, yet I would add a qualifier. As a first time visitor coming from the world's largest land-locked country, I found that people in the Pacific are indeed as proud of their history and development – and as happy – as one can be. However, as we discussed at the Conference, the geographical isolation of the Pacific Islands creates fundamental challenges that hinder their growth and prosperity. Overcoming these challenges will bring greater happiness to the communities and benefit us all – more developed island states will

mean a more developed world – it is as simple as that. But this will require concerted and sustained development assistance from the international community.

While it may seem strange at first, Kazakhstan shares many challenges with SIDS. Just as we are land-locked, they are, in a way, sea-locked, with their encirclement by the great ocean and their remoteness from major growth hubs, aggravating, not helping their lot. This is why Kazakhstan felt it was important to participate in the event and share our story of what we, as an upper middle income country in the early years of its development, have done to overcome the challenges of geography and, more importantly, how that can be applied to support SIDS.

That's exactly what I shared in my remarks at the conference and in more than a dozen meetings over three intense days with delegations from around the world, including Cape Verde, East Timor, the Marshall Islands, Kiribati, Vanuatu, Nauru, and many others.

A recurring theme in my conversations and one of the greatest challenges they all share is a lack of energy resources and the resulting high cost of energy (according to UN estimates, the cost of elec-

tricity in countries such as Samoa is four times higher than in the U.S., for example). And here is an area where Kazakhstan can play a concrete and constructive role and is already pursuing a number of efforts – big and small – to help meet this challenge.

First, Kazakhstan will be hosting the international specialized exhibition EXPO 2017, which will focus on the theme of 'Future Energy'. In three years' time, we want to attract at least 100 countries and 10 international organizations to the event to help drive forward innovation and development in the energy sector. We hope it will make a tangible contribution to meeting the energy challenges facing the world today and that SIDS can play an important part and benefit from the event. We are working to provide support to various countries, especially SIDS, to ensure they can participate in the exhibition.

Second, Kazakhstan has put forward the 'Green Bridge Partnership Program'. The initiative brings together several countries, from Germany to Mongolia, to promote technology transfer and innovation in energy with the ultimate goal of finding common solutions to meet the energy needs of the international community.

Third, in partnership with UN ESCAP, we are launching a project to provide electricity producing biogas units to communities in nine Asia Pacific nations, including Kiribati, the Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, the Solomon Islands and Tonga.

Last but not least, Kazakhstan has put forward its candidacy for a non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council in 2017-2018. Our bid is based on the four pillars of food, water, nuclear and energy security. A focus on these key challenges, we believe, can help resolve the energy problems and wider issues facing SIDS and many other nations around the world.

And we are committed and will continue to pursue more ways and opportunities to promote equitable development internationally.

On a different note, during my visit to Samoa, I was often reminded of my previous engagements with U.S. Congressman Eni Faleomavaega, a good friend of Kazakhstan from the neighboring island of American Samoa. We have worked together on a matter that bonds Kazakhstan and the South Pacific close together – fighting for a nuclear weapons free world – which draws on our shared legacy of dealing with con-

sequences of decades of nuclear weapons testing by the Soviet Union, the United States, and France. I was heartened to find that many of his traits – a love of life, openness and keen determination to achieve one's goals – are a feature of all Pacific islanders and I greatly enjoyed their hospitality.

One of the most memorable moments of the trip was the traditional greeting ceremony ahead of our meeting with the head of state of Samoa, Tuiaua Tupua Tamasese Ta'isi Tufuga Tupuola Efi, in his residence on the hills overlooking Apia. The master of ceremonies' call to the heavens asking for blessings for the two countries was reminiscent of the rituals we see and treasure in Kazakh culture.

The performance also reminded all of us of the theory of how humans first populated Polynesia from Asia, and it was really great to see ancient and remarkably similar traditions survive and live on. For while modern diplomacy will help us build mutually beneficial ties, it is the strength of our traditions that gives us confidence and determination to continue moving forward and towards happier lives for all.

The author is the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan. This opinion first appeared as a blog post on mfa.gov.kz.

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OPINIONS

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A Legally-Binding Global Agreement Is Most Effective Way to Tackle Man-Made Climate Change

By Guido Herz,
Aurelia Bouchez,
Carolyn Browne
and Francis Etienne

Today, across the world, the embassies of the U.K. and Germany are joining with the EU delegation and other countries to highlight the challenge we all face – climate change. Together with the French presidency of the 21st Conference of Parties (COP21) due to take place in Paris, we are committed to achieving a binding international agreement to address this challenge in 2015 and encourage other countries to take action. The agreement has to be ambitious, well balanced and in compliance with the agreed-upon objective that the increase in global temperature should be no more than plus 2 degrees. In our interconnected world of the 21st century, climate change affects us all. So it will take global action to successfully counter it.

Our governments and the EU are convinced that climate change is a real and urgent threat. The overwhelming scientific consensus and body of evidence on climate change is clear about the severe consequences for mankind if no action is taken.

The world's climate is already changing. Carbon dioxide in the atmosphere is at its highest level in 800,000 years. Global temperatures are rising – by over half a degree in the last 50 years. The impact of this climate change is already being felt. Arctic ice is melting and it is getting thinner. Sea levels are rising and weather patterns are changing. Earlier this year the U.K. experienced its worst floods in hundreds of years, with devastating consequences. Germany saw catastrophic floods in



Guido Herz

2002, 2006 and 2013, which used to happen only once a century.

So what is being done to tackle climate change? The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change was established to consider how to tackle man-made climate change. It is clear that the most effective way to achieve this is through a legally-binding global agreement in which all major emitters are bound into mitigation commitments and developing countries are supported to take mitigation action and adaptation measures against climate change.

But the global action being taken is not only limited to negotiations. That is why we are taking a leading role in working with partner countries worldwide to implement climate-friendly solutions to make ourselves fit for tackling climate change.

Recently the U.K. Department for Energy and Climate Change reiterated an emissions reduction target for the U.K. of 34 percent by 2020. This will ensure the U.K. meets its climate change target of a 50 percent reduction in emissions



Aurelia Bouchez

by 2030. The U.K. is also committed to providing climate finance to developing countries to follow low carbon-development pathways, to adapt to the inevitable impacts of climate change and to protect the world's forests. Overall, the U.K.'s International Climate Fund provides £2.9 billion (US\$4.7 billion) in assistance to help to do this work. Much of that money is already at work in projects running across the world, including Kazakhstan, where US\$24 million has been allocated through the Clean Technologies Fund to finance various green projects.

The development of renewable energy, an increase in energy efficiency, the exit from nuclear energy and an emissions reduction target of 40 percent between 1990 and 2020 are the cornerstones of Energiewende, the German concept for a transition towards a new low-carbon energy system.

With the Petersberg Climate Dialogue, an annual high-level conference for decision makers in the field of climate policy which took place for the fifth time in July 2014, Germany contributes to the



Carolyn Browne

political push towards a global climate agreement in 2015.

Kazakhstan and Germany have already been cooperating successfully, e.g. in the fields of energy efficiency and emissions trading. Germany is ready to increase joint efforts in this regard.

The EU adopted an Energy-climate package under the French presidency in 2008 and continues to be a world leader in tackling climate change and low carbon de-



Francis Etienne

velopment. In the climate and energy policy framework for 2030, the European Commission proposes that the EU set itself a target of reducing emissions to 40 percent below 1990 levels by 2030. The EU Emissions Trading System has become the EU's key tool for reducing greenhouse gas emissions from industry. The EU has also initiated legislation to raise the share of energy consumption produced from renewable energy sources such as wind, solar and biomass to 20 percent by 2020.

The world's climate is already changing. Carbon dioxide in the atmosphere is at its highest level in 800,000 years. Global temperatures are rising – by over half a degree in the last 50 years. The impact of this climate change is already being felt. Arctic ice is melting and it is getting thinner. Sea levels are rising and weather patterns are changing.

velopment. In the climate and energy policy framework for 2030,

The fight against climate change is increasingly reflected in other

policy areas, such as security, transportation and sustainable agriculture. To further advance this process, the EU has agreed that at least 20 percent of its €960 billion (US\$1.2 trillion) budget for the period 2014-2020 should be spent on climate change-related action. This is on top of climate finance from individual EU member states. This budget marks a major step forward in transforming Europe into a clean and competitive low-carbon economy.

We support Kazakhstan's own efforts to tackle climate change through its strategy to transition to a green economy. The renewable energy sector is being developed with implementation of legislation and regulation policy. There are many public and private initiatives in the power, construction and agricultural sectors. We hope that broader action will also be taken by the government of Kazakhstan in order to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and to develop a national emissions trading scheme.

We welcome Kazakhstan's active role in global climate negotiations and commitments taken for the second period of the Kyoto Protocol. As we said at the outset, global action is necessary to address the global challenge of climate change. We look forward to continuing to work with Kazakhstan and others to ensure action is taken.

The authors are Ambassador of Germany to Kazakhstan Dr. Guido Herz, the Head of the EU Delegation to Kazakhstan Ambassador Aurelia Bouchez, British Ambassador to Kazakhstan Dr. Carolyn Browne and Ambassador of France to Kazakhstan Francis Etienne.

Kazakhstan Optimistic about Progress at Upcoming Caspian Summit

By Zhanara Abdolova

In an interview with this newspaper, Ambassador-at-large of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan Zulfya Amanzholova discussed the multifaceted negotiations of the legal status of the Caspian Sea in the run-up to the summit of the five Caspian littoral states in Astrakhan, Russia at the end of September.

What does the legal status of the Caspian Sea mean and what issues does it pertain to?

The problems relating to the legal status of the Caspian Sea are multifaceted and encompass a number of key areas. The first has to do with the issues of delimitation, including division of the Caspian's water area into maritime zones with different legal statuses, as well as airspace over the Caspian Sea, its seabed and the use of subsurface mineral resources.

The second area comprises the exploitation of natural resources, including marine life and establishing rules and protocol concerning fishing equipment, fishing seasons and special areas, exploration and the production of subsurface mineral resources of the Caspian seabed, artificial islands and structures, as well as procedures for marine scientific research. This sphere also deals with sovereignty over subsurface resource management and exclusive rights to the exploitation of aquatic biological resources within the respective zones of the littoral states.

The third area relates to environmental problems. It is closely related to the second area and embraces efficiency, protection and production of biological resources, protection of biodiversity, liability for damage caused to the ecosystem of the Caspian Sea, assessment of the impact of the proposed economic activity on the environment and other issues.

The fourth area mostly has to



Zulfya Amanzholova

do with the problems of transportation. Issues surrounding marine navigation in maritime zones with different legal status, freedom of transit for all kinds of vessels, ensuring access to the sea and ocean, the transportation of hydrocarbons through underwater pipelines and aircraft flights are being discussed.

Finally, the fifth area relates to issues of security in all its aspects. This includes military issues, as well as cooperation in counteracting illegal activities (such as terrorism, illegal trafficking, arms trading, drug trafficking, poaching, etc.), and emergency management amongst other things.

The abovementioned division is somewhat sketchy and conditional, which, however, helps to have a clear idea and better understand that the range of issues related to the legal status of the Caspian Sea, is very broad.

How has history delivered us to the point where we are now on these matters?

During Soviet times, Caspian affairs were handled on a bilateral basis and were regulated by the Russian-Persian Treaty of 1921 and the Soviet-Iranian treaty of commerce and navigation of 1940.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union and the emergence of four new littoral states instead of one,

including Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Russia and Turkmenistan, a new geopolitical and geo-economic situation emerged. The previous Caspian regime, stipulated by the above-mentioned agreements, did not conform to the new conditions and could not properly regulate the relations between littoral states on the basis of mutual benefit. It touched upon some issues in shipping and fishing but did not contain any requirements for some important components of the sea's legal status, such as the legal regime governing the seabed and subsoil and air space, or any type of environmental standards.

Thus, it was necessary to work out a new legal framework governing the sea that would comprehensively regulate all issues that serves the interests of all littoral states.

Between 1992 and 1996, several meetings were held in both bilateral and multilateral formats, during which the parties discussed Caspian issues.

Following the November 1996 meeting of foreign ministers of the Caspian states in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan, an ad-hoc working group of deputy foreign ministers was established to work out a Convention on the legal status of the Caspian Sea (AWG). The document was intended to fill the legal vacuum through the development and adoption of the above-mentioned convention. Such a document should be a universal legal framework regulating all kinds of activities in the Caspian Sea.

Meetings of the ad-hoc working group have been held alternately and regularly in each Caspian state. To date, there have been 38 meetings of the AWG.

Issues of cooperation between the Caspian states at sea, including various aspects of the legal status of the Caspian Sea, are also discussed at the highest levels. To date, there have been three summits of the littoral states.

Among the many important results of the Second Caspian Sum-

mit (Tehran, 2007) is the adoption of a final declaration, which for the first time confirmed at the highest political level the existing agreements on the legal status of the Caspian Sea, security and stability at sea, as well as the position of the Caspian states on most urgent international issues.

At the Third Caspian Summit held in Baku in 2010, the heads of state signed a Joint Statement, as well as an agreement on security cooperation in the Caspian Sea.

Being a framework document, the above-mentioned agreement creates a legal basis for the regulation of interaction between littoral states in ensuring security and continuing the fight against illegal activities in the region by stipulating the main areas and forms of cooperation in these areas.

In a joint statement, the leaders of the five Caspian states reaffirmed their commitment to the position reflected in the final declaration of the second summit and noted the need for an early completion of work on the Convention on the Legal Status of the Caspian Sea.

As per the delimitation of the Caspian Sea, as of today, a number of agreements between Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan and Russia have been signed. They represent a new stage in the negotiation process, laying the foundation for legal and regulatory consolidation of the sectoral division of the Caspian seabed between littoral states.

According to the provisions of international agreements concluded by the five littoral states, the signatories have exclusive rights to oil and gas exploration and development operations in their respective sections of the Caspian Sea. Adoption of these rules allows our countries to conduct exploration and the development operations of hydrocarbons in the Caspian Sea on a legal-contractual basis and provide the necessary legal conditions and a reliable guarantee for all participants in this process.

Regarding the environmental se-

curity of the Caspian Sea, in 2003, a Framework Convention for the Protection of Marine Environment of the Caspian Sea was adopted. It contains provisions managing human interference with the marine environment, the protection of biological resources and the overall interaction between the parties in relation to measures for the protection of Caspian ecological systems.

“It was necessary to work out a new legal framework governing the sea that would comprehensively regulate all issues that serves the interests of all littoral states.” – Zulfya Amanzholova

In order to expand the contractual framework of cooperation in the field of environmental protection, there have also been signed a number of Protocols to the Framework Convention: On Regional Preparedness, Response and Co-operation in the event of oil pollution emergency, as well as for the protection of the Caspian Sea against pollution from land-based sources and land-based activities.

The parties are continuing their negotiations on draft protocols to the Convention regarding the conservation of biological diversity and assessment of the environmental impact in a transnational context. We hope that these important mechanisms will soon be resolved as well.

What should we expect from the

upcoming Fourth Caspian Summit?

Five-party talks are rather complex, as each state has its own goals, objectives and national interests. However, in the Caspian negotiations, we make decisions based on consensus.

Despite this, it is encouraging that the degree of mutual understanding and cooperation is as high as it is, key negotiations are continuing in both multilateral and bilateral formats, and progress in this case is obvious.

However, the uncertainty of the legal status of the Caspian Sea requires from littoral states further constructive steps in finding mutually acceptable solutions.

In recent years, efficient work has been carried out in preparation for the Fourth Caspian Summit, both in the framework of the ad-hoc working group and in the format of other negotiating mechanisms.

We pin our deepest hopes on this event, as it is an opportunity to agree upon a set of principles in line with which the sides will be carrying out activities at sea. We are near completing three five-sided agreements on the protection of biological resources in response to emergencies at sea, as well as on cooperation in Caspian hydro-meteorology. It is very likely that the documents will be signed during the upcoming summit.

All of this, of course, will provide further positive impetus to the draft Convention on the Legal Status of the Caspian Sea, since reaching an agreement upon the most fundamental issues at the highest level will bring us closer to the signing of the founding international treaty in the nearest future.

Kazakhstan feels optimistic about the future and believes that based upon reasonable compromise and goodwill, we will manage to form a secure legal basis for further fruitful cooperation with the Caspian Sea littoral states.

EURASIA&WORLD

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 2014

President of Iran Advances Economic Ties on Visit to Astana

Continued from Page A1

In turn, the Iranian president stressed that his country attaches great importance to cooperation with Kazakhstan.

"The visit of our high level delegation indicates a serious will of the Islamic Republic of Iran to develop relations with Kazakhstan in all areas," said Rouhani.

Nazarbayev expressed the opinion that various conflicts in the Middle East cannot be resolved without Iran.

"We are confident that talks between Iran and the P5+1 group on lifting sanctions over [Iran's] nuclear programme will be very successful. This will expand our cooperation," he said.

At the press conference following the meeting, Kazakhstan's President noted the progress in Kazakh-Iranian joint projects aimed at the development of the two countries' economic and transit-transport potential.

"This year we are completing construction of the Zhanaozen-Bereket-Gorgan railway route, which will connect the countries of Central Asia and the Persian Gulf. With the launch of the new railway route, sales between our countries can grow to \$2 billion in the next year alone," he said.

President Nazarbayev believes that the two countries could expand mutually-beneficial cooperation in metallurgy, agribusiness, transport, logistics and tourism.

Kazakhstan has an ambitious goal of joining the ranks of the world's 30 most-advanced nations, which will be conducive to successful business cooperation. Nazarbayev emphasised that Kazakhstan currently has new opportunities and enormous potential for both large companies and medium-sized businesses.

According to the global competitiveness report of the World Economic Forum this year, Kazakhstan is ranked 50th among 144 countries. Kazakhstan is also in 50th place in the World Bank annual business ranking, ahead of the country's partners in the Customs Union and other neighbours.

During the meeting, the two

leaders also touched upon the development of interregional cooperation between the western regions of Kazakhstan and the Iranian provinces.

"We believe that the trade turnover between the two countries should increase by five times. As a result of some of the decisions that have been made today, we can achieve these volumes. We also had detailed talks about the Caspian Sea, as well as the importance of launching the Kazakhstan-Turkmenistan-Iran railway road," Rouhani said.

It was announced that Kazakhstan will be implementing a number of investment projects with the participation of Iran. In particular, it will consider projects on the construction of a glass factory in the Kyzylorda region, a hydrometallurgical plant in the Karaganda region and production of aluminum in the Kostanai region.

The Kazakh President also invited Iranian companies to participate in the international specialised exhibition EXPO 2017.

"It is crucial that Iran supports our international initiatives. Kazakhstan wants to take a non-permanent seat in the UN Security Council in 2017-2018 and we really appreciate Iran's support in this respect. I have invited Iranian companies to participate in the upcoming EXPO 2017 in Astana," Nazarbayev said.

In the end, the Kazakh President expressed confidence that the Iranian President's visit, as well as the business forum that took place in the framework of the visit, will provide an opportunity to raise the economic cooperation between the two countries to a new level.

A number of agreements were signed between Kazakhstan and Iran as a result of the presidential talks. The sides signed the intergovernmental agreement on international road passenger and goods transportation and adopted the roadmap on the development of commercial, economic and investment cooperation between the two nations. The Kazakh and Iranian foreign ministries also inked a five-year programme of cooperation.

U.S., Kazakh Experts Call for Stronger Ties, U.S. Presidential Visit

Continued from Page A1

In his remarks, Starr stressed the need to develop active dialogue between the U.S. and Central Asia states both on a bilateral basis and within the regional format. "Kazakhstan is the key strategic and one of the most reliable partners of the U.S. in the Central Asian region and the majority of our interests coincide," he noted. In his opinion, Kazakhstan has played a constructive role in implementing the New Silk Road, stabilising Afghanistan and attracting new investments and technologies to Central Asia.

"The concept of a balanced or multi-vectored approach... has long dominated Kazakhstan's foreign policy thinking," Starr said. He added that this concept has largely contributed to maintaining state sovereignty and was eventually copied by other states in the region. In his words, "the establishment of the Eurasian Economic Union in 2015 will not downplay this fundamental stance." Therefore, the fundamental thesis of the report, he maintained, is that the ongoing process of Eurasian integration "does not obviate the possibility or need for raising the U.S.-Kazakh relationship to a higher level."

Among the key questions the report addresses, Starr said, are issues of security, strategic partnership, economic cooperation, culture, information, democracy and human rights.

Nursha, from Kazakhstan's Institute of World Economy and Politics, underlined that developing bilateral relations with the United States remains one of Kazakhstan's top priorities. The relationship will likely play an important role in Central Asian politics in coming years. This is why, according to him, the authors proposed in the report to establish a "Central Asia Plus One" dialogue platform to discuss regional issues of common interest with the U.S. He also mentioned that accession to the WTO is still high on the bilateral agenda and the United States' support is crucial to concluding the negotiations by the end of 2014.

"The United States remains an important political factor in Central Asia and has always been treated by Kazakhstan's society as one of the key actors in geopolitics. The report is actually the most recent take of what we have seen in the region lately, including its major challenges," he noted.

Another author of the report, Wimbush, outlined the security priorities for the relationship in the coming period. "One of the paper's conclusions was that Kazakhstan and the United States

proposed that Kazakhstan should host such a centre.

He also mentioned that the report states that no U.S. president has ever visited Kazakhstan and other Central Asian states. Therefore, the American and Kazakh experts made a clear policy recommendation to arrange a visit by the U.S. president to Kazakhstan and its neighbours in order to start re-engaging Central Asia after the military withdrawal from Afghanistan this year.

Kukeyeva of Al-Farabi National University pointed to the need

to train a new generation of future leaders who will be able to closely interact and cooperate with other countries," Kukeyeva concluded.

In the report, experts called for U.S. support for Kazakhstan's prompt accession to the WTO, intensifying reciprocal visits and strengthening cooperation in education and trade and economic relations. The authors also held an engaged conversation, answering questions from media representatives on pressing topics of the future development of Kazakhstan, multi-vectored international policy and the institutionalisation of bilateral cooperation.

The authors agreed that Kazakhstan was successfully evolving as an independent state and served as a pillar of stability in Central Asia. The experts advocated further strengthening the Kazakhstan-U.S. comprehensive partnership in order to provide economic prosperity and protect regional security.

The main message of the experts' address and commentaries of other participants was that the Kazakh approach to international politics, including its balanced and multi-vectored policy, serves as a model for many states in the region. The panelists also underscored the need to modernise U.S. approaches to Central Asia and elaborate relevant strategies, which would give Kazakhstan a key role.

The report was presented at the U.S. Congress the following day, Sept. 9.

Speakers included Dana Rohrabacher, chairman of the Subcommittee on Europe, Eurasia and Emerging Threats and a member of the Subcommittee on Asia, the Pacific and the Global Environment, who recently visited Kazakhstan as head of a U.S. congressional delegation and met with President Nursultan Nazarbayev. Rohrabacher praised the concerted policy of Kazakhstan's leadership, aimed at sustainable development and strengthening international peace and regional security.

Zhanara Abdulova contributed to this report from Astana.

"It is a proven fact that the multi-vectored and balanced foreign policy of Kazakhstan is creating an opportunity for improving relations with countries both in the West and in the East. It is very important to build the environment of trust and understanding, and train a new generation of future leaders who will be able to closely interact and cooperate with other countries." – Fatima Kukeyeva

should intensify security and defence cooperation in order to facilitate Kazakhstan's integration into international peacekeeping operations and institutions like the [Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe] OSCE and NATO," he stressed. Another of the authors' recommendations he mentioned was to institutionalise and intensify analytic interaction on regional affairs.

He stressed that it is in both sides' interests to facilitate and promote Kazakhstan's model of development as a secular state with a majority Muslim population and diverse ethnicities living in peace. In order to draw more attention to the strategic importance of Central Asian affairs both in Kazakhstan and the U.S., Wimbush concluded, the sides should consider the possibility of establishing a joint research and analysis institution, which does not yet exist anywhere in the region. He

to further facilitate bilateral relations between Astana and Washington despite the predictions that Kazakhstan's role in U.S. foreign policy will be downgraded after 2014. She cited Kazakhstan's new Foreign Policy Concept, which envisions a multi-vectored approach as its central element for years to come, and stated that it meets the United States' interests in Eurasia. "Therefore, the authors of the report made recommendations to sign a U.S.-Kazakhstan Strategic Partnership Charter and to expand government-to-government and society-to-society contacts in the areas of human rights, rule of law and democratisation," she said.

"It is a proven fact that the multi-vectored and balanced foreign policy of Kazakhstan is creating an opportunity for improving relations with countries both in the West and in the East. It is very important to build the environment of trust and understanding, and

New Iranian Ambassador Sees Many Areas of Cooperation

By Yelden Sarybay

ASTANA – On the eve of the Sept. 9 visit by Iranian President Hassan Rouhani to Astana, The Astana Times interviewed new Iranian Ambassador to Kazakhstan Mojtaba Damirchilu.

You've recently been appointed Iran's ambassador to Kazakhstan. Could you please tell us about yourself? Is this the first time you've been to Kazakhstan?

First, I would like to thank you for coming to the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Kazakhstan, welcome, and I would like to greet all of your readers as well.

It has been three months since I started my diplomatic mission here, but I only presented my credentials to President Nursultan Nazarbayev a few days ago.

This is not my first time in Kazakhstan; some of my prior posts pertained to the country. My first visit to Almaty was in 1994 and my first visit to Astana was in 2001. My diplomatic career started in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iran. There, I worked on CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States) related matters, then went on to serve as the head of the Secretariat for Caspian Issues. Most recently, I served as ambassador to Georgia and took part in various regional meetings. Now, I'm very happy to have started working here



Mojtaba Damirchilu

and to be able to contribute to the friendly relationship between Iran and Kazakhstan.

How would you characterise the relationship between the two countries today?

The relationship between Iran and Kazakhstan is always moving in the right direction. As you know, Iran was among the first countries to recognise the sovereignty of independent Kazakhstan and was one of the first countries to send a diplomatic mission here.

The Iranian-Kazakh relationship has been growing positively for many years and the people of two countries have centuries-old links based on mutual respect and friendship. In this respect, the two countries' relationship covers many fields, especially in economic sectors, political spheres and culture and in countless inter-governmental areas. Because of

this, the potential to develop the relationship is even greater and more important.

Which specific issues would you like to focus during your time here?

Looking at the many initiatives between the two countries, I know that the relationship is full of potential and the future is bright. As such, I hope that we can use this potential in different spheres to reach positive results, especially in economic fields.

What will [Iranian] President [Hassan] Rouhani discuss during his visit? Any plans for increasing government-to-government cooperation? Will he discuss new economic projects, perhaps?

Thankfully, the two presidents have established a good relationship; we can say that the leaders have had great opportunities to increase the cooperation between the two countries. Last year, the esteemed President of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev, attended the official inauguration ceremony of President Rouhani. Recently, we witnessed meetings of the two presidents in Bishkek and Shanghai. In the future, President Rouhani will visit Kazakhstan. Also in the future, the presidents will meet at the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation summit, as well as at the summit of the Caspian littoral states in Russia. All of this is a sign that the relationship between our countries is very strong.

Continued on Page B2



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WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 2014

CULTURE

Open Air Classical Music Festival Marks Almaty City Day

B3

CULTURE

Computer Animated Film Nears Completion in Pavlodar

B3

SPORTS

National Basketball Teams' Opponents Revealed for 17th Asian Games in South Korea

B7

“Birzhan-Sara” to be Performed at Silk Road Festival



“Birzhan-Sara” opera, which has become popular among young people, will now be a part of the new theatre season.

By Alina Usmanova

ASTANA – “Birzhan-Sara” by Mukan Tolebayev, will be performed as part of the Astana Op-

era’s new theatre season. The opera, which according to the company’s marketing research has become popular among young people, will be part of the Silk Road

International Festival. Birzhan’s part will be presented by Akhmed Agadi, an outstanding tenor of our time and one of the best performers of this role. An Honoured Artist of

Russia and People’s Artist of Tatarstan, he will sing a duet with brilliant opera singer Aigul Niyazova, who will play Sara.

Continued on Page B3

Malaysian Food and Culture Week to Open at Astana Marriott Hotel

By Arsen Kerimov

ASTANA – The Embassy of Malaysia will present a Malaysian Food and Culture Week at the Astana Marriott Hotel beginning on Sept. 23.

It will introduce and promote Malaysia by highlighting the rich culture and tradition of that country with its innumerable crafts and cuisine. The fiesta will feature an exciting array of cultural performances and traditional music of multi-ethnic Malaysia, by versatile and skilled artists. Guests will also have an opportunity to savour delicious and popular Malaysian cuisine.

The Malaysian Food and Culture

Week will be taking place every evening in the Aroma Restaurant at the Astana Marriott Hotel until Sept. 26 to provide locals and visitors of Astana with the ambience of Malaysia. Chef Kamaruzzaman Hasan will be flown in specifically from Malaysia to prepare mouth-watering dishes, in concert with Marriott’s resident chefs who hail from the same part of the world.

According to the organizers, the culinary adventure will also provide guests with a glimpse of Malaysia’s diverse cultures, including the world-renowned art and taste of teh tarik (‘pulled’ Malaysian tea with milk). The nightly event will also feature the intricate skills of Malaysian pewter craftsmanship.

Kazakhstan National Geographic Society Explores Mausoleums of Ulytau

By Zarina Nokrabekova

Ulytau is a land of fresh air, delicious spring water, beautiful mountains, the origins of much of Kazakh culture and home to thousands of legends. And it is the cradle of the nation where a recent expedition was conducted by the Kazakhstan National Geographic Society (KNGS).

Saulet Sakenov 4Many centuries ago in Ulytau, fate intervened in the history of the Kazakh peo-

ple. Here on the white rug, according to tradition, khans were ordained. From Ulytau, legendary Tamerlane led his crusade against Khan Tokhtamysh. Here, the great khans Zhoshy, Alash, Tokhtamysh, the warrior Yedige and other historical figures are reposed. According to legend, Zheruiyk, a famous storyteller from Asan-kaygy, found a land of dreams here. That’s just part of Ulytau’s history.

Continued on Page B6

Nazarbayev University Launches Technological Park to Advance Research

By Dmitry Lee

ASTANA – Kazakhstan’s newest research institution, Nazarbayev University, launched a new 2,000 square metre Technological Park (TechnoPark) in hopes of growing the country’s research and innovation sector.

The facility, launched in mid-July, provides researchers with space for experiments and resources to help them commercialise their work and formulate new ideas. Minister of Education and Science Aslan Sarinzhapov attended the opening ceremony.

University partners from South Korea and the U.K. helped design the facility. It is designed to house biotechnology, robotics, IT, renewable energy and mechanics projects. The Technopark will enable the university to conduct its own scientific research and commercialise it.

“The opening of this Technopark signifies the beginning of the third stage of the Nazarbayev University that focuses on applying science to common, everyday uses,” Sarinzhapov said at the opening ceremony. “The first stage entailed the develop-



ment and implementation of the academic curriculum and inviting the best professors. The second stage concerned building up the research and scientific base of the university. Currently, scientists, along with young graduates from the Bolashak programme (Kazakhstan’s state education scholarship awarded to outstanding

students for study abroad) are carrying out research at Nazarbayev University. Thus, we can see the results of the second phase. Today, we are launching the third stage.”

The new facility will help anyone with an idea make it a reality. Applicants must apply to the commercialisation centre. Selected projects will not only receive fund-

ing, but also space to carry out the research.

The Technopark is a continuation of the plan to develop an intellectual-innovative cluster at Nazarbayev University and establish it as a world class research institution. It will help create a favourable environment for researchers and attract more research investments in Kazakhstan.

New Talent-Management Principle Seeks to Train More Effective Civil Servants

By Alibek Nurbekov

ASTANA – The Academy of Public Administration under the President of Kazakhstan recently opened a new academic year. This year, approximately 200 people, selected on the basis of the talent-management principle, obtained an opportunity to study in master’s degree and Ph.D. programmes.

During the opening of the fourth session of the Kazakh Parliament, the head of state noted that one of the main tasks related to Kazakhstan joining the 30 most-developed countries is a continuation of administrative reforms and the

creation of an effective system of public administration with a professional and compact state apparatus.

The main strategic objective of admissions to the academy in 2014 was the implementation of the talent-management principle aimed at the formation of a pool of students from among the most capable civil servants who are highly motivated to study. Just this year, of the approximately 500 applications submitted, 199 students were enrolled (184 master’s and 15 Ph.D.).

Representatives of the Kazakh Agency for Civil Service Affairs and Anti-Corruption, the Supreme

Court and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs congratulated the students and faculty of the academy on the occasion of the start of the new academic year.

In his speech, Deputy Chairman of the Agency for Civil Service Affairs and Anti-Corruption Sayan Akhmetzhanov noted the special role of the academy in implementing the tasks set by President Nursultan Nazarbayev, including training a new kind of civil servant that is competent, patriotic and able to ensure the effective development of the state and welfare of the people. Based on the positive experience to be gained, the further improvement

of the civil service institute will continue with a focus on preventing and warning of corruption.

“Formation of a new anti-corruption culture, anti-corruption education at all levels of study and high moral training, as well as ethical standards and zero tolerance of corruption, is becoming the priority,” said Akhmetzhanov.

In this regard, a particular role has been assigned to the academy to direct efforts to improve teaching methods of civil servants, develop modern educational programmes and introduce new teaching materials on anti-corruption issues, ethics and anti-corruption programmes.

THINGS TO WATCH SEPTEMBER

SCHOOLCHILDREN PALACE

September 21 at 08:45 Group run

VIP ROOM

September 19 at 23:00 Diva Shena Concert

ASTANA OPERA

September 17–October 5 Silk Road Festival at 19:00

September 17 at 19:00 “Toska” opera

MAXIM GORKY THEATRE

September 19 at 19:00 “Sparrow Nest” tragedy
September 27 at 11:00 “Cat Leopold Birthday” performance
September 28 at 11:00 “Mixed Emotions” drama
September 28 at 11:00 “Little Red Riding Hood” tale

SHABYT PALACE OF ART

September 27 and 28 “Hamlet” performance by at 19:00 “Globe” Shakespeare’s theatre

KAZAKHSTAN CENTRAL CONCERT HALL

September 29 at 19:00 Valery Meladze concert

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 2014

Kazakhstan, Qatar to Implement Joint Project to Help Nuclear Test Victims

Continued from Page A1

"The project we are presenting to you today is of high importance and would make Qatar actively join the world process of non-proliferation and disarmament as well as positively reflect on your country's image internationally," Saudabayev said.

In turn, Al Muraikhi thanked the foundation director and expressed his deep interest in visiting Kazakhstan and the city of Semey in particular.

Both parties exchanged views on the possible implementation of this



Kanat Saudabayev (l) and Dr. Ahmed bin Mohamed Al Muraikhi.

joint project and considered it as the first step of mutually-beneficial co-

operation. Despite the differences in weather, the parties also agreed

there are many fields of mutual interest for collaboration and much in common between the two countries. On the day the two met, for example, the temperature in Doha exceeded 45 degrees Celsius and the humidity, as usual, was very high, while the people in Astana are getting ready for five months of winter, when the temperature could drop to minus 45 degrees Celsius.

On the same day, Saudabayev met with Dr. Khalid bin Mohamed al Attiyah, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the State of Qatar.

Foreign Minister al Attiyah underlined that the fact that one of

the first visits Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, the new Emir of Qatar, paid to Astana shows the priority of relations with Kazakhstan for the Arab country.

"I truly respect President Nursultan Nazarbayev and Kazakhstan as well and am confident that all the projects we put together will have positive results and further expand cooperation between the two countries," he said.

Al Attiyah also emphasised the leadership of the Kazakh President in the international non-proliferation and nuclear threat reduction process and expressed the willingness of Qatar to take part in the joint project to construct the rehabilitation centre in Semey.

The parties underlined the priority of the project, as they are aware of the large number of people who are in need of medical treatment.

A total of 456 nuclear tests were

conducted at the Semipalatinsk nuclear test site, causing suffering to 1.5 million people. The United Nations declared Aug. 29 as the International Day against Nuclear Tests, the very day in 1991 Nazarbayev shut down the Semipalatinsk test site, one of the biggest in the world. However, babies are still born with defects or other health problems.

The United Nations General Assembly, paying due attention to the issue, adopted a resolution in 1997 calling on member states for special economic assistance as well as highlighting the importance of international cooperation and coordination for the human and ecological rehabilitation of the Semey region. In subsequent years, the UN General Assembly passed five more resolutions on the issue urging consistent international attention to the problems of the Semey area.

New Iranian Ambassador Sees Many Areas of Cooperation

Continued from Page A8

Mr. Rouhani's visit is important for several reasons; it will be his first official visit to Kazakhstan as president. This visit demonstrates Kazakhstan's importance and the nature of the questions asked highlight the key areas of Kazakhstan and Iran's relationship. During the visit, we expect to hear words of agreement between the two leaders, especially regarding developing cooperation; the most important points will be economic in nature. Furthermore, at the end of the visit, we hope to be able to sign documents that will support economic cooperation and make it easier for companies to trade. Relevant government departments and companies are doing their utmost to make this a successful visit.

Maybe an oil pipeline is very fitting in this context. What impact

would such a pipeline have on the two countries' economies?

One of the most important spheres of cooperation is, of course, the energy sector, especially the oil industry.

As you are aware, the Islamic Republic of Iran has a well-developed and progressive oil industry that is well-known throughout the world. Iran has a century-old oil industry and has access to government experts, talented human capital and many technologies. In this regard, Iranian cooperation in Kazakhstan could be useful in oil processing or help in building petrochemical factories.

Also, taking into consideration Iran's infrastructure, we could also consider a partnership in bringing Kazakh oil products to the world market. Of course, there have been successful partnerships in this sphere before. They worked as follows: Iran received Kazakh oil in its

northern ports and would use it for its own purposes and then trade it for the same amount in its southern ports; these are called swap operations.

Because Kazakhstan has a large volume of oil, questions as to who exports it arise. Since this question has been brought up, there has been a proposal to build a pipeline between Kazakhstan and Iran for oil exports. To make this project a reality, we must focus on what is necessary and work on the relevant issues and make the necessary calculations and plans for export.

How would you assess Kazakhstan's role in the global nuclear dialogue and its contribution as a host to the P5+1 and Iran talks?

We would like to thank Kazakhstan for hosting the nuclear peace talks. Kazakhstan's support for reaching an agreement between Iran

and a number of countries on nuclear issues is worth to mention. We believe that if other countries have a position similar to Kazakhstan's, a consensus could be reached much quicker.

Of course, there are still proposals on the nuclear question and the decision is dependent on the parties that attend these negotiations. We, on our part, appreciate Kazakhstan's position supporting the right of using nuclear energy peacefully.

What would you say about Kazakhstan hosting a low enriched uranium bank under International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) auspices? Do you think it's a good idea?

Of course, many countries give importance to the peaceful use of nuclear energy, especially Kazakhstan. The government's current focus on the reduction of fossil-fuels and

increased attention to renewable energy is very important.

Kazakhstan's initiatives in this sphere on the global arena are very understandable and we support them. The fundamental policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in this regard is "nuclear energy for all and nuclear weapons for none." As such, Kazakhstan has both the full right to the use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes and our support for these rights.

How would you assess Kazakhstan's role and its contribution to the Muslim world?

Kazakhstan is considered a very important and influential country in the Muslim world. Kazakhstan is a large and unique country. It has maintained very good relations with Muslim countries since its independence. Also, it is actively involved in the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). Furthermore, it has started

many initiatives in this sphere, one of the most important of which is creating the nutrition fund of the Islamic states. Kazakhstan has been paying attention to food production in Islamic countries and taking into consideration its wheat industry, Kazakhstan has proposed the creation of a food security reserve.

Kazakhstan has cooperated on economic, cultural and political issues with many countries in the framework of OIC and the Parliamentary Union of the OIC member states. In the Islamic world, Kazakhstan is seen as an equal. Additionally, Kazakhstan's position on the events in Iraq and Syria related to extremism and terrorism are constructive. In general, the Kazakhstan government, because of the care it pays to developing its economy and its political situation, is considered an influential country in the Islamic world.

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CULTURE

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 2014

Open Air Classical Music Festival Marks Almaty City Day



Almaty residents and visitors will be able to enjoy live classical music during the fifth Open Air Music Festival held within the celebration of the Almaty city day.

By Julia Rutz

ALMATY – Almaty residents and visitors will be able to enjoy live classical music from Sept. 9 to Sept. 11 during the fifth Open Air

Music Festival. The festival's Orchestra Parade will be held on the stage of the Shabyt Central Park Amphitheatre as part of the Almaty City Day celebrations.

The Orchestra Parade has be-

come one of Almaty's best known cultural events, according to Kairat Kulbayev, head of the Almaty Department of Culture. Money from the orchestra show will be given to cultural charities.

The concert will be opened by the Almaty Symphonic Pop Orchestra, conducted by Alexandre Belyakov. The headliner of the show will be the famous Russian music group Kvatro – the quartette of Sveshnikov Choral Art Academy graduates, Anton Sergeev (tenor), Anton Boglevski (tenor), Leonid Ovrucki (baritone) and Denis Vertunov (bass).

Famous Kazakh compositions by Abai and Tlendiyev will also be performed by the Otyrar Sazy Academic Folk-Ethnographic Orchestra, conducted by Dinzhura Tlendiyeva. The audience will also be able to enjoy classical masterpieces by renowned composers, such as Georges Bizet, Edvard Grieg, Giacomo Puccini, Aram Khachaturyan and Giuseppe Verdi performed on Kazakh national music instruments during the second day of the show.

The open air concert will end with a performance by the National Brass Band, conducted by Kanat Akhmatov, performing compositions from famous musicals, such as "Cats," "Jesus Christ Superstar," "Juno and Avos," "The Phantom of the Opera" and "Chicago." One of the invited guests will be professional guitarist Vakh-tangh Toreli who is famous for his "Classics and Rock" music show.

"Birzhan-Sara" to be Performed at Silk Road Festival

Continued from Page B1

The part of Birzhan's mother, Analyk, will be performed by Dina Khamzina, a sensual interpretation that will touch the hearts of the audience. Zhannat Baktai will perform jealous Altynai and Beimbet Tanarykov will play the party of Yestai.

A memorable work of the famous Kazakh composer, "Birzhan-Sara" is the new musi-

cal version by Abzal Mukhitdinov, with staging by Yuri Alexandrov, which premiered in the Astana Opera on June 21, 2013. The original staging by the People's Artist of Russia gained great popularity due to the new vision of the director and the complex and deep relationship between poet and composer Birzhan and poet Sara. Alexandrov made opera accessible not only for the present generation to understand,

but by conveying to the viewer the idea of personal drama and eternal love.

"Birzhan-Sara" has been performed with great success not only in Kazakh theatres but also abroad, in Germany, Turkey, Russia, Uzbekistan and other countries. The first performance was held on Nov. 7, 1946 on the stage of the city's Abai State Academic Theatre of Opera and Ballet. The Russian

premiere took place in Moscow in 1948.

The opera presents a vivid embodiment of musical and poetic tradition that attaches originality to ingenious musical composition disclosed in its entirety and depth. Almost 70 years after its creation, "Birzhan-Sara" remains an example of inexhaustible artistic power, born in the synthesis of national and universal cultural and poetic experience.

Computer Animated Film Nears Completion in Pavlodar

By Bakhytbek Aduov

ASTANA – Amateur filmmakers in Pavlodar are shooting a fantasy-action movie titled "The Mechanics" using CGI (computer-generated imagery) technology.

Andrey Zakharov, the leader of the group making the film, is an engineer-administrator at the Aksu Ferroalloys Plant near Pavlodar. He is also a professional photographer and the author of the video project *underground.kz* which shines light on Kazakhstan's rock music scene. Although he hasn't studied filmmaking, he has managed to muster up the courage to create a film.

"The Mechanics" is a product of Zakharov's imagination as well as his first independent film. He is a director and screenwriter and is also responsible for overseeing the film's shooting process. "We have neither sponsors nor investors. Our group is funded with enthusiasm. We are funding the entire project ourselves and we create the characters, model the costumes and make the decorations on our own initiative. We rely on our friends and fans to tell us when something is missing. The purpose of this film is to break the stereotypes about Kazakhstan filmmaking," said Zakharov.

"The Mechanics" is about an ordinary girl named Casey who, by circumstance, finds herself trying to save the universe with a group of peacekeeping heroes called the Mechanics.

According to Zakharov, the film has many dynamic scenes. Some parts of the film are entirely computer generated. So far, 60 percent of the film has been drawn and 30 percent has been shot via traditional means.

The project casts amateur actors and is being shot in basements, at-

tics and public streets. The film's budget is about four million tenge (US\$21,978). British director Gareth Edwards' 2010 movie "Monsters" had a budget of \$15,000 and was a box office success, grossing \$4.2 million.

"The Mechanics" is a product of Zakharov's imagination as well as his first independent film.

Zakharov noted that the film will be completed in December and then undergo post-production and editing.

He added: "Once everything is ready, we will try to get Timur Bekmambetov involved. We have already spoken with people capable of helping us reach him in Moscow. We aren't ruling out other options though."

Timur Bekmambetov is a Kazakh-Russian film director known for his vampire franchise "Night Watch" (2004, Russia), "Day Watch" (2006, Russia) and "Wanted" (2008, USA) among others. Similarly, he started his career with the independent movie "Peshavar Waltz" (1994).

"The Mechanics" is being made without support from professional filmmakers, so there is the possibility that it may not do well at the box office. However, no matter the outcome, the team will have gained valuable experience and completed something not many do.

Famous classics such as "Star Wars: Episode V – The Empire Strikes Back" (1980) and "The Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles" (1990) were independent projects.

Cultural Development Is Key to a Successful State

By Arystanbek Mukhamediyev

Cultural policy is the main ideological platform of each successful state which forms the main value system of society and the creative origin of the individual.

Realising the need for modernisation of the cultural policy, President Nursultan Nazarbayev in his address to the people of Kazakhstan, "Kazakhstan's Way 2050: common goal, common interests, common future," set a clear goal, "to develop and approve a long-term concept of the development of the cultural policy of the country, aimed at the formation of a competitive cultural mentality of Kazakh people and development of modern cultural clusters." This target implementation will allow Kazakhstan to become one of the centres of world culture and art by 2050.

Culture is one of the most important priorities of the development of any country. The availability of an effectively-functioning infrastructure of cultural institutions, as well as mechanisms ensuring the preservation and enrichment of the national and world cultural heritage and the creation, broadcast and consumption of high-quality cultural values are a criterion of the success of the state.

Given the high demand for a new conceptual vision of the development of the industry, the elaboration of the proposed concept involved leading cultural experts, art critics, cultural organisations and creative unions. The set task was not easy – it was not just to present a vision of the cultural policy of Kazakhstan until 2050, but also set new development impulses and mechanisms of forming a competitive cultural mentality of



Kazakhstan. Therefore, everyone's opinion was interesting. We have studied the advanced world experience and best practices and carried out a comprehensive case study of the problems and needs of the population. A large-scale discussion was held at each stage of development of the draft concept. All have worked with great dedication.

In his national development strategy until 2050, the leader of the nation has put forward the fundamental idea of consolidation of our multinational state "Mangilik Yel" (Kazakh for eternal nation) which has become a basic component of the draft concept of cultural policy.

In general, the draft document is based on such principles as the priority of the national cultural heritage: recognition of culture as a factor of growth and a powerful resource for social development, respect for the cultural diversity of the country, support and development of cultures and traditions of multi-ethnic Kazakhstan, freedom of creative personality and cultural expression, unity of cultural environments on the basis of new institutional associations, contempo-

rary cultural clusters and advanced technologies. All these principles allow for building a system of values which will be the core of forming a new, competitive cultural mentality of Kazakhstan.

Culture itself is a very complex industry because it is impossible to make any calculations here, to determine a clear development forecast, to bring a certain formula. It is safe to say that no country in the world has clear standards and regulations in its culture. It is possible to bring up a civilised person. Books, movies, music and the environment in which people live can be involved, so it's important to create a high-quality cultural product to form the correct values.

The head of state very accurately said, "Traditions and culture are the genetic code of the nation and we should preserve our culture and traditions in all their diversity and grandeur to collect our cultural heritage by crumbs."

He has repeatedly emphasised that the Kazakh culture should become the nucleus for all citizens of the country. The Kazakhs have always had seven great spiritual treasures, "Zheti Kazyna," or as they say today, fundamental priorities. Thus, the draft concept identified seven components of the cultural code of the nation – heritage, traditions, customs, language, family, lifestyle and holidays. These are values which must be laid at birth, accompany a person throughout his or her life and passed on from generation to generation. People who know their origins and respect the historical roots of tradition are the foundation of a strong and successful state.

Modern realities require the creation of a qualitatively-new cultural product, capable of forming

and cultivating basic guidelines available and understandable to everyone. First of all, it is human values – family, virtue, humanity, creative labour. It is necessary to create bright new images, have the ability to set a clear hierarchy of norms and be the conductors of simple and indisputable truths. Our heroes, relatively speaking, should be an ordinary doctor selflessly devoted to the profession, as well as well-known, prominent personalities who have left their mark in history. The assets of the national cinema, literature and paintings must be the projects of the country's iconic historical events and cultural heritage.

Domestic animation should get its full development. This is the most effective and affordable tool of educating a new generation in Kazakhstan, for which value orientation should be our national way of life, our traditions and our heroes. Kazakh batyrs, sultans and heroes who receive artistic expression in animation and movies will become mass examples to follow. The experience of The Walt Disney Company is indicative, which by creating modern heroes for children made them the subject of large-scale replication and influence. It is a big business and a huge industry.

No small role in the concept is devoted to the creation of modern cultural clusters or so-called "creative economy," which will provide the relationship among creativity, education and science, economics, business and innovation. Today, it is the most appropriate way to achieve the competitive benefits of the industry.

With regard to institutional reforms, there is a proposal to establish a National Council for litera-

ture and art under the President of Kazakhstan and the arts councils by branches under the Ministry of Culture and Sport. It is an initiative of creative unions, supported by experts and industry representatives, which note the need to create a dialogue platform for artists, public figures and businessmen. It will address issues of formation of repertoire and touring policy, personnel, logistics industry and others.

In addition, in the near future there are plans to transfer a number of art schools, colleges and schools to the Ministry of Culture and Sport. This measure will solve a wide range of issues on the preparation of creative personnel, their further advancement, professional orientation and implementation of the principle of dual education. It is known that the formation of a creative personality is a continuous process that begins in early childhood and continues throughout almost all of one's life. In this context, the task of the Ministry of Culture and Sport is to provide a systematic support to talents, to create the starting conditions for their creative growth and to shape its unique educational model in culture.

Cultural products should teach each of us to be proud for the country. We live in a country with rich historical and cultural heritage and we have unique cultural and natural sites, historical monuments and sacred places. We have everything, but unfortunately, it almost cannot find the proper development. In this regard, it is necessary to combine all the resources to use all available tools and to create the conditions for intensive development of a competitive cultural environment. In particular, the concept of cultural policy proposes to significantly expand the functions of national mu-

seums and reserve museums. The format of their work is expected to be focused on close interaction with the science of history, archeology, restoration, art and ethnography. Museums in the country should be supporting centres of research, science, cultural information and creative innovations.

We see the new format as well in the work of national libraries. Today they are a large-scale information resource for the country that should be utilised to the maximum and become widely available in a modern and convenient format. In fact, the library must be a multi-functional, educational and informational platform of the cultural activities of our citizens.

The priorities of the new cultural policy include strengthening the status of the Kazakh culture in the world. It is no secret that today, the potential of integration of the national culture and art in the world cultural process is not realised enough. There is a real need to increase international ties, including through organisations such as UNESCO, TURKSOY, ICOMOS and others. There are plans to create the country's regional research, scientific and educational centre in the field of humanitarian cooperation with the UNESCO International Institute. There is also a proposal to make Astana the headquarters of a new international organisation in the field of culture – the Eurasian Council for Cultural Development of the Silk Road.

Of course, the industry faces difficult tasks. Each predetermined direction of the new cultural policy is a huge area of work and their successful implementation is another step towards a successful building of a strong, successful state with a high level of cultural development.

The author is Minister of Culture and Sport of Kazakhstan.

DIALOGUE OF CIVILISATIONS

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 2014

Kazakhstan's Model of Interreligious Dialogue: the Basis of Peace and Harmony

By Aidar Abuov

In the 21st century era of globalisation that is full of threats and dangers, where things that happen at one end of the globe have a direct impact on the life of a country at the other end of the world, any threat to human life ceased to be a problem for only one particular nation. Therefore, since gaining its independence, Kazakhstan has not confined itself to resolving only its own external and internal problems, and has not been a passive onlooker to injustices happening in the world, but has actively participated in solving world problems.

From the very beginning, our republic has been a natural border between the major world religions of Islam, Christianity and Buddhism.

For many centuries, the representatives of various nations and ethnic groups have lived and worked together in Kazakhstan. Strong cultural and economic ties that promote mutual enrichment and prosperity have been built here. This is a colossal wealth that the people of the country are hoping to preserve and pass on to their descendants.

In 2004, President Nursultan Nazarbayev, understanding the growing role of religion in society, as well as the real threat posed by terrorist organisations put forward the idea of an interreligious forum of religious leaders in the capital of Kazakhstan – Astana.

Nazarbayev's initiative has been positively accepted by religious authorities. As an example, I shall mention several facts.

Since 2003, the President has met with the General Secretary of the Muslim World League Sheikh Al-Turki, Russian Orthodox Church Patriarch Alexy II, Pope John Paul II, Chief Ashkenazi



Rabbi of Israel Yona Metzger and others. Each of them supported and commended the idea to hold the Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions.

Through the support of the heads of states and leaders of world and traditional religions, the First Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions was held on Sept. 23–24, 2003 in Kazakhstan.

The significance of the first congress was in its conceptual idea – dialogue of religions is an effective tool for settling disputes and opposing violence and terror.

The aims of the first congress were to find common guidelines in the world and traditional forms of religions to create a permanent international, interdenominational institute for ensuring religious dialogue and making coordinated decisions.

The forum concluded with the adoption of a declaration, where spiritual leaders made statements about joint actions on ensuring peace and progress for mankind and guaranteeing stability in societies as the basis of a harmonious world in the future.

The success of the event was consolidated by the decision of the first congress to hold the interreligious forum on a regular basis – once every three years. By this decision, Kazakhstan was granted the honour of organising

and preparing in 2006 the Second Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions in Astana.

During the period between congresses, main bodies have been established, including the Secretariat of the Congress and Congress Working Group, which consist of representatives of different religions.

Working bodies of the congresses carry out on a regular basis activities aimed at the objective and detailed preparation of themes and concepts for forthcoming meetings of religious leaders, and the development and drafting of the outcomes of the congresses.

The Second Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions was held in Astana on Sept. 12–13, 2006 in a new building constructed specifically for the event – the Palace of Peace and Reconciliation.

On the first day of the forum, the document named “Principles of Interreligious Dialogue” was adopted, which contained the basic components that guided participants in their work.

The congress also adopted a joint declaration calling on representatives of all religions and ethnic groups to preventing conflicts on the ground of cultural and religious differences. This document reflects in full the global need to replace “opposition ideology” with a “culture of peace.”

The Third Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions was held in July 2009 in Astana under the theme, “The Role of Religious Leaders in Building a World of Tolerance, Mutual Respect and Cooperation.”

During the congress, issues were discussed related to the moral and spiritual values of the modern world in the context of the challenges and threats of the 21st century and the need for sol-

idarity and religious tolerance in the modern global community.

The outcome of the congress was an appeal by the participants to religious and political leaders, public figures, scientists, mass media and the world community.

A proposal was made to create a Council of Religious Leaders to ensure dialogue and cooperation with other forums and international organisations, whose work would be aimed at a dialogue of cultures and economic cooperation.

“The concept of the Council of Religious Leaders” was adopted during the 10th session of the congress’ Secretariat, which was held in June 2011 in Astana.

The Fourth Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions was held in May 2012 in Astana under the name “Peace and Harmony as the Choice of Mankind.”

The important role of religious leaders in strengthening the security of humankind, improving dialogue and mutual understanding was emphasised during that congress.

The participants stressed the responsibility of pastors for the moral development of societies, the education of younger generations and the efforts of religious leaders aimed at solving economic and social problems on national and international levels.

One of the most important initiatives of the fourth congress was the creation of an Internet resource as part of the common electronic portal G-Global, dedicated to the formation and strengthening of global tolerance and trust.

In conclusion, I would like to note that the Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions has become a candid and legitimate reality of modern history and human life.

The format and spirit of the Astana congresses have created favourable conditions for dialogue where inevitably rich conversation are held, as well as meaningful discussions on the spiritual rapprochement between communities and nations, the adoption of the joint declaration and the address of religious leaders to people, countries and nations took place.

During the congresses, ties between representatives of different religions and confessions

exchange ideas, listen and hear each other.

Through initiatives and suggestions made at the congresses, today, we have a Council of Religious Leaders, the governing body of the congress, which is empowered to deal with appeals to the world, to raise acute issues and look for constructive solutions and act for the benefit of justice and peace.

Throughout the period in between two congresses, constant and hard work is being done by

In 2004, President Nursultan Nazarbayev, understanding the growing role of religion in society, as well as the real threat posed by terrorist organisations put forward the idea of an interreligious forum of religious leaders in the capital of Kazakhstan – Astana.

were established and strengthened, which have contributed to the growth of mutual trust and respect between religious communities. Those are the main components of peaceful coexistence and harmony in our common home, the Earth.

The contribution of the first congress to the institutionalisation of the global dialogue platform is unique. It has literally encouraged spiritual leaders to give a helping hand to each other. It is not a secret that the congresses bring together people who often share not only different religious beliefs and cultural aspects, but also years of confrontation between the states where they live.

The uniqueness and unprecedented sensitivity of the congresses are that representatives of different views hold a dialogue,

the Secretariat of the Congress and its Working Group, the Committee for Religious Affairs of the Ministry of Culture and Sport, the International Centre of Cultures and Religions, as well as the parliament, the government and the presidential administration, aimed at implementing the initiatives of participants of the congresses, serving as a basis for the further promotion of the principles of religious tolerance dialogue and understanding in the human community.

As Kazakhstan has encouraged the international community to do good work, it has won the hearts, respect and favour of people around the world.

The author is Director of the International Centre of Cultures and Religions in Astana.

Building Security Takes Diligence

By Yeshaya Cohen

The Torah says: “The pit is empty; there is no water in it.” It would seem that the second part of the sentence is a repetition of the first. If it has already been said that the pit is empty, why specify that there is no water, as the word “empty” means there is nothing in it? But is this what was actually said? In fact, this is not what was said. A traveler approaching the pit and taking a glimpse inside could tell other people walking with him that there is no water inside and that it is empty, meaning, there is nothing to quench their thirst. But if we look carefully into the pit, we would see snakes and scorpions at the bottom of it (as Jewish rabbis would say).

Thus, from a practical point of view, the pit can be considered empty, as there is no water and no way to benefit from it. But if believing it is completely empty, someone decides to descend to the bottom of the pit, he will be risking his life, as he will inevitably be met by snakes and scorpions.

Why have I mentioned this ancient Jewish wisdom? This phrase describes the most important principle laid down by God regarding the functioning of our world: if there is a vessel – whether in the material or spiritual sense – it must be filled with something. When a person does not fill his life and the world around him with holiness and good (in the above phrase water represents holiness and good), evil (which is symbolised by those snakes and scorpions) will rush in to fill the void.

This analogy can be made regarding every facet of life, including those pertaining to society and the role of the state. Some positive developments in society, in ar-



today don't have true religious knowledge, pseudo-religious slogans fill the gap. We can combat this phenomenon only by refilling the void with wisdom from our religious leaders.

This is exactly what the Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions does. The forum allows the most respected and recognised religious leaders in their communities declare openly that religion always promotes peace, love and friendship and strongly stands against evil and violence, the latter being the reason why religion is completely different from pseudo-sects and movements that justify violence in the name of God.

God supports good will and bestows His blessings on those who seek kindness and peace. If at least one person, having heard on a television programme or having read in the newspaper about the Congress, realises that he has had many negative ideas imposed on him by bad people and refuses to participate in the activities of a sect or a terrorist organisation, it would mean that at least one soul has been saved. At the same time, we can't know exactly how many souls have been saved in reality, because, in fact, not only the soul of that man should be taken into account, but the souls of people which he could have harmed.

Therefore, each Congress and even its preparation, is a good deed that contributes to the safety of citizens. I hope that with the will of God, with the help of the Congress and due to our aspirations for peace and prosperity, God will send tranquility and well-being to Kazakhstan and all people on Earth!

The author is the Chief Rabbi of Kazakhstan.

In Kazakhstan, a Unique Opportunity for Inter-Religious Dialogue

By Deacon Andrei Titushkin

In the 21st century, the need for a conflict-free society, strengthening of cooperation between people and peaceful coexistence of the adherents of different cultures and religions is high on the agenda. The Russian Orthodox Church is striving for inter-religious harmony and understanding.

One of the most important clerical documents of the present time, “Basis of Social Concept of the Russian Orthodox Church,” says, “The ministry of the salvation of man and the world cannot be limited by national or religious limits, as clearly says the Lord Himself in the parable of the Good Samaritan. Moreover, members of the Church get close to Jesus Christ, who suffered all the sins and suffering of the world, welcoming each one of us – the hungry, homeless, sick or prisoner. Help for those who suffer is a true help to Christ and the execution of this commandment determines the eternal destiny of every human being.” (Matthew. 25.31–46) (p. 1, 2)

In his report to the Bishops Council as of Feb. 2, 2011, His Holiness Cyril, Patriarch of Moscow and all Russia said, “Many of the challenges of our time related to the processes of globalisation, the rise of extremism and terrorism and environment require a joint response of people, which can be found through inter-religious dialogue. Our Church is actively involved in it.”

According to His Holiness, the basis of inter-religious dia-



logue should be not a “mixture of religions,” not a questionable theological compromise, not a syncretic ritual, but a respect for the integrity of beliefs, traditions, history and lifestyle of each other.

The Russian Orthodox Church clearly understands and sees that believers of different traditional religions can stand together against social evils, immorality and injustice. People of different religions and nationalities are called together to overcome national and social conflicts.

The Ruling Council of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church of 2011, “On the Issues of Inner Life and External Activities of the Russian Orthodox Church,” says, “An important aspect of the Christian appeal to the world is inter-religious dialogue. Participation of our Church in the dialogue is based on the idea of Orthodox reality, excluding mixture or artificial combination of various religious traditions. The aim of this dialogue is to search

for an answer to common challenges, ensuring peace and cooperation of people with different religious views, ethnicities and cultures, a joint opposition to extremism and terrorism, as well as attempts to supersede religious outlook on social life.”

Moral concepts of traditional religions have a lot in common, which allow religious leaders to jointly face the challenges of immorality, aggressive atheism and ethnic, political and social strife. We may see that the religious leaders of the conflicting countries can find a compromise more easily than politicians. In discussions with the government, participants of interreligious dialogue repeatedly condemn terrorism, express their support for the traditional family, advocate the return of morality in society, criticise the vicious policy of some of the media representatives and defend the interests of the religious communities.

We are glad that Kazakhstan regularly becomes a centre of the world inter-religious dialogue. Leaders and representatives of completely different traditional religious views have a unique opportunity to meet and exchange experiences on the hospitable Kazakh land. I am sure that future meetings of respected religious leaders within the Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions will also serve for the common good, promoting harmony and peace in the world.

The author is Deacon of the Russian Orthodox Church of St. Nicholas of Myra on Three Mountains, Moscow, Russia.

DIALOGUE OF CIVILISATIONS

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 2014

Bridging the Gap between World Religions

By Dr. Muhammad Zia-Ul-Haq

The recent events of global importance are evidence of increasing religiosity in international affairs. Religion has become a decisive force in the contemporary world and it is crucial that it be a force for good – for conflict resolution, not conflict creation.

Unfortunately, religion, which is a source of moral and spiritual satisfaction, is demonstrated as a source of tension and conflict due to increasing terrorism on the name of religion. Religion is part of the solution but unfortunately portrayed as the source of the problem.

In the current international scenario, religion has returned counterintuitively against all expectations in many parts of the world as a powerful, even shaping, force. The presence of effective religious forces is particularly felt in acute conflict zones, such as Bosnia, Kosovo, Chechnya, Kashmir, Iraq, Afghanistan, India, Pakistan, the Northern Ireland, the Middle East, sub-Saharan Africa and parts of Asia.

It has been said that in the Balkans, among Catholic Croats, Orthodox Serbs and Muslims, all three speak the same language and share the same race; the only thing that divides them is religion. In the understanding of present global conflicts, religion is often considered the fault line along which the sides divide. The reason for this is very simple. Whereas the twentieth century was dominated by the politics of ideology, the twenty-first century will be dominated by the politics of identity. The turn



of politics from ideology to identity brought religion to the centre stage of the majority of dimensions of the modern world.

Multi-religious and ethnic conflicts and tensions created a situation that is helping the extremists and exclusivists in every society to use a “them and us” mentality for hijacking religion and killing innocent people in its name. Their actions cannot be justified or legitimised by any theology, but the causes and consequences of their actions will have everything to do with how and where religions will be going in the twenty-first century. What September 11 illustrated was the ability of a few determined individuals to pull their entire civilisation, whether it agrees or does not agree with their thinking or actions, into a confrontation with other civilisations.

It is to be noted here that extremism is not limited to any particular religion, race or region. In fact ideological extremism is present everywhere. Some theorists made unexpected contributions to the discussion of religions by underlining the role of religion in contemporary society. This is simply a modern version of the old

theory of despotism, and again, unfortunately, it is a fallacy to which some fanatical religions subscribe. So the real dichotomy is not among religions, but between extremists and exclusivists on the one hand and inclusivists and pluralists on the other.

Due to this primordial position of religions, Professor Hans Küng has rightly observed, “No peace among the nations without peace among the religions. No peace among the religions without dialogue between the religions. No dialogue between the religions without investigation of the foundation of the religions.”

There are serious efforts at the global level, perhaps for the first time on this scale and frequency, of influential individuals advocating mutual understanding among world religions. In these global efforts, the most effective and serious consideration to world religions was given by Nursultan Nazarbayev, the founding President of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

After independence in the formative period of the republic, he realised that sustainable economic development is dependent on peace and peace is not possible without bringing world religions closer and bridging the gap among their followers. For this great task President Nazarbayev invited leaders of world and traditional religions to Astana in 2003. The first Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions was held on Sept. 23-24, 2003 in Astana. Leaders and eminent representatives of religions as well as honourable guests from 13 countries of Europe,

Asia and Africa participated in the forum. It was decided in this first congress that a permanent secretariat of the Congress of World and Traditional Religions, comprised of representatives of leaders and eminent personalities of religions, should be established to promote the following goals and objectives:

- promoting global dialogue among religions and cultures.
- deepening and strengthening mutual understanding and respect among different religious communities.
- development of the culture of tolerance and mutual respect as opposed to the ideology of hatred and extremism.
- cooperation and interaction with all international organisations and structures that pursue the goals of promoting dialogue among religions, cultures and civilisations.

To achieve these goals and objectives the secretariat has organised up to now four congresses.

The second Congress was held on Sept. 12-13, 2006 in Astana on the theme of “Religion, Society and International Security.” This congress was held at the Palace of Peace and Harmony, a state-of-the-art venue purposely built as the forum’s permanent home. The second congress, which brought together 43 delegations from 20 countries of Europe, Asia, Africa and the Americas, adopted “The Principles of Inter-religious Dialogue.” On the basis of the recommendations, the second congress established the International Centre for Cultures and Religions was established.

changing the differences into diversities.

The themes and sub-themes that have been adopted in the four congresses and various meetings of the secretariat of the Congress of World and Traditional Religions affirm that the present developments in science and technology require parallel progress in the relationship of followers of various religious and cultural traditions. The time has affirmed the continuous need for joint efforts by all major civilisations to promote a culture of dialogue on the basis of difference, diversity, plurality tolerance, mutual respect, freedom of expression and sincere readiness at the grassroots level. Agreement on the agenda on the basis of common interests like spiritual satisfaction, trans-cultural norms, justice and submission to the creatures of the universe will lead dialogue to succeed.

The dialogue is the only hope for saving the world from the clash of civilisations; otherwise, worldwide conflicts and violence will continue taking religious dimension after feeding from misconceptions, misunderstandings and misrepresentations. The confidence of human beings on the movement of dialogue will push us ahead and we will be able to talk on other matters that are important to all nations, such as ecology, holy places, medical ethics, food technology, etc. Worldwide efforts against hunger, disease and natural disasters can be unified only after a better understanding, harmony and peace among faiths through dialogue.

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Religious Harmony is a National Value, Inspiration to Other Nations

By Madina Abisheva

President Nursultan Nazarbayev’s state-of-the-nation address, “Kazakhstan 2050 Strategy: A New Political Course for an Established State,” embraces several key national goals, including the peaceful coexistence of various ethnicities and religious tolerance. Peace and interethnic harmony are major national values here in Kazakhstan. Peaceful coexistence between different cultures and civilisations in our multinational country has become a model for many nations around the world.

President Nazarbayev underlined the need to strengthen interfaith partnerships, further develop inter-confessional dialogue and preserve and strengthen the values of modern civilisation. He outlined the principles of inter-confessional dialogue in the modern world, which was reflected in the unique joint document, “The Principles of Inter-religious Dialogue.”

Kazakhstan serves as a bridge between major world religions, namely Islam, Christianity and Buddhism. For centuries, representatives of various nations and ethnic groups have lived and worked together here in peace. As a result, strong cultural and economic ties have evolved; they are accompanied by concern for the welfare and prosperity of the people.

Due to effective government policies towards religion and personal responsibility and the efforts of our country’s leadership, ethnic conflict and religious confrontation have lost anything that could even resemble a haven in Kazakhstan.

Today, terrorism and extremism pose particularly complex challenges to the world. Radicals use religion to play with the minds of unsophisticated people in different parts of the world.

In 2003, President Nazarbayev launched an initiative to hold the first Congress of World and Traditional Religions in Astana. The event became an important stepping stone in Kazakhstan’s quest to become a facilitator of dialogue between different faiths.

Religious leaders from across the world praised the initiative of President Nazarbayev. The Congress was supported by Dr. Abdullah bin Abdul Mohsin Al-Turki, the Secretary General of the Muslim World League, the Patriarch of



Russian Orthodox church Alexy II, Holy Father Pope John Paul II, Chief Ashkenazi Rabbi of Israel Iona Metzger and many other world famous religious leaders and figures.

With support from heads of state and leaders of world and traditional religions, the First Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions took place on Sept. 23 and 24, 2003 in Astana. A total of 17 delegations from 14 countries around the world participated in the event.

The Congress received congratulatory letters from the leaders of both foreign countries and international organisations, as well as from various religious leaders, including Patriarch of Russian Orthodox Church Alexy II, Pope John Paul II, Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams and Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople.

The first congress greatly contributed to the global process of inter-civilisational and intercultural dialogue. It reflected the efforts of the global community in addressing the so called clash of civilisations and global challenges resulting from cultural and religious differences and building a world based on tolerance, development and security.

At the first congress, a decisive step to strengthen harmony and establish a constructive dialogue between different civilisations, confessions, countries and peoples was made.

During the first congress, a declaration was issued in which the spiritual leaders declared their intention to take joint actions to safeguard peace and progress on behalf of all of mankind and ensure stability in society for a harmonious future.

Following the congress, delegates came to the conclusion that

religious dialogue should be profound and based on dialogue.

The success of the event was highlighted by the decision of the first congress to hold the inter-religious forum every three years. With this decision, Kazakhstan was granted the honor of organising the second Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions in Astana.

Also, Kazakhstan was given the responsibility of developing all aspects of the secretariat of the congress.

One of the initiatives put forth at the first congress was building a special venue for the Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions, which was successfully embodied by Norman Foster in Astana’s Palace of Peace and Harmony. Since 2006, all congress events have been held in the palace, which has also housed the congress secretariat and other permanent bodies.

More than a decade has passed since the first congress was convened. In 2013, a large international conference was held to mark the important historical date. Four congresses and 12 secretariat meetings have been held in Astana during these fruitful years.

In his address, the Kazakh President said: “Kazakhstan is our sacred home. Future generations will be living on this precious land in prosperity. By the will of fate, many different nationalities have been living here together. We opened our heart and showed them Kazakh hospitality. They grew up here and became our brothers. Nowadays, we are one multinational and united country. The era of globalisation is an epoch of multinational states. This is a global process. All nationalities and ethnic groups have contributed to the development of our country. No one has the right to discriminate against our people and infringe on our independence, or interfere with the brotherhood of our nation. A man who loves and respects his people will respect other nations. If we respect ourselves, others will respect us.” Therefore, let’s continue our regular meetings in the peaceful and hospitable country we call Kazakhstan at the upcoming 5th Congress in 2015.

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Religious Congress Provides Opportunity for Dialogue

Dr. Kala Acharya

In this world, different religions came into existence and spread over the centuries. They have different scriptures, different philosophies and different practices. On one hand, religions have given mankind the message of peace and harmony and also have contributed immensely to the well-being of humanity by encouraging different acts of charity, such as building schools, orphanages and hospitals and promoting art, architecture, sculpture and literature. On the other hand, in the name of religion, people have spilled innocent blood and raised fumes and fires of destruction. Thus, sometimes religions have become one of the major causes for dissension, division and conflict.

With this background and his prudence and insight, Nursultan Nazarbayev, the President of Kazakhstan, explored the possibilities of sharing together the areas of convergence and divergence in religions by organising the Congresses of the Leaders of World and Traditional Religions so as to establish a bond of fraternity among their followers. He looks forward to building a new world of peace and safety for all by bringing leaders of different faiths on one single platform. In his speech in the first Congress he said, “The diversity of faiths indeed is not a disadvantage; instead it is a priceless gift, thanks to which there is mutual enrichment and spiritual development.”

Religions, as S. Radhakrishnan, the second President of India pointed out, are like manifold dialects through which we can speak to God and God can speak to us. He wrote, “Religion speaks to us in many dialects. It has diverse complexions. And yet it has one true voice, the voice of compassion, of mercy, of patient love. And we must do all we can to listen to that voice.”

The Congress of the Leaders of World and Traditional Religions is the initiative of President Nazarbayev. It is a platform for inter-religious dialogue, which is a pressing need of the hour.

The world in which we live ought to be a happy home for one and all. The Yajurveda says, “Let the world be one single nest for all



its inhabitants.” If it is under the shadow of war, pierced by affliction, oppression, torture and pain, none can enjoy life which is worth living.

One can understand that world peace is not something that can be established permanently once and for all. It is like hunger which once satiated rises again. Efforts are constantly made to see that one gets his bread every day. Similarly, for maintaining world peace, people should go to great pains to achieve it. It is a shared responsibility. Much is talked about world peace, but only a few noble souls such as Mahatma Gandhi walk the path they talk about.

The followers of different religions, should make a resolution to help the fearful become fearless, the oppressed free from pain, the insecure feel secure, and the weak become strong; then, we can envisage that the dawn of peaceful coexistence is not far.

The idea of bringing together the leaders of different faiths on one single platform is in itself a beautiful dream come true, a dream which humankind perhaps would have never seen before. It is encouraging to come across political leaders like President Nazarbayev who realise

the potential of religious leaders in guiding human society.

Interfaith dialogue takes place on various levels, such as dialogue between academicians, dialogue between religious leaders, dialogue between lay persons, etc. Among these, the dialogue between religious leaders has a special significance. People at large have faith in religious leaders and they rigorously follow what they say. Political leaders, with their power to envisage and implement the policies for a nation, have the unique opportunity to meet religious leaders in these congress meetings which give space for mutual exchange on critical and urgent issues. Thus the sacred and secular powers come closer as pilgrims of peace to build bridges for inner and outer peace in the world.

With these and similar efforts, we, the followers of different religions, should make a resolution to help the fearful become fearless, the oppressed free from pain, the insecure feel secure, and the weak become strong; then, we can envisage that the dawn of peaceful coexistence is not far.

Saint Jnaneshvara, in his commentary on the Bhagavadgita, popularly known as Jnaneshvari, prays to God with the following words:

“May the sinners no longer commit evil deeds; may their desire to do good increase and may all beings live in harmony with one another. May the darkness of sin disappear, may the world see the rising of the sun of righteousness and may the desires of all creatures be fulfilled. May everyone be in the company of saints devoted to God, who will shower their blessings on them. Saints are walking gardens filled with wish-fulfilling trees and they are living abodes of wish-fulfilling gems. Their words are like oceans of nectar. They are moons without blemish and suns without heat. May these saints be the friends of all people.”

The congress meetings give the opportunity to be in the company of noble souls who, without any selfish motive, work for making the world a better place to live in.

The author is the director of K.J. Somaiya Bharatiya Sanskriti Peetham.

NATION&CAPITAL

TOURISM

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 2014

Kazakhstan National Geographic Society Explores Mausoleums of Ulytau

Continued from Page B1

The expedition was aimed at establishing GPS routes and preparing a digital and print outline map of Ulytau for tourists. In July, KNGS scientists carried out a preliminary evaluation expedition. The expedition team was composed of scientists, geographers, geologists, archaeologists, tourism experts and journalists. A documentary movie will be filmed and an audio book will be released about the expedition.

"Ulytau has played a large role in the history of the Kazakh people; our main goal is the revival and promotion of its cultural, historical and religious significance," said expedition leading expert, geographer, senior manager at Nazarbayev University and representative of the KNGS Saulet Sakenov. "Of course, it is necessary to develop our tourism industry, which would give a powerful impetus to the socio-economic recovery of the region. The expedition team met with residents of nearby villages. Villagers spoke in detail about the future of the tourism industry and called upon residents of Ulytau to become involved in promoting tourism."

Breath of Antiquity

The expedition traveled far to reach the mausoleums. The first on the expedition's route was the mausoleum of Alash Khan. The monument is a traditional mazar [Eastern style funeral home]. The area is fenced and plates are installed at the entrance depicting almost all known family symbols and genera of three Zhuzes. It was Alash Khan who is considered to be the ancestor of the founders of the Kazakh Khanate, Kerey and Zhanibek, the ancestor of all Kazakhs.



Ulytau, the home to thousands of legends, is the cradle of the nation where the Kazakhstan National Geographic Society conducted a recent expedition.

"The earliest mention of Alash Khan, which can be found in written sources, belongs to Rashid al-Din, the greatest historian of the East (mid-14th century)... Turks called and continue to call him Yaphet Buldza-Khan (Abuldzhi-Khan) and do not know whether this is the Buldza-Khan (Abuldzha-Khan) that is the son or grandson of Noah, but they all agree on the fact that he lived at about the same time as him. All Mongols, Turkic tribes and nomads (literally, the inhabitants of the steppes) originate from his family," Sakenov said.

There are also theories that Ghengis Khan is buried in the Ghengis mausoleum. According to locals, much evidence of this was found during excavations over the last century, although the location

of the grave of the greatest khans of all still remains a mystery.

An interesting feature of the mausoleum is an indoor spiral staircase that rises through narrow corridors and what appear to be catacombs. A view like no other awaits those who make it to the top. Around the mausoleum is a necropolis. There are no names on the graves, but it is known that they are ancient burial sites.

Why do dombras have only two strings?

"Aqsaq qulan" is a famous cartoon created at Kazakhfilm Studios in 1968 and is based on the beautiful Kazakh legends associated with the names of two khans, Ghengis Khan and Zhoshy. Authorship of the kui is attributed to steppe musi-

cian, Zhoshy Khan Dombauyl. His mausoleum, some 50 kilometres away from Zhezkazgan, was the next stop on the expedition.

Zhoshy, the eldest son of Ghengis Khan, died while hunting kulans. However, no one dared to report his death to the khan because he had promised to fill the throat of the "black messenger" with lead. Dombauyl, musical adviser of Zhoshy Khan and father of the famous Zhyrau Ketbugi, informed the khan about the terrible news while playing kui on his dombra. Enraged, Ghengis Khan kept his word and ordered the "execution" of the dombra. Because of the hot lead, all but two of the strings on the dombra burst. Since then, the small hole characterising the bottom of the dombra, serves as a reminder of this.

A cone shape mausoleum made

of dark stone and limestone was crafted to resemble a yurt. Vaults inside the building are trapeze shaped. The structure is about six metres in height. In the 1970s, the complex was renovated, but retained its original appearance. Stone balbals are located adjacent to the mausoleum's patio.

Steppe Watch. Zhoshy Khan

A few kilometres further onto the steppe, the Zhoshy Khan mausoleum can be found. Its dazzling radiant azure dome can be seen from afar. The desert mausoleum is a true oasis with its thick groves along the river, lush wild rose bushes and bright palettes of colours. Presumably, this was Zhoshy Khan's home.

Zhoshy was different from his father; ruthlessness and a lust for war were traits he did not inherit. According to historical records, Zhoshy (Dzhuchi) had excellent diplomatic skills and tried to avoid bloodshed.

On the plaque the date of construction can be found (the date of Zhoshy Khan's death - 1227). The mausoleum is rectangular in shape, with a low lancet arch. Material for its azure dome, according to legend, was brought from Samarkand. The mausoleum was restored in the early 2000s.

Master of Legends

The expedition also went to Aulietau Mountain where seven saints are buried. Here, according to legend, the great storyteller Asan-kaygy and his wife found their last refuge. The expedition overcame a steep climb and went to the top of Yedige Mountain, where the ashes of the famous Tokhtamysh Khan and the warrior Yedige rest. They visited Terekty and saw petro-

glyphs, which are more than 3,000 years old.

At the site where Tamerlane's troops were posted, it is possible to see an ancient stone smelting furnace on which his sword of meteorite steel was allegedly forged. Emir Timur's memorial stone was placed there. It was later discovered by the Satpayev expedition in 1936 and transferred to the Hermitage in Leningrad (St. Petersburg today), where it remains to this day.

A copy of this stone was placed on the mountain with inscriptions reading: "In the seven hundred and ninety-third year, the year of the sheep, in mid-spring, Sultan Timur Turan-beg came with two hundred thousand men to challenge the Khan of Bulgaria, Tokhtamysh Khan for the sake of his good name. Upon reaching the area, he built this mound, for it was a sign. May God have justice! God willing! May God have mercy on man! May he bless us!"

Great Mountains

"Ulytau is mineral rich beyond imagination. From the south to the east, the mountain range stretches and at almost every slope, there are deposits of natural resources including tin and platinum amongst many other different types of minerals. Ulytau gave metal to ancient nomads to make weapons," Kydyrbai Suleimenov, a scholar and a participant of the expedition, said. According to the scientist, the name of the mountains, which is translated as Great Mountains, speaks for itself.

In addition to natural resources, much Kazakh history originated at Ulytau. Today, Ulytau is home to a monument of Kazakh unity, which can be seen on the way to the mausoleums, as it is located at the main road near Zhezkazgan. It is considered the geographic centre of Kazakhstan.

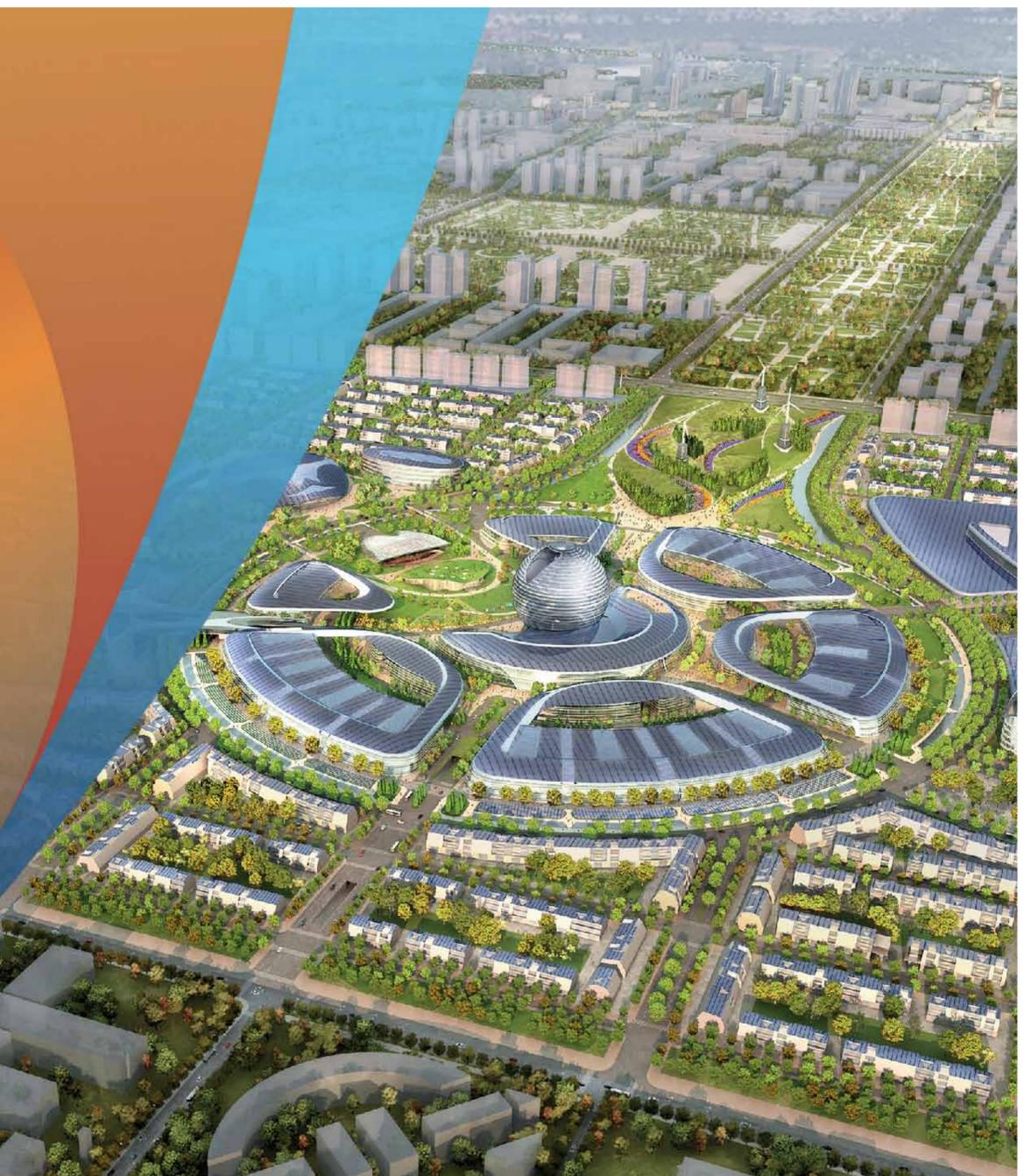
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WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 2014

Astana Basketball Team Trains at Camp in Slovenia

By Yelden Sarybay

The Astana professional basketball team is currently training at a camp in Slovenia under the supervision of coach Aleksander Trifunovic and the coaching staff in preparation for the 2014-2015 season.

The Astana team won a friendly match 77:60 against the Lasko team from Slovenia on Sept. 4. The Astana team also beat Slovenia's Rogashka team 90:69 on Sept. 10.

The team's young players are gradually being drawn into the team and are beginning to understand the philosophy of head coach Trifunovic. During the first game, Astana players Dmitry Klimov, Rustem Murzagaliev and Maxim Marchuk showed that they are working hard in the training camp to move up to the next level and win a place on the team. During the second game, Jerry Johnson and Anatoly Kolesnikov also showed impressive skills. New recruits J'covan Brown and Rashid Mahalbashich also exhibited advanced and efficient basketball skills.

Captain Rustam Yargaliev is recovering from his injuries and is also taking part in the general training.



National Kazakh MMA Team Wins Six Medals at World Championships

By Dmitry Lee

The Kazakh Mixed Martial Arts (MMA) National Team captured six medals across six categories at the Sept 11-12 Mixed Martial Arts World Championship in Minsk. Kazakhstan took one gold, four silver and one bronze medals.

"First place is now our goal, and we will fight for it. Our athletes prepared long and hard for this world championship. They have had a series of training camps, even a film 'Kazakhstan - the Country of Heroes,' was shot [about our team and training] that will soon be premiered. We have justified our reputation. In fact, we all were considered heroes in this championship and for a good reason," President of the Federation of Jiu-Jitsu and MMA Kazakhstan Anatoly Kim said after the Minsk event. "We worked hard throughout the year. This is the result of our successful work, the result of the entire team. However, the coaches will work on the roster of the team for the European Championship and possibly not the top fighters will go. Right now, we are preparing

several rosters. We are strengthening our national team."

In the 70.3-kilogramme category, Rashid Dagayev of Kazakhstan defeated Ramazan Suleibanov of Russia. In the 77.1-kilogramme category, Shavkat Rakhmonov, after long referee deliberations, lost the belt to Russian Gadzhimurat Khiramagedov. In the 84-kilogramme category, Kazakh Dauren Yermekov was unable to fight for gold due to an injury from his semi-final bout. The gold was given to Russian Shamil Abdulayev.

The champion's title in the 93-kilogramme category was decided between Murad Abdurakhmanov of Kazakhstan and Magomed Ankalayev of Russia. Abdurakhmanov won the fight in 30 seconds with an arm bar by luring his opponent into an attack.

In the above 93-kilogramme category final, 2012 European silver medalist, 2013 world silver medalist and 2014 Asian champion Zaur Gadzhibabayev of Russia met Mokhammad Sulimanov of Kazakhstan. While Sulimanov looked good in the first round, he lost steam in the second and lost the final.

National Basketball Teams' Opponents Revealed for 17th Asian Games in South Korea

By Dmitry Lee

The Kazakh national men's and women's basketball teams now know who they will face at the 17th Asian Games that begin on Sept. 20 in Incheon, South Korea.

The men's team was placed in group B and will face Saudi Arabia, Palestine and India. The team that will take the first place in the group will go through to face Iran and the Philippines. The second place team will face China and Chinese Taipei.

As for the women's team, in the round robin, the Kazakh females will face Mongolia, Nepal, Qatar and Hong Kong. The winner of the group will then face South Korea in the quarter final and the second placed team will play against China.



Kazakh basketball teams know their competitors at the 17th Asian Games.

Radio Enthusiasts from 25 Countries Compete in Borovoye

By Dmitry Lee

BOROVOYE - More than 300 amateur radio enthusiasts from 25 countries gathered in Borovoye Sept. 6-13 for the 17th Amateur Radio Direction Finding (ARDF) World Championship.

ARDF, also known as "fox hunting," is a radio-based discipline that originated in Denmark and England after World War II. Competitors use maps, compasses and radios with directional antennas to find five transmitters ("foxes") in the woods or in rough terrain in the shortest amount of time. Participation re-

quires physical and mental skill.

Akmola Region Deputy Akim (Deputy Governor) Nurlan Nurkenov and ARDF Vice-President Ole Karpestad of Norway spoke at the competition's opening ceremony.

The largest delegation of competitors in this competition was from China, with 64 participants. The Russian delegation had 40 participants, the Czech Republic 37, Kazakhstan 30 and Japan 25.

In the end, Russia took gold, Ukraine won silver and the Czech Republic won bronze. Lithuania and Kazakhstan took fourth and fifth places respectively.

Kazakhstan Participates in First World Nomad Games



By Julia Rutz

The First World Nomad Games will kick off on Sept. 9 at the Cholpon-Ata hippodrome on the Issyk-Kul lake shore in Kyrgyzstan.

Teams from 12 countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), as well as Lithuania, Turkey and Brazil are expected to compete in various nomadic types of sport, such as kok bory, kyresh, alysh, toguz korgool, er enish, kulan chabysh, alaman baige, zhorgo salysh and ordo. It is expected that about 20 million spectators will follow the games on television and online.

The World Nomadic Games is a cultural event aimed at the development of national sports, healthy lifestyles and local tourism. The opening and closing ceremonies will be performed in 3D format.

According to Darika Asylbasheva, head of Asylbashev Creative, which is producing the ceremonies, a teaser trailer highlighting the games has already been released. All shooting on the trailer was done in Bishkek and directed by Eric Ibrayev.

"This is a unique event for Kyrgyzstan, so we are doing our best to make this event unforgettable. We have also brought in foreign specialists to help us with technical equipment. Huge TV-screens, each 50 metres in length and 15 metres high, will be incorporated along the hippodrome," said Asylbasheva.

Asylbasheva added that the video clip to be shown during the Sept. 14 closing will be similar to the opening trailer in that it will present the life of nomads in the past, but will also show the future of the nomadic lifestyle and how nomads have developed throughout time.

Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev congratulated participants and organisers of the First Nomad Games and wished them luck in the upcoming events. Nazarbayev also said the event will unite national sports and preserve the ancient values of nomads.



The teams from 12 countries participated in the First World Nomad Games at the Cholpon-Ata hippodrome on the Issyk-Kul lakeshore in Kyrgyzstan.

EBRD, UNDP, Government Unveil Energy-Saving School Renovations

By Michelle Witte

ASTANA – The government of Kazakhstan, the UN Development Programme and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) have completed a joint project to demonstrate the energy-saving possibilities of upgrading the Kazakh capital's schools. The project at public school No. 25, which was launched in 2011 and presented on Sept. 6, is expected to improve heating in classrooms, reduce the school's annual heat consumption by more than one third per year and lower carbon dioxide emissions.

The project, funded by a grant of 160,000 euros from the EBRD in 2011 and organised with the help of the Kazakhstan Electricity Grid Operating Company (KEGOC), installed new insulation, energy-efficient windows and a modern, automated heating system in the school. The measures are expected to reduce the school's energy consumption by some 1,566 gigajoules (GJ) per year, according to the EBRD, and save about \$5,170 from the school's annual energy

bill. Rooms will be heated more evenly with the new system, and maintenance will be simpler, according to the EBRD.

The energy saving measures will also reduce the school's carbon dioxide emissions by about 250 tonnes per year – one of the major reasons for undertaking the project. The grant was signed at the school in the context of the EBRD's annual meeting of 2011, which was held in Astana. The grant was provided in order to offset the carbon footprint generated by the meeting and the air traffic it engendered, as well as to draw attention to environmental issues and energy efficiency.

"In addition to offsetting carbon emissions, we wanted to demonstrate that investment in energy efficiency is not just good for the environment, but makes good financial sense," said Janet Heckman, EBRD director for Kazakhstan, according to an EBRD press release. "The school will save a lot of money on its energy bills – not to mention warmer, more comfortable rooms for deserving young people."

All upgrades were done during the summer months, said



UNDP and EBRD have completed a joint project to demonstrate the energy-saving possibilities of upgrading the Kazakh capital's schools.

UNDP Press Expert Dinara Abdakhmanova, and the school, which serves students from ages 6 to 18, opened on time this year. The company that installed the heating

system will service the school this year and collect data on its performance, which will be shared with other project experts, she said.

The project was implemented by

the UNDP and the EBRD Astana Resident Office. The UNDP in Astana has had experience with similar projects over the last few years, including helping fund and

implement a heating system renovation of school No. 9 in 2011. The organisation supports energy efficiency programmes in Almaty, Astana and Karaganda.

Chinese Troupe to Perform at Astana Opera

By Alina Usmanova

ASTANA – Artists from China will give a concert on the Astana Opera stage Sept. 25 within the Days of Chinese Culture in Kazakhstan. The programme will feature dances with elements of circus arts and songs performed by universal performers working in different genres, from original instrumental compositions to modern electronic music in conjunction with Xinjiang, as well as rhythm and blues music and classical repertoire.

The evening will be unique, as this kind of theatrical performance can only be seen at the National Theatre of China. The art masters will demonstrate exciting and complex speeches, as well as knowledge of Kazakh folk songs and playing the dombra.

The troupe from Taiyuan will show breathtaking dances, in which performers will climb high, do flips and perform various acrobatic elements. The main effect of the show is the live reaction of the performers, high-proficiency harmonious interaction and beauty.

The team from China consists of renowned performers such as Go Chanchan, Wu Na, Dong Fei, Chen Chen, Abulatszyani and many others.

The troupe management noted that the song "Stay Here, a Guest from Far Away" included in the programme and the dance of the Tibetans, "Geba in the Steppe," won gold and bronze medals at the Sixth International Youth Festival in China.



The troupe from Taiyuan showing breathtaking dances, in which performers climb high, do flips and perform various acrobatic elements.

The Central Folk Song and Dance Ensemble was founded in September 1952. Over its 60-year history, this troupe has collected masterpieces of different nationalities and nurtured and raised generations of talented singers, dancers, songwriters and producers. In total, the troupe is

represented by about 37 ethnic groups, among them Mongols, Hui, Tibetans, Kazakhs, Uighurs, Miao, Zhuangs, Manchu, Koreans, Hans and many others. The main objective of the troupe is to revitalise and continue to develop the art of Chinese dancing and singing.



MADE IN ASTANA Exhibition Showcased in Kulanshi

By Rufiya Ospanova

ASTANA – Kulanshi, the Centre for Contemporary Art, opened its annual exhibition "MADE IN ASTANA" on Sept. 11 with the participation of 28 young artists and the support of the city's department of culture.

The purpose of the project is to popularise the creativity of young Kazakh artists.

According to a summer creative competition, the youth exhibition features more than 70 works of different styles, trends and genres.

Many artists from different re-

gions of Kazakhstan have participated during the six years of the project. This time the creative youth of the city are presenting the audience with paintings, drawings, photographs and installations created over the last year.

Some authors have been involved in this project several times and with the passage of time they hone their skills and learn new spaces.

The exhibition includes diploma works of college graduates of the Kazakh National University of Arts and creative works of independent artists. A collection dedicated to the Great Patriotic War is housed

in a separate exposition, as well as art photography which organically fits into the visual range of the project and three-dimensional installations telling about the creative quest of modern youth.

The young people's interests are like a mosaic that illustrates the development processes of the new cultural spaces in the city. Vivid colour, graphic forms and bold ideas have been living separate lives from their authors.

The authors represented in MADE IN ASTANA grew up in the young capital, love their city and create for it.

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