



## Kazakhstan Steps Up Efforts in Search for Peace in Eastern Ukraine



President Nursultan Nazarbayev (l) of Kazakhstan had an informal meeting with German Chancellor Angela Merkel to promote bilateral cooperation as well as discuss the situation in Ukraine in Berlin on Jan. 9.

By Zhanara Abdulova

ASTANA – Amid the ongoing pressure and sanctions between the West, Russia and Ukraine, President Nursultan Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan said recently that he holds out hope for a chance to reconcile the opposing parties, bringing them to the negotiating table to agree on a common stance.

“Both Ukraine and Russia are equally close to Kazakhstan and

that is why I am ready to continue talking to leaders in both Kyiv and Moscow, as well as in European capitals, in a bid to promote progress in negotiations over lasting peace in eastern Ukraine,” President Nazarbayev maintained during his annual end-of-year news briefing last December.

Despite mounting tensions, some of the opponents seem to brighten up on hearing there still exists a push for peace in the midst of widespread pessimism

and impasse over the lingering crisis.

Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko was first to announce on Dec. 29 that a meeting in the so-called Normandy Format will be held in the Kazakh capital Astana on Jan. 15. Moscow, for its part, confirmed Jan. 15 as a possible date for the meeting on Ukraine.

The announcement of that date, since then negotiated extensively but with no confirmation from the four participating parties, was pre-

ceded by two successive visits of President Nazarbayev to Kyiv and Moscow, during which the Kazakh leader discussed with his counterparts ways of overcoming the Ukrainian crisis.

After the meetings, Nazarbayev again discussed the issue in his telephone conversations with President Poroshenko, President of France Francois Hollande and Chancellor of Germany Angela Merkel.

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## EBRD to Lend 10 Billion Tenge for On-lending to Small Businesses in Kazakhstan, Damu Fund to Act as Guarantor

By Michelle Witte

GAITHERSBURG, MD – The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development has agreed to provide a five-year loan of 10 billion tenge (US\$54.7 million) to Kazakhstan’s Bank CentreCredit for on-lending to micro, small and medium-sized businesses in the country, the EBRD reported on Dec. 23. At least 60 percent of the loan will be earmarked for businesses outside the country’s two main cities, Astana and Almaty.

Bank CentreCredit (BCC) is Kazakhstan’s sixth largest bank, with a network of 20 branches, and works with micro, small and medium-sized businesses (MSMEs) regularly. The loan is intended to help improve access to financing

by MSMEs outside the country’s urban centres. The loan will be the first action under the EBRD’s new \$200 million Kazakhstan MSME Framework, which intends to increase access to medium-term local currency funding for MSMEs in the country.

The loan will be guaranteed by the Damu Entrepreneurship Development Fund and accompanied by a technical assistance programme to build BCC’s internal capacities in the MSME sector. Funds will be channelled through local commercial banks, microfinance organisations and leasing companies that focus on projects in rural areas, while technical assistance tailored to each partner financial institution will be provided as part of the package.

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## Eurasian Economic Union Launches in Challenging Times

By Michelle Witte

The long-awaited Eurasian Economic Union (EEU), the single market for goods, services and labour uniting Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan and Russia, has taken effect, though dire conditions in the union’s largest economy may be dampening some enthusiasm for the launch.

The EEU agreement went into effect on Jan. 1 for Belarus, Kazakhstan and Russia, with Armenia officially joining on Jan. 2. Kyrgyzstan is set to join in May, and Tajikistan is in discussions about joining.

The new union is organised into several governing bodies. Supreme authority rests with the Supreme Eurasian Economic Council, which is made up of the heads of state of the member nations. The Eurasian Economic Commission (EEC) operates as its regulatory body, with an EEU court in Minsk and the EEU Development Bank in Astana. The new common market comprises more than 170 million people and has a combined gross domestic product, calculated reflecting purchasing power parity, of more than \$4 trillion.

The EEU, Kazakh leaders have repeatedly stressed, is purely economic. Writing for the European Council on Foreign Relations on Jan. 12, Dosym Satpayev, director of the Risk Assessment Group and co-founder of the Alliance of Analytical Organisations of Kazakhstan, noted that it was at Astana’s initiative that the union’s basic principles contain language about respecting each member state’s political system, which means that members do not have to make political changes as a result of closer integration. Members of the union also have a right to withdraw, a point leaders, including President Nursultan Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan, have repeated.

Kazakhstan enters the EEU with economic goals that include increasing its overall competitiveness and increasing the quality of its labour force. As this newspaper has reported, following their accession to the Customs Union, the major precursor to the EEU,

the three countries saw their positions in the World Bank’s Doing Business Report improve. It is hoped that the new union will continue that process.

EEU leaders have expressed interest in making official trade contacts with potential partners including the EU immediately, and the union is currently in negotiations over free trade zones with India, Israel, Turkey, Uzbekistan and Vietnam. Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Vasily Nebenzya has said that some 40 countries or state groups have expressed willingness to create free trade zones with the EEU, Sputnik International reported on Dec. 31.

Unlimited access to the procurement markets of other member states is also a major benefit, as is increasing cross-border trade across Kazakhstan and Russia’s long land border and attracting foreign investors seeking access to Russia’s larger market to take advantage of investment incentives in Kazakhstan. Access to transport infrastructure will be eased and transport costs and timelines are expected to be lowered. With new rail and roadways in progress, transport is hoped to become a major new sector of Kazakhstan’s economy.

For the union’s citizens, as this newspaper has noted, paperwork requirements will be slashed, and accessing work permits and pensions across the EEU should be as simple as in citizens’ home countries. Medical care and education, including preschool access, is also to be available in all member countries to all citizens of the union.

The union has and continues to face criticism. Past criticism has often focused on the EEU as an attempt to recreate the Soviet Union, sentiments dismissed by both Nazarbayev and President Alexander Lukashenko of Belarus. Indeed, Nazarbayev is credited with first suggesting the idea of a greater Eurasian Union 20 years ago. Proponents of the union in Kazakhstan have gone to great pains to stress its economic and non-political nature as well as the mechanism that allows for an exit from the union for any reason.

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## Government, National Bank Project 4-5% Economic Growth in 2015

By Danna Bupezhanova

ASTANA – The Government and the National Bank of Kazakhstan will seek to achieve real economic growth in the country of 4-5 percent next year, the two organisations said in a joint communiqué on major directions of economic policy for 2015 published on Dec. 24.

The document reviews economic situation in Kazakhstan in 2014, underlining negative effects of aggravating economic conditions in the world and outlining plans on fighting consequences of their influence in 2015.

The general slowdown of economic growth and increasing geo-

political instability caused by the conflict in Ukraine and consequent introduction of reciprocal sanctions by the United States and the European Union on the one hand and Russia on the other hand, resulted in destabilisation of macroeconomic situation, the communiqué stated.

Accelerating growth of the gross domestic product (GDP) in the United States and the completion of the third round of the Federal Reserve’s quantitative easing programme led to the strengthening of the U.S. dollar and rising interest rates, which, along with the increase in the extraction of shale oil in the U.S., resulted in the decrease of the world price for Brent crude oil by 45.2 percent, from \$115 per

barrel at the end of June 2014 to \$63 per barrel on Dec. 22.

Kazakhstan’s economy grew 4.2 percent during January-November, the document said. In January-October, its foreign trade turnover decreased by 8.3 percent compared to the same period in 2013. Due to the fall in world prices for oil and base metals and decrease in the volume of exports of oil, coal, ferroalloys, copper and aluminium, Kazakhstan’s commodity exports decreased by 4.9 percent. Imports of goods decreased by 14.5 percent due to the reduction in imports of machinery and equipment, chemical products and food products.

According to the statement, in 2015, Kazakhstan’s economic policy

will be aimed at mitigating the effects of external factors to ensure social and economic stability in the country.

The communiqué highlights three main directions, including conducting countercyclical economic policy through the implementation of the state programme of infrastructure development Nurly Zhol for 2015-2019, increasing the competitiveness of Kazakhstan’s economy and supporting small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). The priorities also include maintaining macroeconomic stability and ensuring financial stability through strengthening the financial system and the recovery of the banking sector.

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## Astana, Ankara Want to Grow Mutual Trade to \$10 Billion, Strengthen Strategic Partnership

By Altair Nurbekov

ANKARA – Calling their countries strategic partners and brotherly nations, Kazakhstan’s and Turkey’s foreign ministers announced their intentions to further deepen bilateral political and economic ties, including by reaching the mark of \$10 billion in annual trade.

The two foreign ministers, Erlan Idrissov of Kazakhstan and Mevlut Cavusoglu of Turkey, completed the meetings in the

framework of what is called Joint Strategic Planning Group (JSPG) in the Turkish capital on Dec. 28-29.

Idrissov paid a visit to Ankara which also saw him being received by President Recep Tayyip Erdogan in the new splendid presidential residence Ak Saray (Turkish for White Palace).

Speaking to reporters at a joint press conference at the foreign ministry, Idrissov and Cavusoglu also announced that Erdogan would visit Astana in early 2015.

“The date for this visit will be set in the nearest time, and it is expected to take place in February of March next year,” Cavusoglu told the media.

During the meeting with Erdogan, Idrissov discussed the upcoming official visit of the Turkish head of state to Kazakhstan to attend the second meeting of the High-Level Strategic Cooperation Council. Established in 2012, the first meeting of the council was conducted during Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev’s visit to Turkey in October of that year.

Another session took place the following April in Almaty.

Idrissov’s meeting with Cavusoglu included discussions on a wide range of issues about the state and prospects of bilateral and multilateral cooperation. The negotiators expressed deep satisfaction with the pace of cooperation development between Kazakhstan and Turkey, stressing their mutual desire to further strengthen the partnership in bilateral and multilateral formats.

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# NATION

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 14, 2015

## 2015 to be Year of Historic Anniversaries, Hard Work

By Zhanara Abdulova

ASTANA – Kazakhstan will celebrate several historical anniversaries in 2015, including 550 years of statehood, 70 years since the victory in World War II and the 20th anniversaries of the country's constitution and the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan.

Other big events on the international calendar for Kazakhstan include the 70th anniversary of the establishment of the United Nations and the 40th anniversary of the signing of the Helsinki Act, which led to the creation of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

The first mention of the "Kazakh state," the homeland of the people from which the current republic takes its name, is found in historical sources describing events in the mid-15th century, when during a struggle between various groups of Genghis Khan's descendants (Genghisids), two sultans (princes) from that dynasty, Kerey and Zhanibek, created a separate political entity.

Muhammad Khaidar Dulati, a respected source on the history of Central Asia in this period, referred to this entity as a "Kazakh state," (doulai-i kazak), in his "Tarihi-Rashidi." This unit must have represented a sizeable group of people, since according to Dulati, in the early 16th century, a few decades after Kerey and Zhanibek's act, "the Kazakhs numbered a million."

"Tarihi-Rashidi," describes the founding like this: "The beginning of the state of Kazakh sultans (iditdai-yi-doulai-i salatini kazak) dates to the year of 870 (1465 – 1466 of the European calendar)." Kazakhstan counts this as the beginning of a Kazakh state that lasted into the middle of the 19th century (the last Kazakh Khan, Kenesary, died in a battle in 1847). And when on Dec. 16, 1991 the Parliament of Kazakhstan declared the former Soviet republic an independent nation, it continued this tradition of Kazakh statehood into the modern age.

Sharing his thoughts on the historical meaning of Kerey and

Zhanibek's act, President Nursultan Nazarbayev noted on Oct. 22, 2014:

"Perhaps, it was not a state in the modern sense of this term, within the present borders, and without fame and prestige in the world. But these words can be said about all of the other states of that era. The important element is that the foundation was laid, and we are the followers of the great deeds of our ancestors."

Though the first Kazakh state had roots in a particular ethnic group, the Kazakhs, the people that make the nation today have worked out a century-old tradition of interethnic harmony, a hallmark of Kazakhstan over the years of independence, in a society consisting of more than 130 ethnic groups. The forthcoming anniversary of statehood on this soil is intended to be a common celebration that unites the people of modern Kazakhstan.

The 70th anniversary of the victory over Nazism in WWII is marked on May 9.

Nearly 1.8 million people from Kazakhstan fought in that brutal war, and half of them did not return. Several generations of Kazakhs remember this victory as one for which they sacrificed one a scale few other nations match.

The citizens of Kazakhstan, as part of the Soviet Union, were involved in the war effort from its beginning in 1941 to its end in the spring of 1945 in Berlin. They helped defend Leningrad and Stalingrad and liberate Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, the Baltic nations and the peoples of Europe.

During the Great Patriotic War, as the war effort against Nazi Germany is known throughout former Soviet republics, Kazakhstan increased industrialisation and mineral extraction in support of the war effort. Besides being an overwhelmingly agriculture-based economy, Kazakhstan was one of the main arsenals for the front. From 1941 – 45, almost 500 plants, ore mines, individual productions and factories producing machinery, weaponry, radio and other military technologies were established in the country, includ-

ing many that were evacuated from Soviet Union's occupied European section.

Twelve Kazakh divisions that fought the entire war received honorary titles. Five divisions have become guards, including the famous Eighth Guards Division named in honour of Hero of the Soviet Union Ivan Panfilov. During the Great Patriotic War, 497 Kazakh soldiers were awarded the title of Hero of the Soviet Union. The last Hero of the Soviet Union title was awarded on Dec. 11, 1990, (posthumously) to legendary Kazakh commander and writer Bauyrzhan Momyshuly. Four citizens of Kazakhstan, attack aircraft pilots Talgat Bigeldinov, Leonid Beda and Ivan Pavlov and fighter pilot Sergey Lugansky, have twice been awarded the Golden Star of the Hero of the Soviet Union. Two heroic Kazakh women, machine gunner Manshuk Mаметова and sniper Alia Moldagulova, were also awarded Hero of the Soviet Union titles, among many others.

The victory in 1945 is celebrated as a victory of unity. A special plan of activities has been worked out to mark the victory over the year ahead. On May 7, 2015, a military parade with participation of the President will be held, before President Nazarbayev attends major celebrations on May 9 in Moscow.

Already, from Dec. 26 to Dec. 30, 2014, an unprecedented national campaign in support of veterans was held across the country at the initiative of President Nursultan Nazarbayev. The akims (mayors) of the regions personally visited each of the country's 5,115 war veterans and extended them the New Year greetings and gifts on behalf of the head of state.

Also in focus this year will be the commemoration of the 20th anniversary of Kazakhstan's Constitution Day, which is celebrated on Aug. 30, as well as the 20th anniversary of the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan (APK), the state institution dedicated to promoting and harmonising interethnic relations in the country. These two milestone events constitute a single link in the country's chronicles.

Twenty years ago, the people of Kazakhstan adopted what is called the Basic Law at a national referendum, which proclaimed Kazakhstan a secular, legal and unitary state. The constitution laid the groundwork for high economic growth and improvements in the welfare of citizens of the new nation. The unity of the people, public and spiritual concord and political stability are set forth as the fundamental principles of the constitutional system.

Since its establishment, the APK has become a major civil institution of the nation. The idea to establish the APK was first announced by President Nazarbayev in 1992 at the Forum of the Peoples of Kazakhstan, devoted to the first anniversary of independence. On March 1, 1995, the President issued a decree on the establishment of the APK, which determined its status as an advisory body under the President. Later, the assembly was transformed into a constitutional body.

The year 2015 has been declared the year of the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan.

The APK's responsibilities are set to increase. Last year, the President approved a plan for its development up to 2020. Regional governors have been given the task of drafting programmes for local branches suitable to their ethnic composition. Friendship houses in the regions will become centres promoting social cohesion and initiatives.

In the foreign policy arena, of particular note this year is the 40th anniversary of the signing of the Helsinki Act, which led to the creation of the OSCE, and the fifth anniversary of the OSCE Summit in Astana.

In 1975, 35 states signed the Helsinki Final Act, which laid the foundation of the general concept of European security and a framework for cooperation in three key dimensions, or "baskets," of the activity of what was then known as the Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE). Its adoption was a historical event promoting the eventual end of the Cold War and normalisation of re-

lations between East and West.

After 40 years, the Helsinki Final Act remains relevant. One of its main directions is the construction of a Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian community of common and indivisible security, reflected in the Astana OSCE Summit Declaration. Within this initiative, Kazakhstan proposed creating a platform within which various regional organisations including the OSCE, NATO, the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) and others can jointly and concertedly address security issues in Eurasia. This is especially important given the deepening divisions in this part of the world following the bloody conflict in Ukraine. It is hoped that implementing the Spirit of Helsinki, which helped tackle the Cold War between the West and East, can prove useful in preventing a new one.

Conventional wisdom has it that a storied past leads to a bright future. Kazakhstan's Kazakhstan 2050 Strategy and the new economic policy Nurlu Zhol, announced by President Nazarbayev in mid-November last year, aim to strengthen the country's economy, improve the quality of life for citizens and ultimately pave the way for Kazakhstan to break into the 30 most developed countries of the world.

The priorities set out in the President's policy documents are part of the country's ongoing efforts to strengthen regional and global security. This year, Kazakhstan will continue with well-established policy initiatives that include taking a leading role on nuclear nonproliferation and disarmament, practising interreligious and intercultural dialogue through hosting the Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions in June and intensifying the build up to EXPO 2017 in Astana. But the country also intends to pursue many new concepts, including the development of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation Food Security Organisation in Astana and the expansion of its own international aid efforts through the new official development agency, KazAID.

### NATIONAL NEWS IN BRIEF

The oldest existing dailies in this country, Egemen Kazakhstan and Kazakhstanskaya Pravda have marked 95 years of their existence in December. Having developed into the leading national publications, today they cover the broad spectrum of political, economic, social and cultural aspects of everyday life in Kazakhstan. The Astana Times team sincerely congratulates the colleagues in both newspapers with the jubilee and wishes them best of luck and grateful readership!

Amirkhan Amanbayev, the Chief of the Department of Supervision and Legality of Pre-trial Proceedings of the General Prosecutor's Office, has announced that Kazakhstan plans to establish a fund to provide assistance to victims of crimes perpetrated by accused persons who flee beyond the reach of the state or are otherwise unable to be prosecuted for long periods of time. Similar funds exist in more than 20 countries across Europe, Asia and America.

In March 2015, Astana will for the first time host a TEDx (Technology, Entertainment, Design) technologies conference. The Conference, in the TED format, will focus on using new ideas and unique technological developments for practical purposes. Larissa Pak, the curator of TEDx in Astana, said: "The mission of TEDx is to utilise worthy ideas. Our task is education. We create a unique experience and an opportunity for people to gain new knowledge, ideas, inspiration, and a different perspective." As noted, the theme of the first conference TEDx Astana will be "How Big is Big" or "How does big become "big." Now the organisers are searching for new ideas in the sciences, social studies, architecture, art, economics, and other spheres. It should be noted that the first TEDx conference in Central Asia was held in 2010 in Almaty and became one of the first independently organised in the world.

Since then, four TEDx Almaty were organized on various topics: "The City 2.0", "The Tipping Point", "Extra – anew normality", "Living the answers". TEDx is a programme of local conferences around the world, focused on "ideas worth spreading" and held in the TED format. The "x" means "independently organised event." These Conferences have been held in the TED format in California, USA since 1984 and gather scientists, politicians, entrepreneurs, artists, musicians, engineers, and other individuals with progressive ideas.

On Dec. 29 Deputy Prime Minister of Kazakhstan Berdibek Saparbayev chaired the meeting of Commission on higher education institutions. During the meeting, the participants were briefed about the reports on results of the Commission's activities and results of inspection of institutes. 127 of 136 institutions are involved in the education sphere. Members of the commission stressed the need for facilitating the spread of information of the Ministry of Education and Science of Kazakhstan on public awareness in modernisation of the higher education institutions. The commission took the decision to withdraw two institutions of their license. These participants at the meeting were also informed about the activities of a number of higher education institutions for compliance with the educational standards and availability of material and technical base. Following the meeting, Saparbayev gave instructions concerning the improvement of mechanisms of modernisation of higher education institutions, their optimisation, as well as the creation of mechanisms to monitor the employment of graduates and improve the integration of education, science and innovation.

## Nation Introduces 10-year Strategic Plan to Prevent Corruption

By Zhanara Abdulova

ASTANA – President Nursultan Nazarbayev signed a decree on Dec. 26 introducing the new anti-corruption strategy for 2015-2025 initiated by the Nur Otan party in July of last year. The document mainly concentrates on measures preventing the conditions that foster corruption rather than fighting the consequences of corruption. It calls for an "eradication of legal nihilism in society."

The strategy says the leading role should be given to a package of preventive measures aimed at radically reducing the level of corruption by eradicating the causes and conditions that give rise to it in the state and society. The emphasis is placed on eliminating corruption preconditions and not on fighting its consequences.

The document also aims at increasing cooperation with various target groups within the civil sector and the business community, as there is a need to develop new relations between the government, citizens and businesses based on an equal and responsible partnership. An anti-corruption road map and specific action plans will be developed for each five-year period.

The key goals of the strategy are forming an anti-corruption culture; fighting corruption in the public, quasi-public and private sectors; introducing the institute of public control; preventing corruption in judiciary and law en-

forcement bodies; developing international cooperation in fighting corruption; and monitoring the progress of the programme.

In the meantime, Kazakhstan has improved its standing in the 2014 Corruption Perceptions Index, rising from 140th to 126th overall and gaining three points on the previous score of 26. The country also fares significantly better than some of its Central Asian neighbours.

Last year's climb stems from Kazakhstan's efforts in implementing reforms, namely the 2011-2015 anti-corruption programme, which contained a number of measures aimed at improving the legislative framework, reducing the risks of corruption in government bodies and eliminating the country's shadow economy. Key initiatives include the introduction of criminal liability for illicit enrichment, as well as the abolition of the Agency on Combating Economic and Corruption-Related Crimes and transfer of its powers to the newly created Agency on Civil Service and Countering Corruption (for corruption-related crimes) and the Ministry of Finance (for economic and financial crimes).

In terms of legislative developments, a new Criminal Code came into effect on Jan. 1, 2015. Among other measures, the code introduces additional mandatory sanctions for corruption-related crimes, such as loss of rank and state decoration and a lifetime ban on holding public office.

The new 10-year strategy notes that corruption is a problem existing in all countries, differing only in typical manifestations and scale.

"In determining the causes, conditions and consequences of corruption, such factors as local mentality, national and religious differences [and] the level of legal culture should be taken into account," it points out.

The document stresses that intolerance of corruption should become the "civil position of every citizen of Kazakhstan," while honesty and integrity should be a "norm of behaviour." In the absence of such a culture in society, it will be impossible to eradicate corruption. Each individual and every family should understand that fighting corruption is the task of the whole society.

"Only by nurturing anti-corruption standards of conduct from the earliest age will we be able to eradicate this social evil. It is important to bring up a child in the spirit of Kazakhstan patriotism and rejection of corruption. Educational anti-corruption courses should cover all educational institutions, government agencies and civil society as a whole," the document proposes.

However, this is still a massive, complicated task requiring the knowledge of professionals who "can explain the mechanisms of obtaining public services, protecting rights and lawful interests of citizens in an accessible and qualified manner."

The text also draws attention to the fact that at the legislative level, violations of norms and rules of professional ethics have not been distinguished from actual corruption offences. This "distorts the real picture of propensity for corruption, prevents the concentration of state efforts on acute directions in the fight against corruption and leads to an increase in corruption ratings of the country."

The document stresses that the government will continue creating conditions under which the use of official powers for personal gain will be unprofitable and impossible.

For example, it is proposed to provide gradual, regular wage increases to improve the social well-being of civil servants, serving as an incentive for carrying out duties in a fair and equitable manner.

Another important measure envisioned is the obligation of public servants to declare not only their incomes but also their spending.

In general, the principle of transparency is a key factor in the fight against corruption, and therefore the work on its implementation will be carried out on a regular, systematic basis, including by monitoring the quality and accessibility of public service delivery. The volume of services provided to the public in an electronic format will grow, including the issuance of various permits.

The strategy aims at making the procedure of obtaining public

services simpler and more transparent. In this regard, a number of government functions will be gradually transferred to the private sector and self-regulatory organisations.

In addition, an institute of public control will be introduced. This requires not only the activation of civil society, but also the appropriate legal regulation. Adoption of the law "On public control" will first create an integrated system of civilian control by establishing the basic rules of its organisation and implementation.

The strategy stresses that an important factor in a successful fight against corruption is the ability of citizens to participate directly in solving local issues. This will be facilitated by the adoption of a law providing for the empowerment of local governance.

The working group that elaborated the strategy included representatives of the General Prosecutor's Office, the Agency on Civil Service and Countering Corruption, the Senate, the Academy of Public Administration under the President of Kazakhstan, as well as the National Chamber of Entrepreneurs, political parties and nongovernmental organisations.

More than 900 suggestions and additions to the draft programme were received from party members, experts and Internet users in the course of its development, changing 40 percent of the original text of the draft programme.

# EURASIA&WORLD

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 14, 2015

## EXTERNAL NEWS IN BRIEF

The five former prisoners from the notorious U.S.-run Guantanamo prison camp, who arrived in Kazakhstan on Dec. 31 have lodged asylum claims there, the government says. A statement from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Jan. 5 said the former prisoners arrived in Kazakhstan after being freed from Guantanamo dueto "the absence of sufficient grounds to present them with charges of committing a crime." The prisoners, identified previously as three men from Yemen and two from Tunisia, had been in detention for over a decade, but "were identified as low-risk detainees cleared long ago for transfer," Reuters reported. They have been granted the status of asylum seekers pending hearings, the foreign ministry said. By law, a ruling should be made within three months. Accepting the five former detainees could enhance Astana's diplomatic credentials with Washington, which is pushing to resettle prisoners in order to meet a long-standing pledge by U.S. President Barack Obama to close down the Guantanamo camp.

The 14th meeting of Inter-governmental Commission on Kazakhstan-Uzbekistan bilateral cooperation held in Tashkent on Dec. 26. The meeting was attended by the First Deputy Prime Minister of Kazakhstan Bakhytzhan Sagintayev and First Deputy Prime Minister - Minister of Finance of Uzbekistan Rustam Azimov. During the meeting the two parties discussed issues of bilateral trade-economic cooperation. In particular, they also discussed aspects of Kazakhstan-Uzbekistan interaction in the water-energy sector, agriculture, industrial and gas sphere. The two parties called for further expansion of partnership between the two countries aimed at increasing mutual turnover.

The project on establishing "Centre of Production and Logistics Azersun" LLP is implemented in the territory of social economic zone "Seaport Aktau." The initiator of the project "Anadolu Investment Company" LLP (Azerbaijan) plans to invest about 1 billion 463 million tenge into construction. The warehouses will be 4-storey shelf-systems, designed for storing different products on the pallets. The warehouses will have an air conditioning system with an automated control system and asystem for using bar codes. The innovative equipment, including refrigerating equipment, climate control system and deep freeze machines, are expected to be brought in from Germany and the Netherlands. On Jan. 7, the United States Department of Energy's National Nuclear Security Administration (DOE/NNSA) announced the removal of 36 kilogrammes (approximately 80 pounds) of highly enriched uranium (HEU) spent fuel from the Institute of Nuclear Physics (INP) in Almaty. The NNSA's press release reports that the HEU was transported in two air shipments to a secure facility in Russia for permanent disposal. This complex operation was the culmination of a multi-year effort between the United States, Kazakhstan, Russia and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). "The removal of this HEU is yet another example of how the international community continues to work together to prevent the threat of nuclear terrorism," said DOE/NNSA Deputy Administrator Anne Harrington. "This cooperation reduces the chance that such material can fall into the hands of terrorists," she noted. According to the NNSA, approximately 10 kilogrammes (about 22 pounds) of HEU fresh fuel was shipped to a facility in Russia from the INP in September 2014. The HEU will be downblended to low-enriched uranium (LEU). Over the next several years, the DOE/NNSA plans to work with Kazakhstan, Russia and the IAEA to return approximately 50 additional kilogrammes of HEU to Russia, thereby eliminating all HEU research reactor fuel from Kazakhstan.

## Astana, Ankara Want to Grow Mutual Trade to \$10 Billion, Strengthen Strategic Partnership

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The JSPG is working on plans to expand a wide range of bilateral issues, including the status and prospects of political dialogue, trade and economic, investment, military-technical and cultural and humanitarian cooperation, inter-parliamentary relations and issues of cooperation in the security sphere.

"Over the past three years, bilateral trade has seen a huge increase; it has more than doubled from \$1.9 billion to \$4 billion. As you know, President Nazarbayev visited Turkey twice this year with working visits. In June, he participated in the summit of the Turkic Council and in August he participated in the inauguration of the first popularly-elected president of brotherly Turkey, His Excellency Recep Tayyip Erdogan. It is a sign of particularly close and trustful dialogue at the highest level between our two countries," Idrissov said at the press conference.

According to the Kazakh minister, Astana and Ankara have a full political agenda in a multilateral format including the UN (United Nations), CICA (Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia), OSCE (Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe), ECO (Economic Cooperation Organisation) and OIC (Organisation of Islamic Cooperation). Together with Turkey,

Kazakhstan has also played an important role in the foundation of the Cooperation Council of Turkic Speaking Countries (Turkic Council) and the Parliamentary Assembly of Turkic Speaking Countries.

The foreign ministers announced their intentions to continue the dialogue and consistently resolve all issues of bilateral relations based on the principles of brotherhood and strategic partnership.

### Ankara's Support for EXPO 2017, Campaign for UNSC Non-Permanent Seat

Kazakhstan's preparation for the international specialised exhibition EXPO 2017 in Astana was also discussed during the talks. The Turkish side expressed its readiness to provide full support in carrying out this event.

In addition to bilateral issues, the parties focused on international problems, including the situations in Syria, Afghanistan and Ukraine.

Turkey fully supports Kazakhstan's candidacy for the United Nations Security Council for 2017-18, Cavusoglu announced at the press conference adding that his country is also ready to offer practical support in the bidding campaign which is set to culminate in 2016. "In case Kazakhstan is elected, we have full confidence



Foreign Ministers Erlan Idrissov (l) of Kazakhstan and Mevlut Cavusoglu of Turkey announced their intentions to further deepen bilateral political and economic ties, planning to reach the \$10 billion mark in annual trade.

that it will contribute to strengthening international peace and security," said

While in Ankara, Idrissov also met Bekir Bozdogan, Turkey's Minister of Justice, to discuss bilateral cooperation in the legal sphere and in fighting terrorism.

### Strong Ties Going Back Decades and Centuries

Turkey was the first country to recognise Kazakh independence on Dec. 16, 1991. The Turkish Embassy in Almaty was opened in March 1992 and later moved to Astana.

Today, Turkey is one of the most advanced and fastest-growing, highly-industrialised economies in the Middle East and Eurasian region. The country plays a leading role in the Kazakh construction industry.

In turn, Kazakhstan is one of Turkey's most important political and economic partners in Central Asia. The frequency of high-level bilateral visits reflects the level of relations between the nations and provides a platform to exchange views on bilateral, regional and international issues. Erdogan's visit to Kazakhstan in 2012, then as prime minister,

helped expand areas of cooperation between the two countries.

When Idrissov summarised the outcomes of Kazakhstan's foreign policy for 2014 during a major press conference Dec. 26 in Astana, he noted that Kazakhstan attaches great importance to strengthening comprehensive cooperation with the Republic of Turkey, which is based on the common historical roots and cultural values of the two nations.

### EEU-Turkey Free Trade Area to Be Worked on

According to the Kazakh foreign minister, the creation of the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) should be beneficial not only for its member states, but also for their partners.

"Our policy is that the EEU is of the open nature, open for economic partnerships," Idrissov told the assembled Kazakh, Turkish and international media. "We are initiating free trade arrangement between EEU and Turkey. Turkey is an important economic partner for Kazakhstan, Russia and Belarus bilaterally, and it is important to have a general agreement on a free trade zone with Turkey."

He added that similar trade facilitating arrangements are being sought between the EEU, which enters into force on Jan. 1, 2015 and which creates a common market of up to 200 million people, and countries such as Vietnam.

## Creation of EEU, Efforts to Pacify Ukraine among 2014 Foreign Policy Priorities, Will Remain in Focus in 2015

By Malika Orazgaliyeva

ASTANA – Minister of Foreign Affairs Erlan Idrissov stressed the strategic importance of Kazakhstan's multi-vector foreign policy as he summarised the outcomes of the nation's foreign policy work for 2014 at a Dec. 26 press conference at the Central Communications Services.

Numerous events and activities in the international arena, including meetings and visits at the highest levels, reaffirmed the significance of Kazakhstan's foreign policy pursued from the first days of independence, he said. Idrissov noted that a key role in advancing the nation's foreign policy goals was played by President Nursultan Nazarbayev, who made eight visits abroad and received 16 heads of state. In total, 59 events at the highest level and 70 bilateral visits involving the state's most senior officials were held within the country and abroad. The minister himself paid 18 visits to other countries.

Idrissov began by stating that the complexity and multidimensionality of the processes in a modern world and emergence of a qualitatively new geopolitical and geo-economic reality reflected in the adoption of the Kazakhstan 2050 Strategy led to the elaboration of a new Concept of Foreign Policy until 2020, which was approved by Nazarbayev's Jan. 29 decree. According to Idrissov, one of the priorities of foreign policy regarding the concept was the creation this year of the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU).

"The EEU means a common market. It will be a fundamentally new association of the 21st century that works on the principle of equality, mutual benefit and consideration of the interests of all the participants. As the President stated, the political sovereignty of our country is strong and unbreakable. The economic integration is developing in order to strengthen the national statehood and make it more sustainable through the strengthening of the economy," he underlined.

At the same time, Idrissov added, "no modern state can develop the economy within closed borders." International experience in advancing regional integration projects

shows that joint efforts bring long-term economic benefits, provide greater security and improve the welfare of the involved nations.

EEU is based on economic pragmatism, respect of sovereignty, voluntary integration of equality in all decisions and evolutionary development, he explained.

The union's attractiveness was confirmed during Nazarbayev's visit to Moscow on Dec. 23, as the heads of the EEU member states signed an agreement on the accession of the Kyrgyz Republic to the union. The original EEU treaty was signed by Kazakhstan, Russia and Belarus on May 29, with Armenia joining in October.

Among other important achievements of the last year, Idrissov named successful completion of negotiations with the European Union (EU) on a new Expanded Partnership and Cooperation Agreement and bilateral negotiations between Kazakhstan and the EU in the framework of the country's accession to the World Trade Organisation (WTO).

Idrissov noted with regret that the past year was characterised by confrontation between the West and Russia over the situation within and around Ukraine, which led in general to the growth of misunderstandings and negative perceptions between the East and the West.

Talking about Kazakhstan's position on the crisis in Ukraine, the minister reminded that Astana supports peaceful initiatives aimed at the de-escalation of the armed conflict in the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts. Kazakhstan has been and is working towards normalisation of the relations among Russia, Ukraine and the West and translating them into civilised, internationally recognised frameworks.

"We are interested in seeing Ukraine remain a stable and independent state. For its part, Kazakhstan has been actively involved in consultations to find ways to resolve the crisis with its partners both in the EEU and the West. Largely due to the active position and diplomatic efforts of our leader, Minsk hosted the meeting of the presidents of Kazakhstan, Russia and Belarus with the President of Ukraine (Petro) Poroshenko and the EU high representative," Idrissov reminded.

The recent events of December,

especially the President's working visits to Kiev and Moscow, demonstrated Nazarbayev is an honest and impartial broker in an attempt to find common ground and reach sustainable agreements to resolve the contradictions, Idrissov said.

[On Dec. 29, President of Ukraine Petro Poroshenko announced he would be meeting with President of Russia Vladimir Putin along with German Chancellor Angela Merkel and French President Francois Hollande in the Normandy Four format. The meeting is yet to be confirmed by the other three parties although the office of the Kazakh President confirmed "readiness to host the meetings on Jan. 15-16 or any other convenient dates".]

In the framework of ensuring regional and global security tasks before Kazakhstan, an important activity of the Foreign Ministry is promoting the nation's candidacy as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council in 2017-2018, explained Idrissov. The election of Kazakhstan to the Security Council would provide an opportunity to draw international attention to the problems of the region, and help draw the focus to such issues as energy, food, water security, as well as non-proliferation issues. The four issues are at the core of Kazakhstan's bid for the UN body.

In the context of regional security, the minister also highlighted the importance of the fourth summit of the *Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia* (CICA), which was held on May 21 in Shanghai and which signified the transfer of chairmanship in the conference from Turkey to China. At that event, Nazarbayev put forward an initiative to transform CICA into an Organisation for Security and Development in Asia, Idrissov noted.

Another major event that shed light on Astana's initiatives was the Nuclear Security Summit in The Hague in March. Nazarbayev made a call to focus efforts on the most important areas, such as general and complete nuclear disarmament, which is the only guarantee of nuclear safety and eradication of nuclear terrorism and its foundations. In addition, during the year, the ATOM Project carried out important work on fostering of broad international public support for early

ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT).

Idrissov also highlighted the relevance of Nazarbayev's participation Oct. 16-17 in the 10th ASEM (Asia-Europe Meeting) summit in Milan. There, Kazakhstan officially joined ASEM, a key forum for dialogue and cooperation between the two parts for Eurasia.

Turning to bilateral relations, the minister stressed that Kazakhstan will continue to strengthen the strategic partnership with Russia in all spheres of political, economic, trade and cultural cooperation based on the Treaty of Good-Neighbourly and Allied Relations in the 21st Century. Nazarbayev and Putin held 10 meetings in 2014 and landmark events in bilateral relations were the Kazakhstan-Russia cross-border forum in Atyrau as well as Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov's visit to Ust-Kamenogorsk.

An increased number of bilateral contacts with China demonstrated the interest of the parties in the development of a comprehensive strategic partnership. Nazarbayev's state visit to China in May was a breakthrough for bilateral relations, with 16 agreements signed in various fields.

Idrissov also said that strengthening strategic partnership with the United States is an important priority of Kazakh foreign policy. Mutual cooperation includes the spheres of trade-economic, investment, energy, technical and humanitarian cooperation. Nazarbayev's talks with President Barack Obama during the Nuclear Security Summit also gave impetus to further development of bilateral relations.

A few days before his Dec. 28-29 visit to Ankara, Idrissov used the press conference as a reminder that Kazakhstan attaches great importance to strengthening comprehensive cooperation with Turkey, which is based on the common historical roots and cultural values of the two nations.

Kazakhstan continues to pursue a balanced policy towards Afghanistan too, with a focus on humanitarian and economic assistance and cooperation in the trade and economic sphere. Idrissov was glad to note that in 2014 the first graduates of the Kazakh government's special scholarship programme for Afghan youth began working in various in-

stitutions in their home country.

According to Idrissov, special attention was paid this year to attracting further foreign direct investment, promoting Kazakhstan's export to foreign markets, developing transit-transport cooperation and elaborating on projects in the energy sector, as well as implementing preparations for EXPO 2017.

"As you know, in 2014 we launched a pilot project on a visa-free regime with 10 countries that are key investors in Kazakhstan. It was done in order to create a comfortable environment and attract more investment. The project was perceived very positively by investors and our foreign partners," Idrissov said.

The minister mentioned the recent adoption of the law on official development assistance, a step towards the creation of what is now conventionally labelled KazAID, in which the mechanism of assistance will be established similar to US-AID. The law is designed to systematise assistance to foreign partners. Thus, Kazakhstan is transforming from a recipient country to a donor country, Idrissov explained.

He also stressed the generally positive reaction internationally to the Nov. 11 state-of-the-nation address of President Nazarbayev in which he outlined the Nurly Zhol new economic policy.

At the end of his speech, Idrissov noted that maximum openness and accessibility to local and foreign mass media and the public are the most important principles of the foreign ministry. For this reason the ministry maintains an active presence on social networks, such as Facebook, Twitter and others. In this respect the President of Kazakhstan's Internet Association Shavkat Sabirov commended the fact that Idrissov himself writes a blog, a tradition that he started when he was the nation's ambassador in Washington DC. "The ministry actively works in social networks and practically all embassies and consulates maintain Twitter accounts," Sabirov noted stressing the importance of what became known as digital diplomacy.

At the end of the briefing Idrissov answered a number of questions from the media, including those on the Caspian Sea delimitation issues, visa matters and others.

# ECONOMY

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 14, 2015

## New Enterprises Are the Answer to Economic Crises, President Says

By Danna Buzepzhanova

ASTANA – President Nursultan Nazarbayev, summing up the results of the first five years of the industrialisation programme on Dec. 25, confirmed that new industries, import substitution and manufacturing of products that have not been produced locally before would assist the national economy in dealing with economic crises.

“Expended costs have already returned to the state budget in trillions of tenge. In fact, we have created a new model of production and social and labour relations, responding to the 21st century demands. We have made a decisive step to change the structure of the economy. Diversification in Kazakhstan began not only in words but also in deeds. We have ensured that the growth rate of the volume of manufacturing industry is much higher than in traditional extractive industries,” President Nazarbayev said during his annual national teleconference dedicated to the Industrialisation Day.

The teleconference examined the preliminary results of the first five-year of Kazakhstan’s State Programme of Accelerated Industrial and Innovative Development (SPAIID), presented 15 new projects of the Industrialisation Map and showed how implemented projects were already working in the regions.

“The share of the mining industry in the country’s GDP decreased to 16.5 percent. Over five years, 400 new products were mastered that had not been produced beforehand in Kazakhstan. [During these years] the manufacturing sector received almost 70 percent of all foreign investment in Kazakhstan’s

economy since independence,” Nazarbayev announced.

According to him, during 2010-14, 770 projects were commissioned creating 75,000 permanent jobs. Eighty percent of the projects have reached the planned capacity. New companies have produced four trillion tenge (US\$22 billion) worth of goods and exported goods worth 628 billion tenge (US\$4.9 billion). Implemented Industrialisation Map projects produced 12.4 percent of the total volume of manufacturing industry’s output (594.3 billion tenge, which is US\$3.26 billion). In 2014 alone 150 new projects were implemented.

The contribution of the projects to GDP growth in the first nine months of 2014 amounted to 0.79 percentage points (from the overall growth of 4.1).

During the teleconference, Nazarbayev reminded that due to state policies, “in the most difficult times of the 2007-09 crises, we did not allow negative growth rate of the economy.”

“Now, when difficult times are coming again, I hope we will overcome them together. In these difficult conditions, labour productivity in manufacturing has increased by 60 percent, with each worker producing an annual average of \$20,000 worth of more products. New major economic sectors have emerged, while world’s largest industrial giants, namely Airbus, General Electric, Alstom, Eurocopter, Toyota, Ssangyong, LG, have come to Kazakhstan,” the President added.

At the same time, the head of state said that to ensure the future six percent growth of the economy and implement the full industrial potential, the state needed to create

100,000 jobs annually. While the manufacturing industry consumes 80 percent of professional services, one job in the industrial sector creates three to five jobs in the service sector, creating a multiplying effect, he said. Therefore, the Industrialisation Programme should establish annually from 30,000 to 50,000 high-quality jobs, the President said.

Reflecting the results of the first five years, he stressed that they gave the state a “priceless experience” of successful anti-crises responses to instability in the global economy, which resulted in the overhaul of manufacturing industry and the appearance of new fields, including automotive, railway engineering, medical equipment and wind energy.

“We have expanded the range of products in the chemical industry, while in five years the share of domestic construction materials almost doubled: now we produce almost 80 percent of the construction materials [that we use]; in comparison when we started, it was only 15 percent,” he said.

Among other fields, the President highlighted pharmaceuticals, which was developing at a fast pace with the number of pharmaceutical products increasing by 500 units and production volumes tripling. Nazarbayev stated that in the mining and metallurgical complex, production of long steel increased six-fold and production of pipes grew three times.

Among the advantages of Kazakhstan, he determined full provision of energy, fuel, electrical power and basic foodstuffs. “We are gradually developing agriculture, so [in our farming sector] compared to 2010 the cattle popu-

lation increased by more than 50 percent,” the President stated adding that currently more than 80 percent of domestic demands were covered by food produced in Kazakhstan.

Referring to future goals, Nazarbayev stated that by 2020, the share of high-tech products was expected to increase from 1.5 percent to 5 percent of GDP, while sector of professional, scientific and technical services should grow from the current eight percent to 20 percent on the basis of the development of innovation in the private sector. A science park “Astana Business Campus” Nazarbayev University and the Alatau Park of Innovative Technologies will become platforms for these innovations.

The head of state also stressed the need to establish new manufacturing industries, setting a task to attract at least five major transnational corporations to Kazakhstan for the construction of five new manufacturing plants. He highlighted the need to reconsider the issue of building a new oil refinery and a couple of large oil and gas companies, which would produce a whole range of chemical products, including gas, medicines, clothing, and polyethylene. He also insisted on a new copper smelter in Kazakhstan with a full cycle of cables.

Talking with officials and workers in regions through video links, Nazarbayev examined the work of existing facilities constructed within the first five-year plan of industrialisation and gave permission for commissioning new projects, including a new plant of a unique titanium ingots and slabs, POSUK Titanium. Titanium ingots

and slabs produced in Kazakhstan will be rolled into titanium sheets and pipes in POSCO enterprises for subsequent use by the largest shipbuilders in South Korea. The goal of the project is to diversify production and create new innovative production of titanium ingots and slabs by electron-beam melting. The use of POSCO’s modern rolled metal technology will enable the joint Kazakh-Korean enterprise, POSUK Titanium LLP, to become a major supplier of flat rolled titanium in the world market.

The President also announced creating a large transport and logistics hub on the border with China, with the Khorgos – Eastern Gate dry port being the first stage of this project. In the short term, the dry port’s processing capacity is expected to reach more than 200,000 thousand containers.

The Khorgos – Eastern Gate special economic zone along with the Zhetigen-Korgas and Zhezkazgan-Beineu railways, the Western Europe – Western China road corridor and the Aktau port, create a powerful cross-border logistics distribution centre and ensure further integration of the country in the global trade and transportation links, the Kazakh leaders stressed.

At the teleconference, the President also formally gave permission for the launch of a bridge over the Syrdarya River, an A class warehouse in Astana, a gold processing plant in North Kazakhstan region, a polypropylene granulation plant in Pavlodar, an industrial wind power plant (WPP) by VistalInternational LLP, a carpet factory in South Kazakhstan region, among others.

### ECONOMY NEWS IN BRIEF

On Jan. 6, the Development Bank of Kazakhstan (DBK), announced it would provide 25 percent of the necessary funds for the modernisation of the Pavlodar petrochemical plant. “DBK will provide about 25 percent of the necessary funding for construction and installation works in the form of a loan over up to 10 years. The loan will be in tenge,” the report stated. According to the DBK, the total value of the “turnkey” contract is more than \$1.2 billion. The project is funded primarily by acub loan from Japanese banks. The project aims to improve the quality of motor fuel produced at the plant, allowing it to meet requirements for environmental class K4 and K5, Euro-4 and Euro-5, as well as to expand refining capacity of the enterprise. As a result of modernisation, the plant’s capacity to process West Siberian oil will be increased from 5 million to 7 million tonnes per year. According to head of DBK Bolat Zhamishev, two of the three existing refineries in Kazakhstan receive long-term financing from DBK modernisation projects. “The first phase of modernisation of the Atyrau refinery is to be completed with financial support from the bank. The total project cost is \$ 2.9 billion, with 45 percent of the required funding provided by the DBK. We and KazMunaiGas are pleased to make a contribution to further developing high-quality oil production in Kazakhstan, ensuring the energy security of the country,” Zhamishev noted.

From the start of 2015, pensions in Kazakhstan have increased by 9 percent, with a total of 1,168.7 billion tenge designated from the state budget for pensions this year, according to the Ministry of Healthcare and Social Development. Pension payments are annually indexed at 2 percent above inflation, predicted within a corridor 6-8 percent, with a possible further reduction to 5-7 percent in 2015. The average pension payment, including base pension payment (BPP), will be 50,549 (pension benefits – 39,367 tenge, the size of the BPP is 11,182 tenge), the minimum size, with the BPP is 34,874 tenge. According to the Ministry, 1,053.5 billion tenge was allocated from the state budget for the pensions last year, with a total of 1,909,597 claiming a state pension.

12 projects with foreign companies are being implemented in the “Seaport Aktau” special economic zone, according to the Minister of Investments and Development of Kazakhstan, Asset Issekeshiev. Visiting the site, the Minister commented “countries including Singapore, South Korea, France, Norway, Italy, Azerbaijan are taking part in “Seaport Aktau”. The expected volume of investments is 7.4 billion tenge. The production capacity is expected to reach 45,000 tonnes,” According to the minister, new measures introduced by the President to give companies taxation and customs preferences had helped attract the foreign partners.

More than 40 projects under the Industrialisation Map are being implemented in the Mangystau region, according to Minister Issekeshiev, who visited the region on Jan. 9. These projects will create more than 7 thousand jobs over the implementation period and just under 6 thousand jobs when fully operation. The minister noted that 33 projects totalling 220 billion tenge were launched between 2010 and 2014, creating an addition 5.2 thousand jobs in the region.

Prime Minister of Kazakhstan, Karim Massimov, has held a meeting with President of Tatarstan Rustam Minnikhanov on Dec. 29. During the meeting the parties discussed various issues, including further strengthening of business partnership between Kazakhstan and Tatarstan. In particular, they considered prospects for expanding cooperation in industrial sector, investment and innovation spheres, as well as in the sphere of military-technical cooperation.

## Kazakhstan’s Government, National Bank Project 4-5% Economic Growth in 2015

Continued from Page A1

Elaborating on the countercyclical economic policy, the document sets the goal of achieving real economic growth of 4-5 percent next year. To support economic growth and employment in 2014-2015, at the instructions of President Nursultan Nazarbayev, the Government has already allocated one trillion tenge (US\$5.5 billion) from the National Fund of Kazakhstan in February 2014.

The second tranche in the amount of 500 billion tenge (\$2.75 billion) will be allocated for additional concessional lending to small, medium and large businesses, rehabilitation of the banking sector and construction of infrastructure for free economic zones and the international specialised exhibition EXPO 2017. The Government will also be allocating \$3 billion annually from the National Fund to implement the new economic policy Nurlu Zhol, which envisions further structural reforms of the economy.

To further support business activities in the country, the government will be allocating 100 billion tenge (\$550 million) from the National Fund annually in 2015-2016 for lending to small, medium and large businesses through existing programmes of interbank lending of the Damu Entrepreneurship Development Fund and the Development Bank of Kazakhstan.

Kazakhstan will also launch projects in the field of SMEs, modernisation of housing and communal services, road construction, development of electric power, renewable energy, and implementing institutional reforms in the amount of \$13.5 billion, with \$9 billion expected to be financed by international financial institutions.

SMEs will also receive support within the Business Road Map 2020, including the expansion of leasing operation and financial sup-

port for agriculture in the framework of the Agribusiness 2020 programme.

To support the positive foreign trade balance and exports, the communiqué previews developing mechanisms for trade and export financing at rates not exceeding the rates applicable for exporters to the EU (2-3 percent in foreign currency).

The start of the implementation of a new five-year plan of the State Programme of Accelerated Industrial and Innovative Development (SPAIID) is also of great importance while considering main economic goals of 2015. The second five-year plan, which launches on Jan. 1, 2015, will focus on developing manufacturing industry in certain priority sectors, taking into account regional peculiarities.

The communiqué stated that macroeconomic stability will be achieved through coordinating monetary and fiscal policy and curbing inflation in the planned corridor of 6-8 percent.

Inflation targeting is expected to increase the real yield savings in tenge, while lowering inflation expectations.

To prevent sharp exchange rate fluctuations for the national currency, measures to limit speculation in the foreign exchange market will be taken. In 2015, the National Bank jointly with the Government will work to amend the legislation increasing requirements for exchange offices in cash foreign exchange market.

To reduce the burden on the state budget, the Government plans to attract external loans from international financial institutions and use mechanisms of public-private partnerships for co-financing infrastructure projects.

Financial stability will be maintained by complex regulatory measures aimed at increasing the role of the national currency in the economy, stimulating the growth of tenge liquidity of banks to further

increase lending for the economy and recovery of the banking sector.

To enhance the role of the national currency, the communiqué previews increasing guaranteed payout to depositors of Kazakhstan Deposit Insurance Fund on deposits in tenge from the current amount of 5 million tenge to 10 million tenge (US\$27,000 to US\$55,000). This will be achieved by increasing the fund’s capitalisation, reducing the interest rate on guaranteed deposits in dollars from 4 percent to 3 percent per annum and prohibiting the practice of setting the prices for goods and services in foreign currencies, primarily the U.S. dollar.

To stimulate the growth of tenge liquidity of banks, a temporary reduction of certain provisions of the prudential regulation where necessary will be considered.

To ensure recovery of the banking sector the authorised capital of the Problem Loan Fund will be increased by 250 billion tenge (US\$1.375 billion), while mechanisms to work with troubled assets, including the organisation’s activities to manage non-performing assets and tax issues (tax administration), will get priority.

In the field of regulatory policy, Basel III, new standards for capital adequacy of banks, will be gradually introduced, which set softer requirements for banks in terms of capital adequacy and capital components the first stage of transitioning. The National Bank will monitor the implementation of the new capital adequacy given the current economic situation.

In general, the economic policy for 2015 will be aimed at mitigating the effects of negative external factors and, strengthening the stability of the socio-economic situation in the country. The main goals are to address recovery of the financial sector, maintain macroeconomic stability and competitiveness of Kazakhstan’s economy through diversification of the economy, the communiqué concluded.

## Eurasian Economic Union Launches in Challenging Times

Continued from Page A1

More recent criticism questions whether, with its largest economy faltering, the EEU will actually be of great benefit to its smaller members, particularly with Kazakhstan’s export-based economy. Kazakhstan’s exports to Russia declined in the first half of 2014, as did overall trade between the two countries. Trade between all three countries of the union declined between January and October of 2014, though Nazarbayev noted in a December meeting with Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev that though trade had decreased in value, it increased in volume.

Russia’s current economic troubles and tumbling rouble, brought on by low oil prices and Western sanctions, are being blamed for downturns in some of Kazakhstan’s industries. As Tengrinews reported on Jan. 2, quoting automobile market experts including magazine editors, the head of the Automobile Union, the Association of Kazakhstan’s Auto Business and others, the industry will suffer from a flood of cheap Russian cars, while Kazakh automakers are already resorting to slashing prices and spending and sending workers on unpaid leave to keep expenses down.

There are also ongoing tensions between EEU members over issues related to EU sanctions against Russia, in particular over Russia’s ban on the import of some Belarussian food products for fear of receiving re-exported EU products, and its ban on the transit of Belarussian food to Kazakhstan through its territory. Lukashenko has complained that these bans were enacted unilaterally and without consultation, particularly at the Dec. 23 EEC summit in Moscow. Neither Belarus nor Kazakhstan have joined Russia in banning the

imports of EU products, leaving their neighbour to handle for itself the repercussions of the ongoing conflict in Ukraine.

Nazarbayev himself has confirmed that current economic conditions will impose challenges on the new union. “The instability of world markets, the policy of sanctions, the deterioration of trust between the leading world powers, the threat of aggravating military and political situation – all of this will impact the processes for building the Eurasian Economic Union,” Nazarbayev said at the EEC Summit. Kazakhstan recently announced that it will be dipping into its National Fund to finance major infrastructure and other projects in an attempt to maintain economic growth and development amidst falling oil prices and other economic turbulence.

For now, the countries of the new union are engaged in creating and refining the ground-level details of their union. Kazakhstan has confirmed that migrant workers from within the EEU will not need certificates and may sign labour contracts in EEU countries without exiting and re-entering the country where they wish to work. The Ministry of Healthcare and Social Development does not expect a huge influx of labour from fellow member countries and no threat to Kazakhstan’s labour market. Trend.az reported on Jan. 8, quoting Deputy Healthcare and Social Development Minister Svetlana Zhakupova. The number of foreign labourers in the country is expected to remain roughly the same as last year. In 2014, nearly 8,000 workers from Russia came to Kazakhstan, 560 from Belarus and 260 from Armenia. The 2014 quota for foreign labour was 63,000 people, though only 29,000 registered, the ministry reported. The 2015 quota is 63,900.

# BUSINESS

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 14, 2015

## BUSINESS NEWS IN BRIEF

“10 billion tenge to be allocated for personnel training in 10 higher education institutions within the State Programme of Industrial and Innovative Development (SPAIID),” Vice Minister of Education and Science of Kazakhstan Takhir Balykbayev said at a Jan. 9 media briefing at the Central Communications Service (CCS). “The 10 billion tenge, allocated to institutions for the coming three years, is a serious investment in the development of higher education and science,” Balykbayev stressed. According to him, the public activity of Kazakhstan’s scientists has increased two times over for the last three years. “Our task is to increase financing to allow scientists and business to work together and implement certain results of scientific developments. To achieve this goal, new grant programmes will be developed,” the Deputy Minister said.

“Enterprises that have taken part in the state programme on industrialisation are now returning a profit”, according to Asset Issekeshiev, Minister of Investments and Development. During his Jan. 9 working trip to the Mangystau region, he visited “KazAzot” LLP, a company that has undergone a reconstruction and modernization and consequently become more competitive on the world market, expanding its export reach to include Russia, Ukraine, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Georgia, Azerbaijan and Lithuania. “The plant’s capacity has increased by 50 percent. About 250 thousand tonnes of ammonia, about 450 thousand tonnes of nitrogen fertilisers were produced by the plant. Besides, the number of the people working at the plant is growing. Presently, the plant’s staff includes 936 people,” Issekeshiev noted.

During Minister Issekeshiev’s visit to the West of Kazakhstan, he also took part in a meeting, in Aktau on Jan. 9, to discuss the development of the transport and logistics potential of the region. The minister noted that the flow of cargo is growing, with increased demand from the international seaport of Aktau and the “Bolashak” border terminal. In 2014, more than 10 million was transported through the seaport and 6.2 million tonnes of cargo moved by railroad. Since the launch of the new railroads connecting Zhezkazgan and Beineu, Uzen and Bolashak the volume of cargo traffic grown by 10 percent 2013 figures. Issekeshiev said that a number of transport and logistics projects were being implemented in the Mangystau region, in line with plans set out by President Nursultan Nazarbayev in his State-of-the-Nation address.

The Ministry of Education and Science of Kazakhstan plans to increase grant funding to commercialise technologies, according to Vice Minister of Education and Science Takir Balykbayev, who was speaking at a recent government hour held in the Mazhilis (lower chamber of the Parliament). “In Kazakhstan, 80-85 percent of the funding is allocated to basic applied research, somewhere around 15 percent for experimental design work. In other parts of the world, they aim for 60-65 percent of the money going to the development of the design. Our approaches have been approved, so we plan to increase funding for grants for commercialisation, including applying for patents,” Balykbayev said. He noted that the Ministry of Education is currently working in partnership with the World Bank to implement 30 projects aimed at technology commercialisation, with 6 billion tenge allocated for the initiatives. Of this number, 10 projects had been put into production. The Deputy Minister also announced that Kazakhstan is developing a draft law on the commercialisation of scientific, scientific and technical activities.

## “Modest” Modernisation Plans, Cost Cutting to Offset Falling Prices, KMG EP Head Says

By Assel Kussainova

In his state-of-the-nation address, “Nurly Zhol: The Path to the Future,” President Nursultan Nazarbayev said that falling oil prices would lead to a decrease in budget revenues. CEO Abat Nurseitov of KazMunayGas Exploration & Production (KMG EP), one of the top three oil producers in Kazakhstan, discussed oil production predictions for 2015 and how the economic downturn will affect his company in an interview with the Kazakhstanskaya Pravda newspaper at the end of December 2014.

**The circumstances under which KMG EP is working have significantly changed since the start of the year. In February there was a devaluation of tenge, thanks to which KMG EP saw the highest profits in its history. However, the second half of the year saw a fall in oil prices. How have these events, in addition to the current political instability in the world, affected KMG EP’s activities?**

KMG EP received a profit of 242 billion tenge (US\$1.32 billion) in the first nine months of 2014. These profits were partially offset by the rise in customs fees, transportation costs and the increase of our wages fund. As for the fall in oil prices on international markets, it is, of course, a significant challenge for our company, since it is not a secret that our oil deposits have been used for quite a long time. So we have to invest modestly into modernising our production, while carrying heavy social obligations.

**Will there be any changes to plans for oil production in 2015 as a result?**

The board of directors has approved the 2015 oil production plan. We still expect a gradual increase in the volumes of goods produced by our main assets [OzenMunayGas – OMG, and EmbaMunayGas – EMG] by 4 percent by 2018 (compared to the results of 2013). Other expenses not directly related to production and existing obligations were reassessed. In particular, capital investments in 2015 will cost 115 billion tenge [US\$630

million]. This is 14 percent less than our planned capital investments for 2015 according to the business plan set the year before. Expenses are to be cut mainly with cuts to investments that don’t affect our level of production, expenses on infrastructure projects, as well as extending the deadlines for some of our long-term modernisation programmes.

**One of the main indicators of effectiveness is, undoubtedly, meeting production goals. Is everything indeed going as planned?**

Yes, by the results of the first nine months of this year, our company exceeded our targets for oil extraction. The consolidated amount, taking into account our shares in our subsidiaries, is 9.217 million tonnes of oil. Please note that our agreed target for 2014 was 12.263 tons of oil, and we have every reason to believe that it, too, will be achieved. In addition, despite certain hardships, this year we launched trial exploitations of a Novobogat SE deposit in the Liman block. Very recently, we have started to exploit the Aksai deposit of oil and gas at our joint venture, KazGerMunay LLC. The amount of gas in that deposit will be of great help in supplying the people of Kyzylorda with natural gas, the objective given to us by the President of Kazakhstan.

**What modern technologies are used by the company to increase the coefficient of oil extraction? It is no secret that KMG EP deposits are well past their primes.**

This is a very timely question, since our deposits are actually quite different in age, from 10 – 100 years old. The mission to increase the coefficient of oil extraction set in February by the President at the expanded government meeting also highlights the importance of the question. We mainly use secondary methods of layer pressure support. However, we also integrate new technologies. For example, on KazGerMunay’s Nuraly deposit in the Kyzylorda region, we started testing a new technology in June: polymer flooding. Similar technology is being tried out in the Zarubeni

deposit by EMG. We plan to start work in the OMG and KarazhanbasMunay joint stock companies.

**Another important factor is stocks replenishment. How are things in that respect? Is KMG EP conducting any geological expeditions at this moment?**

KMG EP is running an ongoing and constant project aimed at increasing oil and reserves and replenishing the raw materials of the company by conducting geological expeditions. We conduct seismic explorations in prospective areas, we drill and test exploratory wells, pick and analyse core fragments and samples of rock layer fluid – we do the full spectrum of necessary research to locate concentrations of hydrocarbons. Naturally, the intensity of the work conducted depends on the perceived potential of the region. It should be noted that growth in reserves replenishment is being reported to the government’s Commission of Reserves of Kazakhstan. The increase of extracted resources in [proven reserves and possible reserves] in 2012 was 3.6 million tonnes of oil and in 2013 it was 5 million tonnes of oil and condensate. In 2014, the increase in alleged extracted resources in [those categories] is expected to be around 9.3 million tonnes of oil and condensate.

Regarding geo-exploratory works, the biggest event of this year was the discovery of a new deposit in the Rozhkovskoe field. Also, initially the exploratory works in that field were aimed at locating hydrocarbons in the Boribricov and Turneyev horizons, and the supply categorised as 2P [proven and probable reserves] in those horizons, according to technical audits of international standards, rose from 5.4 million tonnes in 2012 to 7.9 million tonnes in 2013. However, apart from those horizons, oil was also found in deposits as old as Bashkir! We plan to start exploiting that deposit in 2017.

We continue to search for ways to expand our geo-exploratory portfolio and we confirm our readiness to invest funds into new exploratory works, since this is the only pos-

sible way to broaden the resource base of our company.

**You announced the start of large-scale production modernisation in your main assets a few years ago. Have there been any results?**

As part of our programme in OMG, a department for diagnosing and repairing our underground equipment was opened, as well as an installation for preparing the fluids for killing wells. In our Technical Transport and Well Maintenance Control LLC, we have put a new manufacturing base of 250 units of transport and specialised equipment into operation. A workshop is being built for repairing oil-extraction equipment and a service centre for 1,000 automobiles. There is also the reconstruction of equipment for pumping water into rock layers. This is all in the Mangystau region. Installations for readying and transporting associated gas were built at EMG at the East Makat and S. Balgimbayev deposits in the Atyrau region. This list can go on.

We can already see positive results. In particular, there is a decreased rate of purchases of underground equipment: tubing and pumping rods. By introducing a well-killing department, we cut the time it takes to make a well operational after repairs. Thanks to the integration of global positioning systems into deposits, we have cut fuel expenditures by 17 percent. This project paid off in two years. Overall, the modernisation let us stop the rise in controllable expenses, provided a stabilisation of extraction in 2012-2013, improved operational indicators, as well as helped in adhering to the demands of ecological legislation in the half-urgent perspective.

**You signed a memorandum in the middle of the year on cooperation between the then-Ministry of Environment and Water Resources, the then-Ministry of Oil and Gas, KMG and KMG EP. Has anything been executed through this deal?**

The memorandum that you are talking about is aimed at preventing

waste generation and the reduction and liquidation of contaminated lands and waste disposal. In particular, we are talking about disposing of and recycling waste in the contracted territory of OMG. As you know, oil deposit exploitation in Uzen in the Mangystau region and in the Emba group’s deposits in the Atyrau region started in the last century. Back then, too little attention was paid to environmental damage, which led to the formation of vast, oil-contaminated territories. By the end of this year, in the OMG deposits, 400,000 tonnes out of 2 million tonnes of waste will be eliminated, in addition to the disposal of 52 tonnes of contaminated soil with the use of energy-accumulative additives based on humate-containing composite materials. Such disposal technology is an invention of the Bekturov Institute of Chemical Sciences, where the neutralised soil is planned to be used ... to make substances for road-building. We are also investigating international technologies for waste disposal. This year, we conducted a pilot test of a hydrodynamic waste disposal method, with positive results. ...

In regards to our other enterprises, EMG, KarazhanbasMunay and KazGerMunay, by the end of the year, 340 tonnes of waste will be disposed of. We plan to dispose of almost 1.3 million cubic metres of historical waste in Uzen by 2021. OMG is currently working on cleaning the tubing contaminated by radiation and other equipment, where radioactive salts and dross are being deposited. This equipment was stored in OMG’s temporary containment landfills. ... This year, a specialised contractor cleared 1,000 tonnes of radiation-contaminated tubing. After being cleaned, the tubes are sent back into service for further use.

**Does the company have plans to expand operations by making deals with foreign corporations?**

Yes, such plans exist. I can’t reveal any details, being bound by the confidentiality agreement, but I think that in the foreseeable future we will be able to announce our new foreign partners to the investment community.

## Almaty to Host Islamic Finances Forum in May

By Malika Orazgaliyeva

ASTANA – The 12th Islamic Financial Services Board (IFSB) summit will be held in Almaty on May 19-21, the National Bank of Kazakhstan (NBK) announced. A memorandum of understanding signed between NBK and IFSB on Dec.31 signified the cooperation and commitment of both parties in ensuring the success of this important event, stated its Jan. 5 press release.

According to NBK, the IFSB summit is an interactive platform for key players in the Islamic finance industry that will focus on the current development of Islamic finance in the world, regulating the activities of Islamic financial institutions, regional and global cooperation in the fields of financial stability and capacity building, as well as the prospects and development plans of the industry.

“The first summit of the Islamic Financial Services Board was held in 2004 in the U.K. under the patronage of the Prince of Wales. Subsequent summits were held in Qatar, Lebanon, the UAE, Jordan, Singapore, Bahrain, Luxembourg, Turkey, Malaysia and Mauritius. The summit is held annually in May, with the support of central banks or regulator countries as co-organisers of the event. The summit usually gathers over 300 delegates from more than 35 countries, including high-ranking officials of regula-

tory and supervisory authorities, international financial institutions, financial market participants and representatives of science and education,” the report said.

Hosting such an event in Kazakhstan will promote Almaty as the Islamic financial hub in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and Central Asia.

“I am delighted that the 2015 summit is being held in Kazakhstan,” said ISBF Secretary-General Jaseem Ahmed. “The IFSB summit presents an important high-level platform for the key regulators, market players and thought leaders of the global Islamic Financial Services Industry (IFSI) to discuss issues pertinent in steering the regulatory direction of the industry, with the mutual aim to further strengthen its resilience and stability.”

“The National Bank of Kazakhstan has been an associate member of the IFSB since November 2011 and we are very happy to work with them in organising this twelfth edition of the summit. We are especially pleased that the summit will take place in Central Asia – a region of emerging importance and potential on the map of Islamic finance,” he added.

The annual IFSB summits aim to bring together industry leaders and professionals from across the globe. In particular, participants of the previous summits have included key players of IFSI, especially members of IFSB, from

among regulatory and supervisory authorities, international intergovernmental organisations and market players.

IFSB is an international standard-setting organisation that promotes and enhances the soundness and stability of the Islamic financial services industry by issuing global prudential standards and guiding principles for the industry, broadly defined to include banking, capital markets and insurance sectors. IFSB also conducts research and coordinates initiatives on industry-related issues, as well as organises roundtables, seminars and conferences for regulators and industry stakeholders. The organisation consists of 184 members, including 59 regulatory and supervisory authorities and eight international intergovernmental organisations. NBK joined IFSB in 2011.

Kazakhstan adopted the law on Islamic finance in 2009, creating the conditions for the functioning of Islamic banks, Islamic investment funds and Islamic securities issue. In 2011, a law was passed providing the possibility of issuing state Islamic securities, as well as expanding the list of originators of Islamic securities issued by Kazakh residents.

NBK drafted a law on amendments and additions to certain legislative acts on insurance and Islamic finance to develop Islamic finance, insurance and leasing. At present, the draft is under discussion in parliament.

## EBRD to Lend 10 Billion Tenge for On-lending to Small Businesses in Kazakhstan, Damu Fund to Act as Guarantor

Continued from Page A1

At the loan announcement on Dec. 23, BCC CEO Vladislav Lee said the loan would strengthen the bank’s position in the small business sector.

“The Kazakhstan MSME Framework will build on the extensive work the bank has done over a number of years in the local MSME sector,” said Mike Taylor, EBRD director for financial institutions for Kazakhstan, the Caucasus and Mongolia, announcing the loan. “Our work will focus on the promotion of finance in rural areas, on local currency lending and on technical cooperation programmes to help rebuild institutional capacity in MSME lending. Bank CentreCredit is a long-standing partner of the EBRD with a historical focus and expertise in the MSME area. We are pleased to launch our first project under the new framework with them.”

Lyazzat Ibragimova, chair of the Damu Fund, said that Damu’s participation as guarantor marked a new stage in the fund’s history and indicated both the fund’s professional development and the EBRD’s trust in the institution.

“Development of the MSME segment and continued support

to the local financial sector are the top priorities for the EBRD in Kazakhstan. We not only provide financing but are engaged in an active dialogue with the government of Kazakhstan, Damu, the National Bank and other stakeholders,” Janet Heckman, EBRD director for Kazakhstan, said.

**Since early 1990s, the EBRD has invested over \$4.8 billion in the country’s economy.**

Since the beginning of its operations in Kazakhstan in the early 1990s, the EBRD has invested over \$4.8 billion in the country’s economy, with more than half of the total supporting projects in the private sector. At the 2014 Astana Economic Forum in May, the EBRD and the National Bank of Kazakhstan signed two agreements to enable the EBRD to source up to \$1 billion in tenge from the National Bank to lend onward to Kazakh organisations.

# EDITORIAL & OPINIONS

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 14, 2015

## Eurasian Economic Union Comes into Force Jan 1, Promising Benefits from Integration

The treaty creating the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) took effect Jan. 1, 2015, with economic borders between Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan and Russia becoming significantly thinner. Kyrgyzstan is scheduled to join by May, according to the documents signed in Moscow on Dec. 23.

Kazakhstan has been one of Eurasian integration's biggest proponents. President Nursultan Nazarbayev first expressed the idea and rationale behind creating the EEU in 1994.

After two decades of long negotiations and weighing the pros and cons of the EEU, as well as much preparatory work, such as the Eurasian Economic Community, Customs Union and the Common Economic Space, the leaders of Kazakhstan, Russia and Belarus met in Astana on May 29, 2014 to sign a treaty establishing the EEU.

"The document reflects all of the basic aspects related to international organisations and follows all principles of the sovereign equality of states. It also respects certain specific features of the member states' existing politics," Nazarbayev told the audience that day.

Many ordinary people wondered how the EEU would benefit them. However, as the union is becoming a reality, its benefits become more and more apparent.

According to Minister of Eurasian Economic Commission for Economy and Financial Policy Timur Suleimenov, the EEU's launch on Jan. 1 means that there will not only be a single market space for goods, but also for services. As he explained in an extensive interview with Rossiyskaya Gazeta newspaper, this means that citizens of all EEU member states will be able to travel, work, study and get medical treatment as easy as they do in their home countries.

There will be notably less paperwork and formal procedures.

Tax regimes for EEU member state nationals who are residents in another member state will be equal to the local population and businesses.

Education certificates, as well as other types of documents will be legal and accepted everywhere necessary.

Citizens will also get equal access to medical services in member states, as well as social services. Access to preschools is one of the most valuable advantages of the changes.

All of this is expected to increase competition in labour markets, including in Kazakhstan. The country will also see an increase in the quality of its human capital. However, reaching this historical day wasn't as easy as signing the treaty was. There were several steps starting in the mid-2000's taken to establish the EEU. The first step towards economic integration was the creation of a free trade zone.

The second step was the creation of the Customs Union. The decision to create the Customs Union was made at an informal summit of Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEC) member states in 2006. But only on Jan. 1, 2010, the Customs Union of three EurAsEC member states – Kazakhstan, Russia and Belarus – became a reality. On July 6, 2010, the Customs Code of the Customs Union came into force.

Customs Union member states began closer cooperation and there was a significant increase in mutual trade turnover, as well as improvement in overall economic development.

In 2013, despite the ongoing turbulence in global economy, trade turnover between the three countries increased, reaching \$64.1 billion. The structure of bilateral trade has also changed with the share of exported and imported raw materials declining and the volume of technological products with high added value increasing.

Since then, a single market for goods without tariffs was created. This has given Kazakhstan's products greater access to a larger market. The creation of joint ventures and cooperatives has intensified, new jobs have been created and the range of social services has expanded.

Business conditions have improved noticeably. The members of the Customs Union have seen increases in their rankings on the World Bank's "Ease of Doing Business" index.

This was followed by the third step of integration – the Common Economic Space (CES). The CES is based on 17 international agreements that were developed and adopted by member states in 2010 and entered into force on Jan. 1, 2012.

The CES significantly enhanced the economic potential of member states.

For Kazakhstan in particular, the establishment of the CES has enabled businesses to reduce transactional costs, consequently freeing up working capital to invest in business development.

"CES countries can provide a model for a powerful union, capable of becoming one of the modern world's big economic forces as well as acting as an effective link between Europe and the dynamic Asia-Pacific region," Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan Samat Ordabayev said in his article "Building an Eurasian Economic Union on Consensus, Mutual Respect and Benefit" published on May 20, 2014.

The EEU has a total area of 20.2 million square kilometres. It is five times larger than the entire European Union and two times greater than the area of China and the United States. The combined population of its five member states exceeds 170 million. The main contribution to the combined GDP (with GDP calculated according to the purchasing power parity principle) of the EEU comes from Russia, with a \$3.558 trillion GDP, followed by Kazakhstan with a \$420 billion GDP and then Belarus at \$171 billion, Armenia at \$24 billion and Kyrgyzstan – \$19.2 billion, according to estimates from the IMF's World Economic Outlook for October 2014.

While the union promises to bring great benefits to respective economies, there should be no doubt that Kazakhstan and other EEU members remain independent states free to pursue their own national interests. They only need to seek to expand their economic opportunities by creating synergy and joint potential that would go beyond the simple combined total of the member states.

## OECD Launches Review of Central Administration of Kazakhstan

By Saltanat Janenova

In his annual state-of-the-nation address in 2014, President Nursultan Nazarbayev declared that Kazakhstan should seek to introduce living standards of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) member countries.

Currently the OECD includes 34 top developed countries which account for 60 percent of the world's GDP. Good governance has been selected among top priority areas within the framework of the OECD Kazakhstan Country Programme for 2015-2016.

According to a new Review of Central Administration which was produced by the OECD and launched on Dec. 18 in Astana, Kazakhstan has made remarkable progress since its independence and is now the most dynamic economic and political actor in Central Asia.

Over the past decade, the country made significant improvements in its allocation of resources, business climate, human development and quality of public administration. In view of this, Kazakhstan has the ambition of joining the ranks of the 30 most developed countries in the world by 2050.

Yet Kazakhstan must overcome



significant challenges to achieve this objective, including growing regional disparities in wealth distribution; a persistently high poverty rate, particularly in rural areas; limited human capital; corruption; and the need to strengthen the rule of law, democratisation and openness, including citizen participation in policy processes.

According to the new OECD review, which examined the structure, functions and capabilities of Kazakhstan's central agencies and several line ministries, the following steps could help the country face the challenges ahead:

Re-assessing the role and capacities of Kazakhstan's ministries, granting the greater autonomy and involvement in the policy-making process to support their ability to deliver results and respond to citizen and business needs and to enable the development of a professional public service in Kazakhstan.

Reviewing the functions and roles of central agencies to remove remaining fragmentation and to strengthen the government's ability to act as a collective body.

Strengthening transparency and citizen participation in policy-making, monitoring and evaluation to support inclusive and participative decision-making processes. The mechanisms for the protection of citizens' rights and dispute resolution could also be strengthened.

Improving horizontal co-ordination at the central level, including through fostering working level collaboration across central agencies and ministries to strengthen Kazakhstan's ability to address cross-cutting policy issues.

Enhancing strategic human resource management and performance budgeting, including reducing staff turnover to support the public service's capacity to attract

and retain the best and the brightest.

Improving Kazakhstan's public service performance and accountability system and reducing administrative reporting requirements to improve management performance across the administration and to strengthen ministerial ability to focus on citizen and business needs.

Vice-Minister of National Economy of Kazakhstan Madina Ablykassymova stated at the launch of the review that OECD's recommendations would be beneficial for implementation as the country was aiming to strengthen its national competitiveness and foster inclusive growth.

The OECD will continue actively working with Kazakhstan within the framework of its 2015-2016 Kazakhstan Country Programme in order to help it improve the quality of its public governance and make further progress towards a modern and efficient public sector.

The author holds a PhD in social policy and is instructor at the Nazarbayev University Graduate School of Public Policy and co-author of the OECD Kazakhstan Review of Central Administration.

## Place of Water in Kazakhstan 2050 Strategy

By Leong Ching and Karlygash Karamanova

Kazakhstan is a country rich in oil and natural beauty. But to reach its aspirations under the Kazakhstan 2050 Strategy, it may be missing one vital resource – water.

This is not an obvious limitation, especially in parts of the Almaty or East Kazakhstan oblasts, where water flows abundantly in rivers. But when he outlined the Kazakhstan 2050 Strategy two years ago, President Nursultan Nazarbayev identified water shortages as a key global challenge, with a special salience for landlocked Kazakhstan.

A lack of high-quality drinking water is severe in some regions, especially rural areas. By the end of 2013, according to Kazakhstan's Statistical Yearbook for 2009-2013, 93 percent of the households in Kazakhstan's cities were living in premises with running water; however, in rural areas, the figure stood at only 25 percent. Many households in remote areas still have their water delivered in water tanks and kept in special reservoirs.

By 2050, Kazakhstan hopes to have solved once and for all the problem of water supply.

Globally, this is a familiar problem. Today, one billion people lack access to safe drinking water. By 2025, two-thirds of the world's population will face water stress, and the situation will deteriorate by 2050. Even worse, less than one percent of the world's water is usable.

But these dire statistics need not apply to Kazakhstan. In this, a small island, as different from Kazakhstan as it is possible to imagine, may offer a useful model.

Singapore is just over 700 square kilometres, whereas Kazakhstan is 2.7 million. Singapore has no natural resources, definitely no oil, and is an island one degree north of the equator.

And yet, as Minister of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan Erlan Idrissov has said, Kazakhstan has used Singapore directly as a model of how to achieve success – its state asset management body, Samruk Kazyna, is based on Singapore's Temasek state investment company.

"Singapore's expertise is also being used to help improve public services, including education, and to modernise and diversify our economy, particularly in the field of chemical production and infor-



Leong Ching

mation technology," he wrote in an opinion this year.

Another unglamorous but essential public utility could be added to this list: the provision of water in cities.

Singapore is one of the world's driest countries: 20th from last in terms of fresh water availability. It used to rely on a larger neighbour, Malaysia, for its water. Despite its poor endowment in water, Singapore has a stable water supply and management system today.

Under the Asian Development Bank's IDWA (Index of Drinking Water Adequacy), Singapore scores full marks in four out of five indices: access, capacity, use and quality. There is universal provision of water to households and the cleanliness of its supply meets World Health Organisation standards. Water in Singapore is safe to drink straight from the tap.

How did Singapore provide water for both economic growth and for drinking? How did it wean itself off heavy dependence on its neighbour for its supply of water?

Here are three ideas that could be useful for Kazakhstan.

### Every Drop is Precious

One of the secrets to Singapore's success is an unglamorous engineering task – fixing the pipes.

In most developed countries now, non-revenue water – leakage from source to end user – is about 20

percent. In some countries, such as Mexico, it is as high as 40 percent. In Kazakhstan, it is 22 percent. In Singapore, it is 4 percent. In other words, if Kazakhstan reduces its leakage to Singapore's level, it will



Karlygash Karamanova

immediately increase its water supply by nearly 20 percent.

At the moment, Kazakhstan's water supply network is in poor condition – some of its sections have exceeded the standard operating term of 25 years. In 2009, only 36 percent of the water supply network was in working condition and 64 percent needed complete replacement or major renovation, according to the Ak Bulak programme approved by the government in May 2011. The government is already putting efforts toward rebuilding its water infrastructure. State programmes for water supply, like the Drinking Water Programme from 2002 – 2010 and the current Ak Bulak programme, acknowledge the need for better policies for accurately metering water use and ensuring supplies for end users.

Such efforts need to be strengthened, not just because Kazakhstan's population is increasing, but because goals under the Kazakhstan 2050 Strategy aimed at economic growth will require efficient water use and the recognition that each drop is precious.

### Price and Compassion

The pricing of water is a politically salient activity. In Singapore, everyone who uses water is charged from the first drop. The Singapore government has targeted support that provides utilities subsidies for the poor. Even the very poor have

constant water connections and the same level of service as any other Singaporean.

Today, state programmes in Kazakhstan emphasise the efficient use of water via tariff differentiation, cost-efficient operation of enterprises and covering investments for the implementation of medium- and long-term programmes. But both drinking and irrigation water is still subsidised.

Kazakhstan will have to find its own formulation for pricing water. But it must recognise that water has an economic cost and its price must reflect its value.

### Nudging Behaviour

Nudging, in behavioural economics and social psychology, is a light-touch approach to behaviour modification – using the power of social norms or all-too-human emotions.

Some successful examples of nudging have been the use of data on electricity bills to lower consumption.

In terms of regulating demand, Singapore has public education programmes. But it also has several nudges among its water management programmes, including smaller flush cisterns, automatic push pipes and the publication of average consumption data in bills to nudge high water users.

Such nudges decrease (or eliminate) efforts needed to save water, or, in the case of bills, harness the power of social norms to change behaviour.

Appreciating every drop, price recognition and nudging are all measures that Kazakhstan can implement easily and at relatively low cost, especially in its cities.

Kazakhstan has big dreams, economically and politically, as befitting a big country. It has both the wealth and the political will to make regulatory and policy changes that will make the revolutionary transformations required.

We argue that these changes ought to take place in water first. It will lay the foundation for the incredible developmental growth that will likely follow.

Leong Ching is a senior research fellow at the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy at the National University of Singapore. Karlygash Karamanova is a teaching assistant at the Graduate School of Public Policy at Nazarbayev University.

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# OPINIONS

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 14, 2015

## Kazakhstan's Campaign for UN Security Council: A Focus on Real Issues

By Ertan Idrisov

It is a little over a year since Kazakhstan formally announced its candidacy for a non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council in 2017-2018. And it has been a year of steady progress and sustained achievement.

Our diplomats have been working world-wide to take our foreign policy and international relations to new frontiers. We have built new and exciting partnerships with countries in the South Pacific, Africa and Latin America – areas that in the past have been largely terra incognita for my country.

Our ability to reach out to so many regions over the past year has shown that food, water, energy and nuclear security – the issues at the heart of our UN Security Council campaign – strike a chord with audiences the world over.

We have seen, in all the nations we have visited, diverse as they are – be it island states, developing nations, emerging markets or established global players – that these issues are of the utmost importance to everyone. Our commitment to these essential issues has been recognised in Samoa, Ethiopia, Guinea, Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Mexico and the United States alike. Kazakhstan, moreover, has been playing an active role in addressing them in our region and beyond.

With regard to food security,



Kazakhstan initiated and is now working with partners in the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation to establish the Islamic Organisation for Food Security, which will be headquartered in Astana.

On water security, Kazakhstan, alongside its Central Asian neighbours, has been endeavouring to develop common solutions to the acute and growing challenges of water supply in the region – one of the driest in the world.

On energy security, we have pushed forward with the development of our extensive traditional resources as well as promoting new, clean and alternative solutions through initiatives such as the Green Bridge and Expo 2017, which will be focused on the theme of Future Energy.

I'm pleased to say that preparations for EXPO 2017 are already under way. The purpose-built EXPO city is being constructed on the outskirts of Astana's Yessil River's left bank, alongside the

impressive modern architecture that has come to symbolise contemporary Kazakhstan.

But our EXPO, focusing on Future Energy, is more than bricks and mortar. It has transcended the merely physical to become an important feature of our international diplomacy. We hope that our EXPO will both drive the energy agenda and produce real results outside the Central Asian region and across the world.

Energy security is an issue facing all nations, but it affects are felt most by those facing significant development challenges. This is why we are providing resources to 60 countries to enable them to take part in the EXPO – countries that would otherwise not be able to afford to do so. We are also pursuing initiatives to support nations facing acute energy problems such as working with the UN Economic and Social Commission for the Asia-Pacific Region to provide funding for biomass energy for nine small island developing states.

Nuclear security is, of course, an issue on which Kazakhstan has a justly renowned record. Ever since our early days of independence, when we relinquished the world's fourth largest nuclear arsenal and closed the Semipalatinsk nuclear test site (both inherited from the USSR), nuclear security has been at the centre of Kazakhstan's foreign policy.

We have continued to work

hard to strengthen the nuclear non-proliferation regime and push forward the global nuclear disarmament agenda. With our partners in Central Asia, we have taken great steps towards establishing the region as a nuclear free zone that has been recognised as such earlier this year by the five nuclear weapon states. And, in partnership with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), we are working to establish a low-enriched uranium fuel bank in Kazakhstan to promote the peaceful use of nuclear energy around the world.

**“The Foreign Ministry of Kazakhstan has had a busy and productive year with regard to the four pillars of our UNSC campaign – food, water, energy and nuclear security – but there has been much more besides. We are also continuing with initiatives such as our proposal to establish a UN hub for regional diplomacy in Almaty and the launch of our first dedicated agency for official development assistance, KazAID.”**

The Foreign Ministry of Kazakhstan has had a busy and productive year with regard to the four pillars of our UNSC cam-

aign – food, water, energy and nuclear security – but there has been much more besides. We are also continuing with initiatives such as our proposal to establish a UN hub for regional diplomacy in Almaty and the launch of our first dedicated agency for official development assistance, KazAID.

We have also furthered discussion and debate on Central Asia in the international community by providing support for a new, independent think-tank, the Eurasian Council for Foreign Affairs (ECFA). Its launch in Brussels in

of the Czech Republic, Dr Benita Ferrero-Waldner, former foreign minister of Austria and the ECFA's first chair, Lord Lamont, former Chancellor of the Exchequer of the United Kingdom, and Franco Frattini, former foreign minister of Italy.

The ECFA aims to promote informed and unbiased debate on the critical issues facing Eurasia, Central Asia and Europe. It is my hope that through the ECFA, audiences throughout the world will gain a greater understanding of the challenges, prospects and importance of Central Asia to the international community.

From its foundation in the aftermath of World War II, the principles, values and actions of the United Nations have been the cornerstones of international peace and stability. Kazakhstan is committed to advancing the role of the UN and supporting its efforts to overcome the many threats and challenges facing the world today.

We are confident that our common efforts will help strengthen this unique institution and help build a better, safer and more prosperous world for all.

Kazakhstan looks forward to working with all our partners in the international community as we strive to achieve these goals.

**The author is Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan.**

## Kazakhstan Implements Millennium Development Goals

By Yerzhan Ashikbayev



The Constitution of our country defines Kazakhstan as a democratic, secular, legal and social state. From the first days of independence the country's leadership has paid great attention to social support. The realisation of this high and noble purpose has been the key priority of the state's long-term national development strategies, such as Kazakhstan 2030 and Kazakhstan 2050, as well as “Nurly Zhol – The Way to the Future,” the Nov. 11 address by President Nursultan Nazarbayev which set out the new economic policy of the country.

Traditionally, special attention is devoted to social policy as a base in promoting social stability and harmony. In the December 2012 historic state-of-the-nation address, “Strategy Kazakhstan 2050, a new political way of the established state,” the President said, “The main criteria for me always was and will be the nation's quality of life. For the last 15 years the income of the people of Kazakhstan grew by 16 times. The number of people with income below the poverty level decreased by seven times, the number of unemployed has fallen by half. We laid the foundations of socially-oriented society.”

President Nazarbayev also noted that Kazakhstan managed to make significant progress in improving the health of the nation and creating equal opportunities for education. “To improve the efficiency of health care, its organisational, managing and financing systems were reformed. Over the past five years, maternal mortality has decreased by almost three times and the birth rate increased 1.5 times. Equal opportunities for education are being created. Over the past 15 years, spending on education grew 9.5 times. The state educa-

tion programme aimed at a radical modernisation of all levels of education, from pre-school to higher education, is being realised. Due to our policy of long-term investments in human development, we formed the current generation of talented young people,” the President said.

The social policy of our country coexists in harmony with the objectives of the international community in solving the social problems of all humanity. In 2000, Kazakhstan was among 189 countries in the world that signed the United Nations Millennium Declaration and committed to achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015.

The Millennium Declaration calls on countries to establish a new global partnership in order to reduce the poverty level and defines the basic values and principles of development assistance.

On the basis of common key objectives, eight MDGs to be achieved by 2015 were formulated. They are:

To eradicate extreme poverty and hunger

To achieve universal primary education

To promote gender equality and empower women

To reduce child mortality

To improve maternal health

To combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases

To ensure environmental sustainability

To develop a global partnership for development

Overall, the MDGs are divided into 21 quantifiable goals, the achievement of which is measured in 60 indicators.

Since 2000, Kazakhstan has issued four reports on the implementation of the MDGs. The first report was published in 2002 and became the first such kind of report in the region of Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). In 2005, the second report was published on the MDGs, which presented an analysis and evaluation of achievements at both national and regional levels. In 2007 and 2010 respectively, the third and fourth reports on the MDGs were published.

By the middle of the last decade, Kazakhstan had already achieved some initial goals of development, such as poverty reduction, access to primary education and promo-

tion of women's rights. In this context in 2007, the government of Kazakhstan committed itself to the agenda MDG Plus, which contains additional targets based on the analysis of national priorities, statistics and programmes, as well as the experience of other countries.

Today, Kazakhstan can speak about the implementation of goals one-five.

In particular, regarding goal one (to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger), the proportion of people living below the subsistence minimum was reduced by half. In 2007, both tasks of goal one were adapted to the national situation and are now formulated as follows: to reduce the number of people living in rural areas with an income below the subsistence minimum by half and halve the proportion of people with no access to balanced nutrition.

In its original formulation, to ensure the possibility for children, both boys and girls, to fully receive primary school education by 2015, goal two has been reached in Kazakhstan. The conclusion was based on the analysis of national policy priorities, statistical data, implementation of state programmes and taking into account the experience of other countries

**“Kazakhstan is an active member of various international organisations, regional and international treaties and agreements. International partnerships concluded by Kazakhstan fully support and promote the countries' development goals. At this stage, the most active ties remain in the spheres of trade, investment, finance, information technology and communications, as well as regional and international cooperation.”**

with emphasis on the quality of education and enrollment of children with special needs from disadvantaged groups.

Promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women is one of the core aspects of the national social policy. Due to this, Kazakhstan fulfilled goal three on abolition of the gender gap in primary and secondary education by

2005 and at all levels of education by 2015.

Nevertheless, the differences in positions of women and men in Kazakhstan still persist. Therefore the new challenges of goal 4+, adopted in 2007, include such priorities as the adoption and implementation of measures to increase the representation of women in state bodies, providing legislative and executive measures to prevent and eliminate violence against women, sustainable implementation of gender approaches in national planning and budgeting process.

As to goal four (to reduce child mortality), Kazakhstan has made significant progress and achieved a two-thirds reduction in the deaths among children under age 5. In July 2013, the UN inter-agency team of experts conducted an independent examination, by the results of which Kazakhstan was positively assessed by the systematic measures carried out in the field of maternal and child health.

Progress was also attained in achieving goal five (to improve maternal health), as the maternal mortality rate fell from 55 per 100,000 live births in 1990 to 12.6 in 2013. Thus, the maternal mor-

tales directed at the reduction of maternal mortality will be.

Among the imperatives of the current moment, continued active work on MDG 6 should be allocated to combat HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis. Today, the reported number of cumulative HIV cases amounts to 21,602. Wherein, it is aimed to retain the disease in its concentrated stage, i.e. below the World Health Organisation (WHO) recommended level 0.2 percent [in Kazakhstan, 0.16 percent.]

With regard to tuberculosis, the effective implementation of a package of measures helped to stabilise the epidemiological situation of tuberculosis in the country. The indicator of incidences of tuberculosis amounted to 67.1 per 100,000 people in 2014 (the target level to be achieved in 2015 is 58).

Relevant questions of environmental sustainability remain in MDG 7: application of the ecosystem approach in the design and implementation of economic and social programmes and adherence of the principles of integrated and sustainable management of the environment in Kazakhstan.

Nevertheless, Kazakhstan managed to improve the performance of a number of positions designated under this goal. Specific measures to improve the legal and regulatory framework, optimisation of the governance structure and management processes in the field of biodiversity conservation and active participation in international projects allow us to predict the achievement of the designated objective as long as positive dynamics of indicators are maintained.

In general, Kazakhstan has made significant progress in implementing the stated commitments to move towards sustainable development. At this stage, localisation of challenges and expansion of the list of environmental -sustainability indicators were held. This improves the objective assessment of the changes, as well as gives the possibility to optimise the combination of economic growth with environmental sustainability.

With regard to MDG 8 (to develop a global partnership for development), Kazakhstan continues to develop cooperation and partnerships at the international level (including trade, donor and financial institutions) and within the private sector and civil society of the country. For many years, our coun-

try has provided various types of development assistance to Central Asian countries and Afghanistan. Therefore, the need appeared of establishing the institute of development assistance, which would systematise the activities of Kazakhstan in this direction. On Dec. 10, President Nazarbayev signed the law on official development assistance. Thus, in 2015 the official institution of Kazakhstan's official development assistance (ODA) to foreign partners, especially neighbouring countries, will be created. This will be the first organisation of such kind in the CIS.

In a recent interview, UN Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson spoke about the tremendous progress in the development of our country. “We are closely watching after the processes in this part of the world. We are very impressed with the development directions of Kazakhstan that were defined in the President's address ‘The way to the future.’ The content of this document is important for your country, but it also relates to the international efforts being made today in order to determine the future for the world. Lately, the UN Secretary-General submitted to the General Assembly the report on the agenda of the MDGs after 2015. So most of the aspects of future policy reflected in it match with the targets that were established before your country in the address. Thus, your efforts at the national level are part of international policy, hopefully leading to peace, prosperity, respect for human rights and the rule of law,” he said.

Kazakhstan is an active member of various international organisations, regional and international treaties and agreements. International partnerships concluded by Kazakhstan fully support and promote the countries' development goals. At this stage, the most active ties remain in the spheres of trade, investment, finance, information technology and communications, as well as regional and international cooperation.

Thus, we can say that a key factor of successful achievement of the MDGs in Kazakhstan turns out to be consistent implementation of the development programmes Kazakhstan 2030 and Kazakhstan 2050.

**The author is deputy foreign minister of Kazakhstan.**

# EURASIA&WORLD

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 14, 2015

## Poland Eager to Expand Cooperation with Kazakhstan, Ambassador Says

By Dmitry Lee

ASTANA – Poland is seeking to expand cooperation with Kazakhstan in various fields, according to Jacek Kluczkowski, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Poland in Kazakhstan.

In his interview with the Astana Times, the ambassador, who has been posted in Kazakhstan since 2011, emphasised a few pivotal points of his mission. A historian by education, Kluczkowski spent his early career as a journalist, then switched to the President's administration and was posted as an ambassador in Ukraine in 2005.

**How would you describe the achievements in almost twenty-three years of relations between Poland and Kazakhstan as two independent nations, including in politics, economy and business?**

In general, Poland and Kazakhstan have vibrant bilateral relations. Since 1992 when our diplomatic mission was established, there have been two presidential visits of Polish presidents and two visits of your president to Poland, as well as official visits of prime ministers, foreign ministers and parliamentary delegations, so in this sense we have had very vibrant relations.

As for economic relations, despite the fact that the countries are located quite far from each other Poland adheres to the policy of exporting goods to the east in general and Kazakhstan happens to be one of the most important trade partners, not only in the [Commonwealth of Independent States] CIS member states but also in the



Jacek Kluczkowski

whole Eurasian space. In short, Kazakhstan is about the third largest importer of Polish goods in the CIS and fifth in Asian countries. And for Kazakhstan, in my opinion, amid European countries, Poland is not in the top five but perhaps the sixth or seventh trade partner.

In general, our relations are also developing steadily in the humanitarian field, where there is potential and opportunities. We have something to be complacent of. Poland's exports to Kazakhstan are mostly comprised of automobile parts, mining gear, chemical products, make-up, furniture, agricultural produce, fruits and vegetables. I can say in the past two years we have expanded this trade quite successfully, although in 2014 we did run into some challenges with logistical issues with some products via Russia. The devaluation of the tenge also made our products less competitive with some others. Nevertheless, there is no significant drop in trade. Polish

businessmen count on the Kazakh market and what's important is the two sides are integrating into the production industry with joint investments rather than just trade. Businessmen understand that to have a reliable position in the Kazakh market they need to be here, they need to organise joint ventures. What gives us hope is that we see that there are about 160 Polish companies in Kazakhstan that have either joint ventures or subsidiaries and about 2,000 companies that are part of the bilateral trade. These are impressive numbers. Polish investments are not huge, but mostly in small and medium-sized businesses; that is the dynamic of the Polish economy, which keeps developing without interruption. The Polish economy is the only EU economy that has not undergone a recession; even during the 2008 and 2009 financial crises our economy grew. What makes our economy different is that it has an internal dynamic; we see that in many respects it depends on small and medium-sized businesses that are more adept during times of crisis.

**What were the outcomes of the recent visit to Astana by Polish Deputy Prime Minister Janusz Piechocinski?**

The visit in November 2014 of Polish Deputy Prime Minister Janusz Piechocinski, who also happens to be the co-chair of the inter-governmental economic commission of Poland and minister of economy, boosted the economic ties between the two countries. A wide range of questions

in economic cooperation were touched upon during the visit, in investments, trade, exchange of technology, green technology, infrastructure cooperation, construction sector, agriculture and so on.

**There is a significant Polish minority in Kazakhstan. How do you think they feel about Kazakhstan and Poland? How would you evaluate the government's language and cultural policies in this respect?**

We help the local 45,000-50,000 in the Polish community in Kazakhstan to preserve the Polish language and cultural heritage. Back in September 2014, I signed an educational agreement that stipulates many educational programmes, however one of the pivotal points was to support the Polish language studies for Kazakh citizens of Polish descent. Thirteen teachers ar-

land covers their expenses and the teachers are working in schools and cultural centres.

**The media reported that the Polish government designated Kazakhstan as one of the five most promising markets for Polish business?**

First of all, Poland's take on Kazakhstan is that Kazakhstan is an important economic partner. The goals of our embassy here are to closely cooperate with the ministries, national companies and governmental bodies that are actively engaged in the economy of the country, promote cultural and educational ties and be an active part of the large Polish community in Kazakhstan.

**What are some of the challenges, if any, that your mission encountered in Kazakhstan?**

**Kazakhstan happens to be one of the most important trade partners, not only in the [Commonwealth of Independent States] CIS member states but also in the whole Eurasian space. In short, Kazakhstan is about the third largest importer of Polish goods in the CIS and fifth in Asian countries. And for Kazakhstan, in my opinion, amid European countries, Poland is not in the top five but perhaps the sixth or seventh trade partner.**

rived from Poland mostly to northern parts of Kazakhstan, including Astana and Karaganda, where the Polish communities are prevalent in number. The government of Po-

One of the main challenges in Kazakhstan is the distance. Sometimes our diplomats have to travel to Kazakh borders and those are lengthy distances, like to Kosta-

nai (700 kilometres) for instance. Other than that I don't feel other challenges in Kazakhstan. Another thing we give priority to is to have honorary consuls in Kazakhstan similar to many other diplomatic missions here. These are citizens of Kazakhstan that can aid and resolve some issues in the country. We are close to having at least two such consuls in Kazakhstan.

**What are your personal impressions of work in Kazakhstan?**

I like Kazakhstan in general; when relatives arrive I take them to Borovoye. I like the mountains in the southern parts of Kazakhstan, as there are places to be seen. One thing is the winter is not that exciting and not abundant with evening city strolls. Sometimes it is impossible to go

## Country Steps Up Efforts in Search for Peace in Eastern Ukraine

Continued from Page A1

As a result of lengthy negotiations, it was agreed to appoint a preliminary date for the Normandy Format meeting, which was immediately made public by the Ukrainian leader.

On Dec. 30, President Nazarbayev confirmed his willingness to host the next round of meetings between leaders of the Normandy Four in Astana, in mid-January "or at any other convenient time for the parties."

However, numerous inter-party negotiations have challenged further steps, calling into question the agreed meeting date.

In the meantime, another important step in a string of peacemaking efforts was made after senior diplomats from Germany, France, Ukraine and Russia met at the Federal Foreign Office in Berlin on Jan. 5 to discuss the possible resolution of the crisis. It was announced after this meeting that senior diplomats would continue their talks, as there were still some serious unresolved issues.

As a follow up to the earlier progress, Nazarbayev had an informal encounter with Chancellor Merkel in Berlin on Jan. 9. During the talks, the parties discussed bilateral cooperation as well as the situation in Ukraine, the Akorda press service reported. At the request of the German side, the Kazakh President also received German Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs Frank-Walter Steinmeier.

Later in the day, Nazarbayev had a telephone conversation with Russian President Vladimir Putin, during which the parties again dis-

cussed the progress on Ukraine, stressing the importance of joint efforts by all stakeholders for a peaceful settlement of the crisis.

On Jan. 12, the ministers of Ukraine, Russia, Germany and France gathered in Berlin, where, among other things, they discussed the possibility of the meeting of the heads of state in Kazakhstan's Astana.

Despite the uncertainty of a Normandy Format meeting in Astana, Kazakhstan is continuing its efforts to help stabilise the situation in Ukraine. "The fratricidal war has brought true devastation to eastern

**As part of its humanitarian assistance to Ukraine, Kazakhstan has sent \$400,000 worth of aid to Ukraine's southeastern regions to help ease the crisis following months of military conflict...**

**The aid shipment included 127,875 cans of meat, 40 tons of sugar, 150 tons of buckwheat and 36,000 liters of vegetable oil, among other essential items.**

Ukraine, and it is a common task to stop the war there, strengthen Ukraine's independence and secure the territorial integrity of Ukraine," said President Nazarbayev recently.

As part of its humanitarian assistance to Ukraine, Kazakhstan has sent \$400,000 worth of aid to Ukraine's southeastern regions to help ease the crisis following months of military conflict.

Railway cars carrying canned meat, sugar, buckwheat and vegetable oil were delivered on Jan. 9 to Severodonetsk, a town near the Ukrainian-Russian border.

Ukraine's State Service of Emergency Situations and the admin-

istration of the Luhansk Oblast received the aid in the presence of Kazakh officials and local and international nongovernmental organisations, including the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

"Ukraine is experiencing a difficult time ... and in this situation, Kazakhstan cannot stay indifferent," a senior official from the Kazakh Embassy in Ukraine said, explaining the motive for Astana's decision to send aid.

Deputy Head of the Luhansk Oblast State Administration Olga Lishik expressed Ukraine's gratitude to the people of Kazakhstan for their assistance.

"This is serious support for us, including the Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts, where military action is taking place and the civil population suffers. We are grateful that President Nazarbayev initiated the aid," she said.

The aid shipment included 127,875 cans of meat, 40 tons of sugar, 150 tons of buckwheat and 36,000 liters of vegetable oil, among other essential items.

In addition, in October 2014, Kazakhstan donated \$30,000 to the International Committee of the Red Cross's humanitarian effort in Ukraine.

While the final decision on the Normandy Four meeting will soon be clarified, Astana holds true to its aspiration to reconcile the two brotherly nations and is determined to continue contributing its best efforts to bring lasting peace and stability to Ukraine.



### THE ASTANA TIMES

BRINGING KAZAKHSTAN TO THE WORLD

#### REPORTERS, SENIOR EDITOR & DESIGNER WANTED

The Astana Times has quickly grown to be the region's reliable source for news and views. From business to culture, The Astana Times covers the stories relevant to its international and domestic readers. Be a part of the rise of Central Asia as a power player on the global stage. Join The Astana Times staff and experience excellence in international journalism.

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THE ASTANA TIMES  
BRINGING KAZAKHSTAN TO THE WORLD

# Nation&Capital

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 14, 2015

**CULTURE**

Kazakh-Spanish Film Named Best 2014 Documentary at California Film Awards

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**SOCIETY**

Kazakhstan Works to Improve Protection of Human Rights, Ombudsman Says

B5

**SPORTS**

Astana Arlans Kick Off World Boxing Series with New Roster

B7

## Astana Dakar Team Crews Chase Success in South America

By Dmitry Lee

Three crews in the car category and one crew in the truck category are representing Kazakhstan at the Jan. 4-17 Dakar Rally 2015 in South America.

The pilots/co-pilots pairs representing Kazakhstan are: in the category class T1 – Aidyn Rakhimbayev/Anton Nikolayev, MINI; Bauyrzhan Issabayev/Vladimir Demyanenko, Toyota Overdrive; in T2 – Denis Berezovsky/Ignat Falkov, Nissan Patrol; trucks – Artur Ardavichus/Alexei Nikizhev and mechanic Daniel Kozlovsky on a Tatra.

As of Jan. 12, Rakhimbayev/Nikolayev held 10th position, Issabayev/Demyanenko the 21st and Ardavichus/Nikizhev were in 19th position overall.



Astana Dakar Crew Issabayev/Demyanenko during the race in South America.

## Belarusians Find a Home in Kazakhstan

By Dmitry Lee

ASTANA – Kazakhstan is home to more than 130 ethnic groups. Millions perished in the vicious repression led by then-Soviet strongman Joseph Stalin in the 1930s that continued until the 1950s; however, Belarusians suffered a different fate even earlier.

“The first Belarusians in the territory of Kazakhstan were sighted in the mid-nineteenth century,” said Alexandra Romanova, chairwoman of the Belarus Public Association. “They were exiled Belarusians from the 1863-64 coup d’état in Belorussia that was unsuccessful. Later, during [Pyotr] Stolypin’s reforms some Belarusians were also sent to Kazakhstan.”

Stolypin, Russian Prime Minister and Minister of Internal Affairs from 1906 to 1911, was mostly remembered for his efforts to counter revolutionary groups and implement agrarian reforms.

“But the majority of us came here during the years of the Virgin Lands campaign in 1954-65,” Romanova explained. “As for myself and my family, I was repressed, because my father was exiled for anti-Soviet propaganda. There are still photographs of my family at the ALZHIR museum.”

ALZHIR, an acronym in Russian for “Akmola Camp for Wives of Traitors of the Motherland,” is a former labour camp 35 kilometres from Astana. It is the most notorious in GULAG Archipelago, made globally famous by Alexander Solzhenitsyn, which was reserved for the spouses of

those considered enemies of the people.

“I remember in the 1930s our parents would get all Belarusians in Kazakhstan together, socialise and spend the evening together and I thought to myself, ‘why can’t we do the same these days?’ And in 2001 we organised our own dancing classes, we established our community and are now a part of the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan. I was awarded with a Labour

Valour medal by President Nursultan Nazarbayev. We participate in all venues hosted by the assembly. We not only focus on learning and preserving our own language, but also are actively learning Kazakh, as there are free courses offered at the Akimat. At the upcoming concert our Belarusian singer will sing in Kazakh. She is fluent in Kazakh, but will perform in a Belarusian national costume. We also have our young vocal band Alessya. I try to

focus on the younger generation, because it is important they know our past and cultural heritage.”

“[In Kazakhstan] we are given opportunities. We can open Sunday schools if we like and language schools and we are given the opportunity to speak our own language. We also can pay visits to other communities; for instance, recently we had a holiday within the Jewish community.

Continued on Page B2



Members of the Belarusian community in national costumes during Assembly of People of Kazakhstan venue in Astana.

## Sabina Altynbekova: Popularity Is Both a Challenge and a Gift

By Ilyas Omarov

ASTANA – Sabina Altynbekova, 18, is a member of Kazakhstan’s women’s junior national volleyball team.

She hails from the West Kazakhstan city of Aktobe. She shot to stardom in East Asia last summer, but not exactly because of her volleyball skill. Rather, Chinese fans took notice of Altynbekova’s natural beauty, which many of her new fans say evokes images from Japanese anime art. In the last few months, Altynbekova has become very famous across Asia, and now in the stands watching the Kazakh team’s performances are fans there for the purpose of taking a look at

her and expressing their admiration.

Altynbekova, however, says she remains a very modest person who is trying to use her unexpected popularity to promote Kazakhstan and volleyball.

The Astana Times spoke with the star last week when she visited the capital.

*Last season, Kazakhstan’s women’s national volleyball team made it into the second round of the World Cup for the first time in the history of independent Kazakhstan. Is this a fluke, or is this the result of hard work?*

Indeed, this is a natural result of our team’s performance, supported by hard work and many hours of

gruelling training. Our team has long sought it, trying to show such a result. Undoubtedly, our girls proved to be great. At present, our national team is one of the most experienced ones in the world. Believing that this is not the limit, the Kazakh team should perform even better in the future. In this respect, undoubtedly, we should pay more attention to the new generation of Kazakh volleyball players, who tomorrow will replace the current national team players, and that is what our management is focusing on.

*How would you describe Kazakhstan’s volleyball style? European, Latin American or Asian?*

I think that we have our own

particular playing style, which cannot be confused with anything. I think that our volleyball players should continue following this unique style and hone it so it will positively influence results in the future.

*Who is your favourite player or idol?*

Since I started to play, my favourite player has been and remains a longtime captain of our team, Elena Pavlova, who was one of the best volleyball players in the world. Choosing from existing volleyball players, I like the leader of the Russian team, Ekaterina Gamova.

Continued on Page B2

## Eight Kazakh Universities Listed among Top 100 for Eastern Europe, Central Asia

By Malika Rustem

ASTANA – Eight Kazakh universities were included on the list of best universities in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, according to British company QS Quacquarelli Symonds’ December report. The new university rankings cover 30 Eastern European and Central Asian countries. Al-Farabi Kazakh National University was ranked 14, while L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University was placed at 23.

According to Head of the QS Intelligence Unit Ben Sowter, who is responsible for managing all major QS research projects, Eastern European and Central Asian universities are making significant contributions to global higher education.

“Today, these universities are not just competing on the national or regional level, but they are entering the international arena by stimulating innovation and promoting their strengths as never before. As a result, they are becoming more attractive to students from all over the world,” he said.

Sowter also noted that the goal of their ranking is to provide universities with a platform upon which they can demonstrate their best features while at the same time helping students compare and choose amongst many institutions.

During the study, QS examined 368 universities, 255 of them had never been mentioned before in any ratings. Eight universities from Kazakhstan were included in the Top 100.

“We look forward to working with even more ambitious universities as the project progresses,” Sowter noted.

Russia takes the leading place in the ranking with 26 universities in total; Moscow State University is listed at number one. The next two countries with the largest number of universities in the rating were Turkey (10) and the Czech Republic (10), followed by Poland (9) and Kazakhstan (8).

The two top-ranked Kazakh universities among those eight are respected and amongst the best in the country.

Al-Farabi Kazakh National University is one of the oldest universities not only in Kazakhstan, but also in Central Asia. Kazakh Na-

tional University was founded in 1934. The university has more than 19,000 students who study at 14 schools devoted to science, engineering, humanities and the social sciences. The university maintains close relations with leading universities from around the world. Every year, world-leading scholars including Nobel Prize winners such as John Forbes Nash, Finn E. Kydland, Roger D. Kornberg, Christopher Pissarides and Murray Gell-Mann deliver lectures to students. More than 500 international professors from 20 countries teach at the university.

L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University (ENU) was Kazakhstan’s second entry in the 2013/14 QS World University Rankings. Founded in 1996 in the capital Astana, ENU has about 13,000 students. Having set a mission of becoming a leading Eurasian research and education centre, ENU currently has 26 scientific institutions, including research institutes, laboratories and science centres. Other schools that made it into Top 100 of the ranking include the Kazakh-British Technical University (51-60), K.I. Satpayev Kazakh National Technical University (51-60), E.A. Buketov Karaganda State University (71-80), M.O. Auezov South Kazakhstan State University (71-80), and Abylai Khan Kazakh University of International Relations and World Languages (81-90).

QS World University Rankings is a prestigious annual ranking of the best universities in the world and is perhaps one of the most recognised and respected ratings of its kind. QS Rankings are compiled by experts from the QS Intelligence Unit (QSIU) in close cooperation with the International Advisory Board, an organisation that includes many leading scientists. The rankings are widely used by prospective students and specialists from universities and governments worldwide.

QSIU was formed in 2008; its main goal is to meet the increasing public demand for comparative data on universities and organisations and the growing demand for institutions to develop deeper insight into their competitive environment. It remains a distinct and autonomous department.

### THINGS TO WATCH JANUARY

#### ASTANA ROCK CLUB

January 17 at 20:00

Old ‘New Rock’

#### SNOW PARK (CENTRAL PARK)

January 18 at 11:00

World Snow Day

#### FLY ASTANA (KOKTAL 13)

January 18 at 12:00

Extreme Rope Jumping

#### KAZNUI ORGAN HALL

January 20 at 19:00

Brass Band Orchestra

#### ALAU SPORTS COMPLEX

January 23-24 at 10:00

Speedskating Championship

#### DAULET SPORTS PALACE

January 25 at 10:00

Winter Jogging Cup Stage II

#### ASTANA OPERA

January 28 at 19:00

Evening of Piano Music

## PEOPLE

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 14, 2015

## Belarusians Find a Home in Kazakhstan

Continued from Page B1

They invited us and we went. The Turkish community also had a similar festival, so we also organized an event [called] Bulbachka where we demonstrated Belarusian cuisine and culture. Guests didn't want to leave at the end of the event. We invited all the chairmen of different ethnic groups under the Assembly, so guests were from different cultures. It was really, really interesting. We need to host another such festival soon."

With numerous connections in her historical homeland and no political repressions since the collapse of the USSR, Romanova prefers to live in Kazakhstan and has her own solid reasons.

"My father was repressed in the 1930s and we didn't have the right to keep in touch with our relatives back in Belarus. When my father was 80, in his sleep at times he would scream out, 'it was not my fault that we got deported, father, it was not my fault.' His words watered our eyes. My parents were sent out from Belarus in cattle cars and in trains, but when I was taken by our Akim to Belarus to celebrate Minsk Day and when we were greeted there with flowers and all formalities my soul shattered — my parents were exiled from here and I am met with honours and a red carpet and flowers. This is one of the reasons [I never thought] about moving back to Belarus and also because it is [unwise] to try and plant one tree twice."

According to statistics and

population records, the Belarusian population in Kazakhstan is steadily reducing. Today, there are about 67,000 left in the country, with heavily-populated areas in the Kostanai, Akmola, Karaganda and North Kazakhstan regions, while

**Today, there are about 67,000 Belarusians left in the country, with heavily-populated areas in the Kostanai, Akmola, Karaganda and North Kazakhstan regions.**

in 2009 the population was 88,000 and in 2005 totaled some 94,000. According to community member Halil Maslov, who wrote a thesis paper on Belarusians in Kazakhstan in 2009, such migrating tendencies mostly among the younger generation is explained by the proximity of Belarus to Europe. The younger generation is relocating to Belarus to be able to move closer to Europe in the future and some Belarusians move from Kazakhstan to Russia.

## Sabina Altynbekova: Popularity Is Both a Challenge and a Gift

Continued from Page B1

**Why did you choose volleyball?**

At first, I was invited to [play basketball], but I did not quite like it. Later, having watched volleyball for the first time, I felt that it was my sport and made the right decision.

**Volleyball is sometimes referred to as one of the most intelligent sports. It is like chess for active people, where you have to move around the court and at the same time think on the fly, taking instantaneous decisions that affect the course of the game. Do you agree with this assessment?**

This is exactly the case. I completely agree. Indeed, volleyball is one of the fastest sports, in which it is necessary to think, make instant decisions and respond simultaneously, and the ability to do it affects your future on the court.

**What do you think about beach volleyball? Do you like it?**

Well, I like volleyball in its classical form more, when there is a team and emotions are simmering. In short, I prefer classic volleyball, which has it all.

**I cannot help but ask about the immense popularity that came down upon you last year. How do you and people close to you handle it? In what ways do you want to use this popularity in the future?**

The popularity has its advantages. I mean, concerning only sport — representatives of various foreign clubs have started to pay attention to me. It really is a big plus. As for popularity in general, I believe that

it is both a challenge and a gift of fate. However, most importantly, people are going to learn more about our country. I have repeatedly stated that in Asia, for example, many people take pictures with our flag and cheer for us.

**If you get offers to play abroad from serious foreign clubs, what will your response be?**

Why not? To play in a famous foreign club another year or two, to gain experience and improve the quality of my game — in the future, it will contribute to the development and growth of [Kazakhstan's] volleyball and advance it to a new level.

**How do you assess the level of Kazakhstan's sports journalism?**

I find it difficult to draw any conclusions, but I can express my subjective point of view. As a representative of a junior team, I believe that it would not hurt if reporters focus more on the issues of youth sport.

**...volleyball is one of the fastest sports, in which it is necessary to think, make instant decisions and respond simultaneously, and the ability to do it affects your future on the court.**



Sabina Altynbekova

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WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 14, 2015

# Kazakhfilm Supports Young Filmmakers, National Image

By Michelle Witte

GAITHERSBURG, MD – Kazakhstan's film industry is one of the mechanisms the young country is using to define its own image on the international stage. Through scholarships and grants offered by the Kazakhfilm joint stock company, the country offers support for some young actors and directors and helps bring their work to domestic and international audiences.

Kazakhfilm, which operates out of Almaty, has been responsible for some of Kazakhstan's biggest critical and commercial hits at home and abroad, including recent award-winners "Harmony Lessons" (2013) and "Shal" (2012) and the big-budget epic "Myn Bala" (2011).

Kazakhstan's Ministry of Culture and Sport discussed its support for young filmmakers for a Dec. 27 article in the Kazakhstanskaya Pravda newspaper. "Kazakhfilm provides all possible support to young filmmakers – financial, technical, advisory and even educational," the ministry said in response to their query. "Thus, the studio collaborates with leading local and foreign universities of film and television. In Kazakhstan, there are the Zhurgenov National University of the Arts and Turan



University, among others. [Abroad are] the Gerasimov Institute of Cinematography in Moscow, the New York Film Academy, the St. Petersburg State University of Film and Television, as well as other film schools where various kinds of educational programmes

– directing, script and producer's courses, workshops, training – are held."

Young directors' films are watched, the ministry said, and young Kazakh filmmakers who receive top marks in international film festivals may get sup-

port from Kazakhfilm to create their next production, "if there is a script on a socially significant theme," the ministry told the newspaper. Kazakhfilm supports short films as well as feature length productions.

"National film production" is a

programme in the national budget, the ministry noted.

Documentaries and at least one occasional feature were made in Almaty in the 1930s, but Kazakhstan's film industry really launched in 1942 – 1944, when prominent Soviet filmmakers Vsevolod Pudovkin, Dziga Vertov and Sergei Eisenstein were evacuated to Almaty during the Second World War. Thrillers, epics, and, of course, propaganda, continued to be produced after the Russians left, and Kazakh films passed through several filmmaking waves of changing subjects and ethos.

The national film production company has existed all the while, first as Alma-Ata Film Studios in 1941, then renamed Kazakhfilm in 1961. After independence, the studio initially struggled with the rest of the country, producing films but, lacking a comprehensive distribution structure, generally failing to reach Kazakh audiences, as Kazakh film critic and researcher **Gulnara Abikeyeva** has pointed out. In 2005, this began to turn around with the big-budget production, "Nomad." While no box office success, the investment in technology and talent – \$37 million, according to multiple sources – seems to have boosted the domestic film industry. "Nomad" was followed by

"Mongol," (2007) another big-budget epic.

In 2010, the studio produced what became Kazakhstan's highest-grossing domestic film, "Tale of the Pink Bunny," which focused not on ancient Kazakhs but on young people in Almaty, raised in a newly-independent state. Between 2008 and 2010, according to a September 2010 Variety article, the share of domestic films in the Kazakh market increased from 3 percent to 7 percent.

Ten films were scheduled for release in 2012 and another half a dozen in each of 2013 and 2014.

"The film industry of Kazakhstan shows good dynamics – a significant rise compared to the previous decade. This volume results from a comprehensive process that occurs due to many factors, such as the success of Kazakh cinema, theatre and cinema chain growth, increased attendance at the box office, the expansion of infrastructure and filmmaking services and more. Today, our film industry is emerging as a promising sector of the economy, attractive for international cooperation," the Ministry of Culture and Sport said, as reported by Kazakhstanskaya Pravda on Dec. 21.

Shooting on a 20-part film about the Kazakh Khanate is set to begin this month, they said. Kazakhstan will be celebrating 550 years of statehood in 2015.

## Kazakh-Spanish Film Named Best 2014 Documentary at California Film Awards



By Danna Buzepzhanova

ASTANA – The Kazakhstan-Spanish film "Los Olvidados de Karagandá" won the title of best documentary of 2014, receiving a diamond award at the California Film Awards, an independent film award.

The 50-minute documentary "Los Olvidados de Karagandá" or "The Forgotten of Karaganda," directed by Yolanda Mendiola, tells the story of 152 Spaniards held in a Soviet labour camp in Kazakhstan's Karaganda region, who despite having different political ideas, are united by the desire to survive.

"We believe that this story can be of great interest to researchers,

the relatives and descendants of the people who were in these camps and anyone interested in the recent history of our countries," said Kazakhstan's Ambassador to Spain Bakhyt Dyussenbayev.

The project emerged as a result of Spanish Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy's September 2013 visit to Kazakhstan, during which Kazakhstan President Nursultan Nazarbayev presented him with a list of the names of 152 Spaniards who were held in Stalin-era labour camps. Thus, Kazakhstan became the first Soviet successor state to carry out a formal transfer of archival documents to Spain. A project was implemented with the assistance of Kazakhstan's Foreign Ministry and the Asociacion Nexos-Alianza.

The film reflected records of eyewitnesses and elaborated on the circumstances leading to the capture of the Spanish prisoners in KarLag (Karaganda Corrective Labour Camps), which was unknown until now to the majority of Spaniards.

Historically, the USSR supported the Republican cause in Spain's 1936-1939 civil war. Therefore, when Franco's side prevailed, a number of Republicans and their families fled to the Soviet Union. At the same time, some of the Francoist Blue Division volunteers were captured by the Russians while fighting alongside the Germans at the siege of Leningrad. The film showed ideological enemies meeting in the same camp and becoming allies, forgetting their differences for the sake of personal and collective survival.

The presentation of the documentary film at the headquarters of Agencia EFE in Madrid on Nov. 18, 2014 received wide publicity. The event was attended by Kazakhstan's Ambassador to Spain Dyussenbayev, Head of Television Española Jose Ramon Diez, President of the Asociacion Nexos-Alianza Enrique Gaspar, Agencia EFE president Jose Antonio Vera, relatives and descendants of camp victims and academics. A number of authoritative media outlets in Spain published

positive articles about Kazakhstan's gesture of friendship and the fates of families confined in camps in Kazakhstan.

"Personally, I think this was a moment of reconciliation between Spaniards and Kazakhstan citizens. People from Kazakhstan and Spain communicated with each other on a human level, not through their governments," Gaspar, president of the Asociacion Nexos-Alianza stated.

"What is surprising is how they coexisted," Gaspar said, adding that the prisoners' "goal was to survive and return to Spain. As a result, they forgot their ideologies."

Referring to the aim of the film, the creators also underlined advancing cultural relations between the two states. This is "a work that seeks to fundamentally enrich the ties between the peoples of Kazakhstan and Spain," the president of Agencia EFE said.

Bilateral relations "do not only consist of official acts, ceremonial and political and economic issues, they also include very human and beautiful projects like the one we are presenting today," Dyussenbayev added.

## Almaty Folklore Troupe Introduces Kazakh Musical Traditions to Egypt

By Malika Orazgaliyeva

Performers and bands from Kazakhstan, India, Spain, Bangladesh, South Sudan, Egypt and other countries took part in the *International Folk Music Festival* in the Egyptian city of Faiyum on Dec. 17-21. The event was supported by the Ministry of Culture of Egypt and the governor of the city.

Kazakhstan was represented at the festival by the ethnographic-folklore troupe from the Almaty oblast, Suyinbay Sazy.

Suyinbay Sazy's performance was well received and generated the interest of the Egyptian public, media and diplomatic corps accredited in Cairo. At the end of the concert, Ambassador of Kazakhstan to Egypt Berik Aryn presented a *domyra* (Kazakh national musical instrument) to the Museum of Folk Instruments, which is located on the territory of the theatre.

In addition, on Dec. 24, the Kazakh Embassy in Egypt organised

a concert of Kazakh artists in celebration of Kazakhstan's Independence Day. The performance was held in the Theatre of Arabic Music of Cairo, an elaborate building with more than one hundred years of history.

**Suyinbay Sazy's performance was well received and generated the interest of the Egyptian public, media and diplomatic corps accredited in Cairo.**

The performances by Kazakh artists introduced the Egyptian public the musical traditions and art of Kazakhstan.



Still from "Los Olvidados de Karagandá" documentary.



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WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 14, 2015

## New High-Speed Train Cuts 12 Hours off Astana-to-Kyzylorda Travel

By Yury Lee

KYZYLORDA – The Passenger Transportation company launched on Dec. 29 a new high-speed passenger train that will cut the travel time between Astana and Kyzylorda by one third.

“The train consists of 23 cars, including two cars of grand class, two of business class, 14 of tourist class, two dining cars and three technical cars. The train will stop at the following stations during the route: Karaganda, Sary-Shagan, Chu, Zhambyl, Shymkent, Arys-2 and Turkestan. Time of the route to Kyzylorda is 22 hours, 25 minutes and back – 23 hours and 22 minutes,” the company said in a statement, adding that the train would run once every four days.

The first passengers on the Kyzylorda platform were met by Regional Akim (Governor) Krymbek Kusherbayev, who gave his congratulations at the launch of the train.

“The head of state has always paid special attention to the development of road infrastructure. One example of this is the construction of the railway line Zhezkazgan-Saksaulsk and international transport corridor Western Europe-Western China. Launching a new route will save [travellers] 12 hours,” said Kusherbayev, emphasising that this is one of the projects whose implementation was accelerated by Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev’s recent state-of-the-nation address.

Since October, a system has been



in place to allow discounts for advance ticket purchases. Passengers who purchased tickets early received discounts of up to 35 percent. By the date of the departure of the trains, the ticket price depending on

demand would change (from 44 to 35 days before departure of the train the discount would be up to 35 percent, from 34 to 25 days – up to 25 percent, from 24 to 8 days – up to 15 percent).



## Kazakhstan Increases Use of Electronic Bracelet Monitoring Rather Than Prison

By Zhanara Abdulova

ASTANA – Remote electronic monitoring of convicts is underway in Kazakhstan, as the new criminal and penal codes adopted in early July went into effect Jan. 1.

The codes were enacted against the background of the nation’s continuing efforts to humanise its criminal and penal legislation through the wide use of non-punitive legal means. The action is aimed at positively influencing prisoners and helping them mend their ways.

In line with the newly-introduced penal code, electronic monitoring bracelets will be used to track three categories of convicts: those sentenced to restricted freedom, given a suspended sentence and released from prison on parole.

The list of electronic tracking devices was approved by government decree in November and includes seven specifically-described types of tracking equipment. The procedure used with each device is also strictly defined by the competent penal authority.

Remote electronic monitoring is part of the probation system that was first introduced in Kazakh legislation in February 2012. In the context of overall liberalisation and democratisation, the penal system faced the problem of introducing a new methodology of imposing criminal sanctions without isolating convicts from society. To enable the system work properly, amendments and additions were made to ten different laws.

In the following months, the General Prosecutor’s Office and Ministry of Internal Affairs have continuously tried to expand the use of non-custodial sentences in order to establish fairer and more proportionate sanctions. Experts agree that probation is more effective than imprisonment for less serious crimes, particularly in terms of its cost effectiveness.

While devising new codes, extensive research was made into the European experience of using electronic monitoring, including in the U.K., the Netherlands

and Germany. A number of lessons learned from experience elsewhere were taken into account when finalising the codes. For example, in the United States it is four times cheaper to use electronic monitoring bracelets on convicts than to keep them in prison.

Similarly, the use of monitoring bracelets in Kazakhstan will help decrease the number of people in jails and significantly reduce the budget. According to Deputy Prosecutor General Zhakip Assanov, the government presently spends 580,000 tenge (US\$3,167) annually to service one prisoner.

As national legislation in the appropriate spheres was almost completely revised, which led to the adoption of new codes, it is hoped the probation system will gain momentum.

Kazakh criminal policy now regards the idea of expanding humanisation to be of paramount importance and aims to reduce the number of persons condemned to imprisonment through wider use of alternative forms of custodial punishment. The expansion of probation services and introduction of electronic monitoring are seen as key developments in reducing the prison population and further decriminalisation and humanisation of the law, which constitute one of the major goals of the government and law enforcement bodies.

In 2013, 7,000 offenders were on probation in Kazakhstan. Authorities expect the introduction of electronic bracelets to be worn by probationers will help significantly improve the situation. With the new criminal code in effect, the number of probationers is expected to reach 50,000.

As stipulated by the newly-introduced penal code, probation is a set of measures of social and legal nature enforced at the individual’s place of residence. The offender is ordered to follow certain conditions set forth by the law under the supervision of a police officer. During this testing period, an offender faces the threat of being sent back to prison if found breaking the rules.

Electronic monitoring has an important part to play as a cor-

rectional tool as well, particularly in helping people develop more self-control over their lives and comply with court-imposed restrictions. However, electronic monitoring works best when supported by trained probation services with the resources to provide supervision and advice for offenders.

Therefore, the mission of probation service is not only to execute non-custodial control, but also to render social and legal assistance to probationers and help them obtain education, find a job and receive medical care. The assistance, in turn, is intended to secure their social rehabilitation, as well as prevent and reduce new crimes they might commit.

When dealing with the probationer, officers look at the profile of the convicted offender, explain the system of socio-legal assistance and obligations provided by the court and develop an individual programme of socio-legal assistance. As a result, probation officers cooperate with local municipalities and have the right to establish job quotas for those on the probation service list. In addition, state agencies are able to support their work with the assistance of non-governmental organisations through a system of state social order.

Despite holding 31st place on the global prison population list with 316 prisoners per 100,000 people, which is considered to be a rather high indicator, Kazakhstan has already made significant progress in reducing its prison population and plans to reduce it still further by using more alternative sentences. Thus, the number of prisoners has decreased almost three times since independence, dropping from 140,000 to 49,000.

Following the introduction of the required legislative base, Kazakh law enforcement bodies must still decide where to buy the electronic monitoring devices and arrange a proper procedure for allocation of funds for their procurement.

It has been reported authorities are now planning to set up local production of electronic bracelets instead of purchasing the devices abroad. In their words, it would be more feasible and cost-efficient for the state budget.

## New Greenhouse Complex Expected to Meet Pavlodar City’s Vegetable Demands

By Sergey Gorbunov

PAVLODAR – The launching of a new greenhouse complex in Pavlodar that is forecast to produce 1,600 tonnes of tomatoes per year, along with other vegetables, is expected to nearly meet the city’s vegetable demand and bring down prices in the regional market.

The greenhouse’s establishing company Pavlodar has partnered with Dutch firm DALSEM Horticultural Projects B.V. to produce a greenhouse complex utilising the latest equipment that will withstand the test of time. In addition to equipment, DALSEM has provided supervision and an agronomist, who will organise the production of vegetables using hydraulic technology, which is unfamiliar to Pavlodar specialists.

“[Approximately] 1.57 billion tenge were invested in the construction, and the construction completion was scheduled for 2013 but then postponed until spring 2015,” said Nikolai Dy-chko, head of the Department of Industrial and Innovative Development of the region.

Dutch experts attribute the delays to delivery and custom clear-

ance delays as well as the onset of winter.

“The weather is windy and snowy. That strongly inhibits the workflow,” said Chief Installer Radzhikumar Brahatanik.

Installers, however, hope to glaze the greenhouses in the next few days and complete the boiler room, which will allow the soil to be warmed to the desired temperature and seeds to be planted. Then the young plants will be moved to where industrial production of tomatoes will be conducted. According to forecasts of the factory workers, somewhere in the beginning of May, the commercial network will receive the first tomatoes.

“We expect to produce an average of 12 tonnes of tomatoes a day. We will try to make the price lower by 30-40 percent compared to imported tomatoes,” said Baurzhan Osipanov, director of the Pavlodar greenhouse complex.

The production of tomatoes and vegetables by the complex will benefit from the stand-alone heating of greenhouses, the complexes’ own wells for watering plants and the purchase of electricity directly from the thermal power plant, without intermediaries, which is cheaper.



WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 14, 2015

# Kazakhstan Works to Improve Protection of Human Rights, Ombudsman Says

By Ruslan Taukenov

As the year 2014 drew to a close, we interviewed Askar Shakirov, Kazakhstan's Commissioner for Human Rights (Ombudsman), to talk about achievements and challenges in this critical area and his plans for the future.

*As the main human rights advocate of the country, how would you describe 2014?*

Speaking of human rights, it was undoubtedly a landmark year. One of the most significant events was the announcement by President Nursultan Nazarbayev of the Nurlu Zhol new economic policy, aimed at the effective implementation of the constitutional rights of the people of Kazakhstan.

New versions of the Criminal Code, Criminal Executive Code and new Criminal Procedure Code were adopted [this year] providing humanisation of justice, expansion of alternative measures of punishment, strengthening the judiciary, enhancing the principles of equality of parties and fighting against such challenges as corruption, medical crimes and attacks on motherhood and childhood.

The practical implementation started of the Law on the National Preventive Mechanism, established in accordance with the obligations arising from the Constitution and the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture. The essence of this conceptually-new-for-us institute of rights protection is to create a system of independent monitoring of human rights observance in closed institutions.

The mechanism introduces unrestricted access of civil society to such institutions for the first time in Kazakhstan, as its members, except for the coordinator and the Commissioner for Human Rights,

exclusively represent the non-governmental sector. It is a significant achievement of our country, practical demonstration of the commitment to high human rights standards, indicator of the maturity of the civil society and a sign of trust. Kazakhstan is the only [Commonwealth of Independent States] CIS country which established such a mechanism in full compliance with the norms and standards of international law.

Another event which reflected Kazakhstan's commitment to international law priorities was a decision to establish the Ombudsman for Children's Rights. The state has a positive working experience of establishing specialised ombudsmen, including banking, investment, insurance and corporate ombudsmen of the Kazakhstan Temir Zholy National Company and Samruk Kazyna Sovereign Wealth Fund.

Other important adopted legal acts directly affecting human rights include the Law On Road Traffic, which controls the daily exercise of the rights of virtually every citizen of Kazakhstan as a pedestrian, driver or passenger.

This year the Code of Administrative Offences and the Law On Trade Unions were also adopted, while laws against extremism and terrorism and domestic violence were significantly amended. Kazakhstan ratified the international conventions on the Promotional Framework for Occupational Safety and Health, establishing a procedure for determining the minimum wage and its protection.

*What contributed to such productive work?*

First of all, these achievements are the result of the targeted policies aimed at improving the rights and freedoms of Kazakhstan's citizens. Another important aspect is reports to the international structures of

the United Nations, in particular in 2014 to the Human Rights Council and the Committee against Torture. Members of these authoritative international organisations commended the results of the implemented commitment of our country in the field of human rights and we will continue the work in this direction following the recommendations.

Referring to the human rights process in our country, the high level of cooperation between government agencies and NGOs should be highlighted. A unique mediator role of the ombudsman in the legal system, enhanced with the launch of the National Preventive Mechanism, promotes the process.

We attract international partners, in particular in the framework of the implementation of joint projects with the OSCE Centre in Astana, UN Children's Fund, Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and Penal Reform International. The work of participants of the National Preventive Mechanism and members of the civil society receives the support of the Prosecutor General's Office, Ministry of Interior Affairs and Ministry of Justice.

In particular, I would underline a recent open letter from the Commissioner for Human Rights to the Minister of Education and Science on the issue of violence and other violations of children's rights in schools. It raises specific problems identified by monitoring and it should be stressed that the ministry and its head personally responded, agreeing with our proposals.

This dialogue, bringing together efforts of the ombudsman's office, government, civil society and international partners, provided the impetus for the development of the Interagency Action Plan to prevent violence and abuse against children for 2015-2016.

*Human Rights Day is celebrated*

*to commemorate the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the UN General Assembly in 1948. You have already mentioned the international partnerships. Elaborate on this direction of your work.*

In recent years, the Commissioner for Human Rights in Kazakhstan has been consistently integrating into the international ombudsmen community and has now become a full member of the universal human rights movement. In 2012, we joined the International Coordinating Committee of National Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights and this September joined the Asia-Pacific Forum of Ombudsmen. Today, we study the experience of other countries, while they themselves are beginning to consult us on such issues as children's rights and violence in schools.

In general, Kazakhstan participates in almost all major agreements in the field of human rights. We are actively involved in human rights work within the UN, [the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe] OSCE and [the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation] OIC. We emphasise human rights issues in the agreement to enhance the partnership and cooperation between Kazakhstan and the European Union. This vector of our work with foreign colleagues reflects the fact that human rights today have acquired a universal character.

Currently, the objects of interstate cooperation are not only virtually all categories of human rights, which previously were an exclusive competence of states, but also new challenges. For example, expansion of extremist ideologies. Recently, our society has been shocked by videos spread about young Kazakh citizens in the zone of the Syrian conflict. Such facts of child recruitment and brainwashing with the ideology of

intolerance and violence once again confirm the need to strengthen international cooperation in order to solve related problems.

Military conflicts amass violations of human rights. In addition, they give rise to refugee flows that could cause a humanitarian catastrophe in the host country. We also should not forget about the possible threats to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of states, where military conflicts occur.

Equally disturbing are cross-border labour migration flows. The imbalance leads to an increase in crime, unemployment and social tensions in the host country. This is a pressing issue for many states. Nowadays, we see many countries tightening legislation in an attempt to cope with a wave of people seeking a better lot in a foreign land. Even in the EU, the debate raises sharp contradictions.

Another challenge is international unilateral coercive measures, so-called sanctions which, in addition to political and economic aspects, have a negative impact on the rights of ordinary citizens.

All of this suggests the need to intensify joint efforts and develop mechanisms to counter global threats. Human rights could be the ideological and conceptual basis for such activities. An initiative of states, which are perceived as unbiased and respected members of the international community, could give a definite impetus to the process.

*The above-mentioned challenges and threats, in fact, are extremely relevant. What place does our country have or can it take in the process of addressing them?*

In Kazakhstan, human rights are a key component of the state policy. Implementation of the initiatives of President Nazarbayev is always aimed primarily at protecting the rights and interests of the citizens. It

comes from his status as a guarantor of the Constitution and its first article, which proclaimed human rights a core value.

The Nurlu Zhol new economic policy includes unprecedented support of social, labour, housing and economic rights through the development of production, improvement of the banking sector, overhaul of transport and logistics, industrial, energy, housing and social infrastructure, utilities, networks and water heating and creation of over 200,000 jobs.

Kazakhstan has successfully overcome the first wave of the global economic crisis and is now using its experience as a preventive measure confronting a deteriorating global environment. Our country has great potential to promote initiatives for international cooperation in the field of human rights. President Nazarbayev has repeatedly stressed the need for joint action against global threats and even greater use of the potential of integration in the Eurasian space, broadening its scope and format.

Kazakhstan has clearly demonstrated the possibility of disclosure of this potential during its chairmanship in the OSCE and hosting the OSCE Astana summit. The Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions held in Astana also gained international recognition.

During Kazakhstan's chairmanship, the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation was reformed and an OIC Permanent Independent Commission for Human Rights was established. The President of Kazakhstan identified the prospects of joint increase of welfare of the peoples of the Islamic region, indicating that the OIC countries, which controlled 70 percent of the world's energy resources, accounted for only 7.5 percent of world GDP and 11.2 percent of the global trade.

Today, economic, political, environmental and any other international threats are already identified as challenges for human rights. Priority measures to prevent international challenges to human rights are the key to the success of states, while late actions can lead to fatal consequences.

## Model United Nations Concept Evolves in Schools

By Babur Dombay

Many adults, especially parents, want to educate their children about politics, but most of them confuse learning politics with induction into a political agenda or belief. Yet there's a difference between teaching them how politics work, defining diplomacy, etc. and making kids accept subjective statements (opinions) along the lines of "that (insert a name of a politician) is (insert an insult)."

It is normal for people to be biased, but how can children learn about politics while avoiding it?

A good way would be to personally experience diplomacy at work but it is unwise to let children govern a country just for the sake of education, so the next logical idea would be to create a simulation of a governing body. One such simulation is Model United Nations, also referred to as Model UN or MUN. It is, obviously, a simulation of real-life UN (with slightly simplified rules) aimed at educating middle school, high school and university students about diplomacy, the United Nations, its structure and aims and international relations in general, as well as nurturing skills of public speaking and research through first-hand experience. Many educational facilities, including ones in Kazakhstan, have taken up the activity. Kazakh schools that attend MUN conferences include, but are not limited to, Miras International School (also a host of an annual MUN conference), Arystan Lyceum, Haileybury Almaty and Kazakh-Turkish Lyceum.

The idea of mimicking a worldwide organisation stems from the Model League of Nations imitations, a precursor to the UN Conferences of MLN first held during the 1920s before League of Nations' disintegration in the next decade. As the UN was set up in 1945 the idea was reinitiated in the 1950s, though it is unclear which committee was

the first one to do so, as the major claimants are Harvard MUN, Berkeley MUN and National MUN NY.

Recently MUN has spread to many parts of the world, Kazakhstan included, with some conferences being set up to take in delegates (participants) from countries other than its host's homeland, such as Haileybury MUN and the aforementioned Harvard MUN, and some are often hosted in different countries each year. Participants come from very different countries and in a single conference delegates from nations such as the U.S., UK, Russia, Pakistan, Kazakhstan and Turkey can be present. In Kazakhstan, the idea was first taken up some time in late 2000s but there is little documentation to suggest which conference it was, the most likely candidate is the Miras MUN as it was the largest one at that time in the country.

U.S. Supreme Court Justice Stephen Breyer recalled his experience with MUN. "When I was an undergraduate at Stanford, I was twice a delegate to the Model United Nations and once a member of the Secretariat (when Stanford was the host). Students are enthusiastic role-players. We had to learn how nations and their representatives could work with others. We learned about how the United Nations (and international relations) worked in practice. The experience was valuable, the conferences were educational and it was great fun. I am delighted to learn more than half a century later the Model UN is still going strong. I should think that in today's great global conversation it offers... students an even more valuable experience."

Kazakh and worldwide conferences are often set up by MUN clubs in their schools or universities, often student-led (or with teacher advisory) and serve as preparation to host a conference, which are usually annual. Preparations include readying equipment (e.g. desks, projectors), spaces for committees, food and accommodations for those

who have travelled abroad to attend the conference. Before delegates physically attend the conference, they are separated into committees and assigned to represent countries which are usually not the country from which the delegates hail so as to promote learning of different cultures. For example, Kazakh delegates to the Haileybury UK 2014 conference were representing the Dominican Republic, Canada and India. Once the delegations or groups of delegates from a single school or university receive their country lists, individual delegates are free to choose any country in any committee where the country is present, but there can only be one delegate of a country per committee. Then they are presented with the topics which will be discussed in their committee and are expected to conduct research on those topics.

Within Kazakhstan, students tend to discuss global topics, the same as in the real UN. Topics vary widely depending on the committee, from the rights of the indigenous people in the Human Rights Committee to the withdrawal of coalition forces from Afghanistan in the Security Council. Both, in fact, were the topics in the Miras MUN 2013 conference which was attended by students from across Kazakhstan.

After all preparations are done and it is time to go to the conference, delegates are first greeted with an opening ceremony which tends to promote local culture and national heritage. For example, at the start of Miras MUN 2014 delegates were greeted by a couple of dancers performing a modernised version of the traditional "Kara Zhorgha" dance as well as "shashu," a process of greeting guests by throwing sweets in the air as a gesture of good will and hospitality. Inside the committees, delegates are expected to remain relatively serious and at all times be respectful of their fellow delegates and the moderators known as chairs (they are usually members of

the club that set up the conference itself). If someone feels they were unjustly insulted (i.e. the criticism at hand has no factual basis) they can call for a Point of Order; if the chair recognises the point, the delegate who made the insult is asked to retract their statement.

To discuss a topic, delegates engage in formal debate and moderated and unmoderated caucuses. In a formal debate, delegates stand to speak by being appointed to the speakers list by either raising their placards or sending a note to the chair. They make speeches and answer questions to debate a topic or a resolution/amendment while facing the entire committee and there is a time limit for speaking. This is the default state of a committee, so if there are no further motions (propositions to do something as a committee that need a majority of votes to pass) the committee goes to this state. In a moderated caucus, most procedures are dropped and anyone can speak if recognised by the chair; here the time limit per speaker is shorter than in a formal debate. In an unmoderated caucus, delegates meet each other and discuss topics. It is important to note that there are a number of different variations of MUN rules varying from conference to conference since there are few unified guidelines as to how conferences should work; for example, in Miras MUN the "moderated caucus" is in fact a formal debate.

MUN has been practiced for some time now in Kazakhstan, both on national and international levels. Although there are no international conferences hosted in Kazakhstan yet, there are some nationwide conferences, the most notable being Miras International School MUN conducted annually and receiving delegates from across the country from cities such as Shymkent, Astana and Almaty (where it is hosted). Some schools send delegations to foreign international MUN conferences. For example, Haileybury Almaty sent a delegation to its sister school, Haileybury UK, in March-April 2014 and two delegates received commendatory awards for exceptional performance in their committees.

*The author, 17, is a student at the Haileybury Almaty School.*

## 3D Printers to be Produced in Almaty

By Malika Orazgaliyeva

ASTANA – The Central Communications Service (CCS) hosted a briefing on key trends in innovative and technical development in Kazakhstan on Jan. 9.

The briefing was attended by Deputy Minister of Education and Science Takir Balykbaev, Deputy Chairman of the Board of the National Science and Technology Holding Parasat Lyazat Myltykbaeva and General Director of the Centre for Technology Commercialisation Damir Yegizbayev.

**According to the Ministry of Education and Science, today, as part of the grant funding system, 1,933 projects and 86 scientific and technical programmes are being carried out. Total government funding for research and development reached 61.7 billion tenge (US\$336.7 million) in 2013.**

At the briefing, while presenting several promising innovations originating in Kazakhstan, Yegizbayev announced that plans to produce 3D printers in the country are underway, Kazakhstanskaya Pravda reported.

"These innovative devices are becoming increasingly popular around the world, but consumers face big challenges with such services. Our 3DLAB developers offer a turnkey service, which includes production, training, maintenance and constant software updates. Our price is 20-30 percent lower than that of our competitors," he said.

According to Yegizbayev, the first contract has already been signed. Grantees purchased four 3D printers that will be used in the production of insulation materials in the energy sector.

It was announced that Kazakhstan's 3D developments will be presented on April 16 at the Inter-

national Conference on 3D printing in Almaty.

According to the website of the Ministry of Education and Science, today, as part of the grant funding system, 1,933 projects and 86 scientific and technical programmes are being carried out. Total government funding for research and development reached 61.7 billion tenge (US\$336.7 million) in 2013; that figure has doubled over the past two years.

As a result, the number of scientists nationwide has grown. In 2009, there were 15,800 scientists. Today there are 23,700.

In order to promote the development of links between science and business, the Ministry of Education and Science, with the support of the World Bank, is implementing a project focused on the commercialisation of technology. For these purposes, the Centre for Technology Commercialisation was established. Today, the centre is working on 65 research and development projects and 16 innovative grants totaling 6 billion tenge (US\$32.7 million).

The ministry has drafted the law "On the commercialisation of research and development deliverables." The law provides for incentives for business entities that commercially apply research and development deliverables. The law also provides state support for research and development commercialisation. It will allow for an increase in the effectiveness and competitive ability of research and development projects.

NATION&CAPITAL

# TOURISM

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 14, 2015

## Kazakh Medical Tourism Efforts Beginning to Show Results

By Michelle Witte

As Kazakhstan develops its medical competence, with advances in bariatric, cardiac and neurosurgery in the last few years, as well as laser eye surgery and general transplant surgery, a trickle of medical tourists are being drawn to the country.

Until recently, it would have been more likely to see Kazakhs travel abroad for medical care, and indeed, countries like India, Malaysia, South Korea, Israel and others are still courting the Kazakh market. But travellers seeking treatment in Kazakhstan are also on the rise. In December, the Ministry of Health and Social Development announced that patients from a significantly increased number of countries are being treated in Kazakhstan.

As Tengrinews reported on Dec. 8, Director of the Medical Aid Management Department of the Ministry of Health and Social Development Gulnar Kulkayeva said the most popular services provided to foreign patients in 2013 were microsurgical removal of spinal herniated discs, in-vitro fertilisation, heart valve surgery and treatments for uterine fibroids and adenomyosis.



Subsidiaries of the country's public-private National Medical Holding have seen a rise in patients from the United States, Japan and Italy, she said, whereas foreign patients previously only came from Russia and Kyrgyzstan. Eight hundred and thirty-two foreign nationals were treated in National Medical Holding clinics in 2013, she said. The number includes foreigners working in Kazakhstan,

so it is unclear how many actually travelled to Kazakhstan for care and how many simply chose to receive care in Kazakhstan rather than leave.

Most foreign patients, 260, came from the U.K., according to the ministry. The U.S. followed with 111, Kyrgyzstan with 51, Turkey with 50, Russia with 44, and others from Bulgaria, Sri Lanka, the Philippines and 23 other countries.

Low cost as well as increased quality would seem to be a driver of medical tourism to Kazakhstan. Per the Tengrinews story, the Ministry of Health and Social Development reported that bone marrow transplants, at \$51,000 in Kazakhstan, cost half as much as they do in Russia, and kidney transplants at \$16,000 cost less than half that in Kazakhstan's northern neighbour. Liver

transplants at \$20,000 are much cheaper in Kazakhstan than they are in Turkey, a country that itself attracts medical tourists.

In addition to medical tourism, wellness or health tourism is also poised to grow. Kazakhstan's new official tourism website, kazakhstan.travel, promotes traditional cures like kumyss therapy, mineral and other water treatments and traditional medicine treatments including deer antler therapy.

Panotherapy – the therapeutic use of deer-antler velvet and extract – is being developed as part of a tourism destination project in Northern Kazakhstan's Aiyrtau region. A new medical centre there, which opened in June, will use velvet harvested from the maral, a type of large deer native to Kazakhstan. The deer are farmed in the areas and the species is generally widespread.

The antlers contain biologically-active substances as well as female sex hormones and have been used in traditional eastern medicine for thousands of years. The antlers are used to treat a variety of conditions, including sexual dysfunction, the effects of menopause, liver and kidney problems and a host of others. Deer antler has recently been in vogue as a performance-

enhancing substance among some athletes. The new medical centre anchors a tourism cluster in Northern Kazakhstan, part of the country's efforts to develop pockets of tourism destinations in the regions.

Kazakhstan has a long way to go before catching up to global medical tourism hubs like Costa Rica, India, Thailand and South Korea. Global statistics on the number of medical tourists worldwide are hard to come by, but the Patients Beyond Borders website estimates that Thailand attracted up to 1.8 million medical tourists in 2013, and Malaysia 600,000 in 2012. India serves some 250,000 annually, it reports. Closer to home, Turkey is reported to have hosted 110,000 foreigners seeking medical treatment in 2012, and its wellness tourism industry of thermal and mud spas attracts half a million visitors per year.

Kazakhstan's 800 or so patients are, comparatively, a drop in the bucket. However, for a country still in the early stages of developing both tourism and high-quality medical care, with new direct flights being added each season and with the possibility of offering better care than some neighbours and cheaper care than others, the sector would certainly seem to hold some promise.

## Visa-Free Regime to Yield Manifold Increase in Kazakhstan, South Korea Travel



By Dmitry Lee

ASTANA – Kazakhstan's continued efforts to promote multi-directional foreign policy by introducing a visa-free regime in 2014 with 10 countries which are big investors in its economy were not futile. In response, some of those countries have facilitated their visa procedures and some even went as far as cancelling visa-related constraints to boost the travel exchange.

South Korea was one of the nations, along with Malaysia and the United Arab Emirates, which has completely abandoned the visa regime with Kazakhstan. As a result, these countries are taking advantage of numerous economic benefits that the policy envisioned, such as medical tourism for South Korea.

The new visa free regime between the Kazakhstan and South Korea was introduced on Nov. 29, 2014, providing for a month-long visa-free mutual travel for citizens of both countries. In his interview with tengrinews.kz, Korean medical tourism businessman Dong-II Lim noted the number of medical tourists to South Korea is expected to increase fivefold, from 2,890 in 2014 to about 15,000 in 2015. The demand among Kazakh citizens for medical services in South Korea has increased 24 times since 2008, he told the media.

According to statistics of the Kazakh Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the nation's embassy in South Korea issued 8,334 visas in 2012, 9,150 in 2013 and 6,237 in the first nine months of 2014 before talks on the visa-free regime were announced. These numbers certainly don't reflect the total inflow of Korean citizens, but only those who applied from Seoul. According to

the South Korean Ambassador to Kazakhstan Baik Joohyeon some 40,000 Koreans visited Kazakhstan in 2014.

"Fifteen thousand Kazakh citizens visited South Korea [in 2014] and about 40,000 Koreans visited Kazakhstan," he stressed.

Numerous international projects like the EXPO 2017 construction sites, Highville, Apple Town and some of Kazakhstan's renowned five-star international hotels attract Korean businessmen and labourers, while tourists enjoy learning about Kazakh culture and sight-seeing.

The visa-free travel between the countries will not be enough to stimulate investment inflow to Kazakhstan, said former Kazakh diplomat Kazbek Beisebayev in his interview with Deutsche Welle. According to Beisebayev, investors will seek other comforting terms for such purposes and a visa is not an obstacle. Nonetheless, the cancellation of visas "will increase the number of visitors to Kazakhstan and will develop tourism," he noted.

At the 27th Plenary Session of the Foreign Investors Council on June 12, 2014 President Nursultan Nazarbayev announced the upcoming introduction of a visa-free regime with 10 countries which were the biggest investors in the country's economy: France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Malaysia, South Korea, the UAE, the United Kingdom and the United States. The project, providing for a 15-day visa free entrance to Kazakhstan for citizens of these countries, with no limits on the number of such visits, was given pilot status, with the validity period from July 15, 2014 to July 15, 2015 and the possibility of prolonging at the expiration date.

## New Official Tourism Website Launched

By Michelle Witte

GAITHERSBURG, MD – Kazakhstan launched a new official tourism website, Kazakhstan.travel, in June, with information in English, Kazakh and Russian on the country's culture, history and geography as well as detailed information on destinations in each of the country's oblasts or regions.

The website contains photos and descriptions of games, food, clothing and jewellery and other aspects of traditional Kazakh culture, as well as blurbs about modern Kazakh society and religion. The ethnic diversity of the country is highlighted in a gallery of snapshots of citizens of different ethnic backgrounds, including ethnic Tatars, Koreans, Ukrainians, Ingush and more. Site visitors are invited

to click on the photos to learn more about each individual.

The site, a project of the Tourism Industry Department of the Ministry for Investments and Development, comes as Kazakhstan begins a major push to develop tourism in five clusters around the country, part of the Concept on Tourism to 2020 approved last year, and bring tourism as a share of gross domestic product from 0.3 percent to 4 percent.

Photos and maps add visual interest to the new site, and its phrasebook and useful information section are helpful resources. An air ticketing page links to Air Astana's online booking system, but the hotel booking section is not yet populated and information on accommodation around some destinations is lacking.

Kazakhstan has a number of official or semi-official online presences promoting its tourism potential. The Kazakhstan Tourism Association, a nongovernmental association approved by the government, has a portal on the Oriental Express Central Asia website and also operates Kazakhstan's Ecotourism Information Resource Centre, an online source of information about nature-based tourism in Kazakhstan. Visitkazakhstan.kz is also an "official tourism website of Kazakhstan."

More and more, the Kazakh government is using online resources to develop its tourism industry, not only reach out to foreigners, but to engage and train locals involved in the industry. "Tourism is Everyone's Business," a Facebook group created with the support of

the Tourism Industry Department, seeks to provide free training for citizens involved in tourism-related industries now or hoping to be, as well as serve as a platform for dialogue on improving the industry and attracting more guests, Chairman of the then-Tourism Industry Committee Marat Igalitold The Astana Times in May. He said then that active work would be done to attract tourists through online marketing activities and platforms like Google Earth, Trip Advisor, Facebook and Twitter.

In June 2014, Kazakhstan initiated a one-year visa-free pilot programme for 10 countries identified as major investors. Before that move, the country had improved by five positions on the Competitiveness Index for Tourism from 2011-2013.

## Central Kazakhstan Tourist Attractions Named among World's 100 Most Sustainable

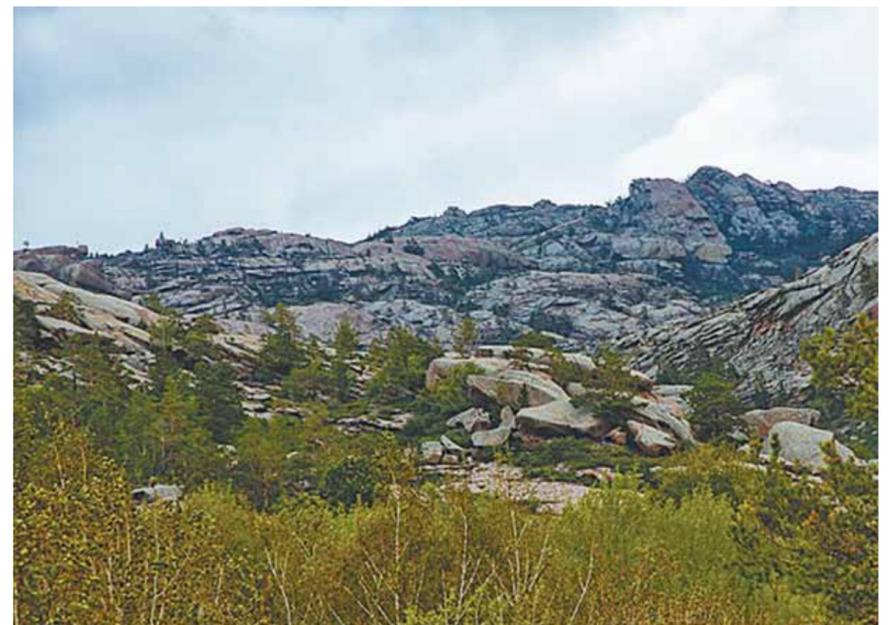
By Natalya Ryzhkova

KARAGANDA REGION – The Kyzylarai mountain oasis and Shabanbai-bi Village in Central Kazakhstan were named among the world's 100 most sustainable tourist destinations last year.

"The oasis and the village with guest houses have been nominated as a single object. Kyzylarai mountains and Shabanbai-bi Village in the Aktogai area represent a very promising place for the development of eco-tourism," said Vitaly Shuptar, head of the Avalon Historical and Geographical Society which did the submission. "In the heart of Sary-Arka there is everything that one may need to relax: striking beauty of nature and unique historical sights."

According to Avalon representatives, the group established the list of the most sustainable tourist destinations to assess efforts to promote sustainable tourism around the world. Nominees were determined by open voting on social networks as well as the input of 30 international experts.

Kyzylarai offers a variety of tourist options. Visitors can hike Aksoran, the highest mountain



Kyzylarai mountain range.

in Central Kazakhstan, wander through beautiful pine forests, visit the sacred cave Aulie and see wild sheep and elk. Visitors can also see unique historical monu-

ments, including ancient cave paintings, a Bronze Age necropolis and Turkic stone sculptures.

As representatives of the Aktogai district akimat (local mayor's

office) note, it is worth visiting these places to experience the boundless hospitality, friendliness and exceptional culinary skills of Shabanbai-bi residents.

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 14, 2015

## Astana Arlans Kick Off World Boxing Series with New Roster



Astana Arlans confirmed 2015 roster.

By Dmitry Lee

On the threshold of the Rio Olympics in 2016 and as athletes vied for slots at the World Series of Boxing (WSB), Astana Arlans Head Coach Marat Dzhakiyev stated that the team's ultimate goal is to "be useful to the country." The comment was part of a recent interview released by the club's press service in conjunction with

the final roster for the fifth season. "Anyone who understands boxing knows the importance of the forthcoming matches for the Arlans. We just talked about it while finalising the roster. There were arguments regarding some candidates, no doubt, but opinions of respected people were considered when they were making their decisions," said Dzhakiyev. "The team is my top priority, but I want my work to help

[my] country. Together with the coach's headquarters we will determine the work ahead of us."

The Arlans had an impressive debut season in 2011, when the new team reached the finals before losing to Paris United. The following year, the club lost to Dynamo Moscow in the semis. In season three Arlans managed to put on a show in a thrilling finale against the Ukraine Otamans and snatched

the team's champion title. Last year, the team reached the semis, but lost to the Baku Fires. This season the team is again hopeful of bringing home the champion's title.

Astana Arlans roster for the 2015 season:

49 kilogramme category  
Mardan Berikbayev, Temirtas Zhusupov, Yerzhan Zhomart  
52 kilogramme category  
Miras Zhakupov, Olzhas Sattybayev, Azamat Isakulov  
56 kilogramme category  
Madi Shulakov, Meirbolat Toitov, Nursultan Koshegulov  
60 kilogramme category  
Yerzhan Musafirov, Roman Shegrinov, Zakir Safiullin  
64 kilogramme category  
Askhat Ualikhanov, Samat Bashenov, Bekbolat Kuramyssov  
69 kilogramme category  
Daniyar Yeleussinov, Madiyar Ashkeyev, Aslanbek Shymbergenov, Kanagat Maralov  
75 kilogramme category  
Zhanibek Alimkhanuly, Meiryrim Nursultanov, Aidos Yerbosynuly.  
81 kilogramme category  
Hrvoje Sep, Ali Akhmedov, Nurdaulet Zharmanov  
91 kilogramme category  
Vasily Levit, Almat Serimov  
91+ kilogramme category  
Ivan Dychko, Ruslan Myrsatayev, Filip Hrgovicè

## Karaganda Football Coach Completes Internship in Brazil



Berik Rakhimbekov

By Dmitry Lee

Shakhtar Football Club Secondary Coach Berik Rakhimbekov completed a one-year internship in Ribeirao Preto, Brazil as part of the state-supported programme at the Olé Brazil Academy. The club's press service recently released an interview with him to learn about his training.

"I have the best impressions from undergoing an internship in a country where football is a religion – it is a priceless experience. First of all, I got the most important thing a coach could get, the experience. Also, what made me glad was to find out that there is a lot of competition. Each player has to battle for his slot on the roster with the best of the best. The infrastructure is at the highest level and football fields are almost perfect. I once more was convinced that football in Brazil is the number one sport," he said.

The coach didn't travel to the academy alone, as young Karaganda footballers also took part in the internship.

"Initially, three Karaganda footballers got the opportunity to train in Brazil. One of them, after a year of training in Brazil, joined the secondary Shakhtar roster. And two Karaganda residents, Sergei Komarov and Ruslan Alimbayev, completed a full course of three years," Rakhimbekov explained, adding "they really want to contribute their personal efforts into development of the sport in Kazakhstan. They learned more than enough in Brazil."

Rakhimbekov noted that the young footballers are still in school and education is a priority while giving their best to become professional footballers.

"By our standards, their day starts very early. They get up at 6:30 a.m., have breakfast at 7 a.m. and at 8 a.m. they start the training. The training lasts about an hour and a half with an emphasis on team tactics and coordination. Lunch is at 11:30 a.m. From 12

p.m. to 2 p.m., they get to rest. At 3 p.m., they start the second workout. The second session, however, didn't take place on a daily basis but included a trip to the gym. Then dinner and after dinner different teachers came to teach school subjects. It is important to get an education for them as they're still school kids."

The coach doesn't exclude the possibility that any of these kids could become part of the Karaganda club, however, he said this would depend on their performance.

Rakhimbekov is also convinced that Kazakhstan's coaches are very capable.

**"I have the best impressions from undergoing an internship in a country where football is a religion – it is a priceless experience," said Rakhimbekov**

"Kazakhstan's coaches are in no way inferior to foreign ones. In my opinion, in order to make a big leap forward, we need a well-developed infrastructure that would allow us to expand our capabilities," he said.

According to the Kazakh coach, who happened to witness the World Cup in Brazil, the country glowed with bright yellow and green colours. Although he didn't have the chance to attend any of the games, he said he could feel the city vibe during the event.

"I wanted to see our neighbour Russia play in the final rounds, of course. But in general, Holland showed a good game, Germany – no need for words, but emotions. The most important thing is that the football was spectacular and entertaining."

## Almaty Submits 2022 Winter Olympic Bid Report, Seeks Cost-Effective Ways to Host Games

By Dmitry Lee

The delegations from Almaty and Beijing, the 2022 Winter Olympic Games candidate cities, presented their three-volume bid books in Lausanne, Switzerland Jan. 6 for consideration by the International Olympic Committee (IOC).

"Our 2022 candidature file is a chance for the world to experience what we have always known: Almaty is a modern, beautiful city graced with real, pristine mountains and real, ideal winter weather – it is a city perfectly suited to host an intimate, accessible Winter Games with lots of natural snow," said Almaty Mayor Akhmetzhan Yessimov.

The proposal books, written in English and French, were required to be a maximum of 360 pages with details, maps and photographs of the venues. The reports included 14 various themes, such as vision, legacy, engagement, transport, accommodation, finance and sustainability.

The Kazakh delegation was represented by Almaty Deputy Mayor Zuraresh Amanzholova, Secretary General of the Kazakhstan National Olympic Committee (NOC) Timur

Dossymbetov, Almaty 2022 bid board member Andrey Kryukov, Director General of the State Foundation Ilya Urazakov and IOC & International Federations Bid Relations Director Oksana Ryzanenko.

"This is our second bid for the Winter Games because we believe it is time to build on what the Olympic spirit has achieved in the past by demonstrating its massive potential

to achieve societal benefits in the future," said Dossymbetov.

Amid the public pressure of those who oppose the pricey venture, Almaty is seeking cost-effective ways to host the Olympics while trying to adhere to low cost and sustainability. As the city is preparing to host the Universiade in 2017, many winter sports venues will be constructed in advance of 2022

which, provided Almaty wins the bid, would reduce the expense of the much-anticipated winter event.

The IOC Evaluation Commission will travel to the former Kazakh capital Feb. 14-18 for a site inspection. Both Almaty and Beijing will present their bids to IOC members again in Lausanne in June and the host city will be unveiled in Kuala Lumpur on July 31.



Kazakh delegation in Lausanne.

## Nation's 2014 Sports Highlights

By Dmitry Lee

ASTANA – The year 2014 was full of memorable sports stories involving Kazakh athletes. The Astana Times has chosen a few to highlight for our year-end sports review.

**Gennady Golovkin Stays Undeclared in 2014**

The undefeated reigning World Boxing Association (WBA) and International Boxing Organisation (IBO) middleweight champion Gennady Golovkin, 32, continued his streak in 2014 by dropping Osumanu Adamain the seventh round on Feb. 1. He then knocked out Daniel Geale in the third on July 26 and finally stripped Marco Antonio Rubio of

the interim World Boxing Council (WBC) champion title on Oct. 18 by a technical knockout in the second round. Golovkin has a 90 percent knockout ratio, which is the highest in the middleweight division's history. He has 31 wins, 28 by knockout, and is on an 18-KO streak to date. He is to face Martin Murray on Feb. 21, 2015 next.

**Denis Ten Wins Bronze in Sochi**  
The Olympics in Sochi 2014 didn't turn out exactly the Kazakh way due to immense pressure after the success in the London Summer Olympics in 2012, where Kazakhstan brought home seven gold, one silver and five bronze medals and finished 12th overall in the medals tally. This time with less events to compete in Kazakhstan only

managed to get one bronze medal. But it was the one medal that had turned a new page in Kazakh sports as it was the first bronze in country's history at figure skating, as the 21-year-old Denis Ten watched the Kazakh flag rise from the podium on Feb. 13.

**Ilya Ilyin Becomes Four-Time World Champion, Breaks New Record**

At the Nov. 15 World Weightlifting Championship in Almaty two-time Olympic champion, Kazakh weightlifter Ilya Ilyin, 26, defeated his opponents by totalling 432 kilogrammes overall (190+242) to win the championship. Ilyin set a new world record and won his fourth world championship.

**Astana PRO Team Wins Tour de France**

Astana Pro Team's Vincenzo Nibali became the sixth man in history and the first Italian since 1998 to win all three of cycling's major tours as he secured a victory in this year's Tour de France on July 27. Nibali wore the overall leader's yellow jersey for all but two stages of the race after his first day. He also won four of the race's 21 total stages, the most for a tour winner since the U.S.'s Lance Armstrong won five in 2004. He eventually finished an impressive seven minutes and 52 seconds ahead of the race's runner-up, the tour's biggest margin of victory since 1997.

Asian Games Cements Kazakhstan's Status as Sports Powerhouse  
Kazakh athletes yet again cemented their position as an Asian

sports powerhouse during the Asian Games in Incheon, South Korea. Kazakh athletes broke 14 world records and 28 Asian records at the events in the country of "Morning Calm." The most memorable were of weightlifter **Zulfiya Chinshanlo** in the lighter category 58 kilogrammes. She set a new world record in the clean and jerk (132 kilogrammes). Swimmer **Dmitry Balandin** won gold in three distances (50, 100, 200 metres breaststroke). The women's national team of Kazakhstan in shooting scored 203 points and broke the record for the national team of China (201 points) in teams events. In general, the Kazakh national team won 28 gold, 23 silver and 33 bronze medals, a total of 84 medals breaking

all previous records in the history of the country's participation in the Asian games.

**Zarina Diyas Makes the WTP Top 50**

Almaty born tennis player Zarina Diyas saw 2014 as her breakthrough year in her career. On Nov. 10, she managed to climb the World Tennis Association (WTA) rating and clinch the 33rd spot, where she is still ranked. In August, she showed her best result in Grand Slams at the U.S. Open as unseeded Diyas advanced to the third round but lost to 17th seeded Ekaterina Makarova of Russia. Diyas has won five singles titles on the International Tennis Federation (ITF) tour to date and is very ambitious about 2015.

# CAPITAL

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 14, 2015

## Free Ice Skating Draws Crowds in Capital

By Dmitry Lee

ASTANA — Relatively mild winter temperatures this year in Astana have allowed city residents to enjoy the city's outdoor ice skating facilities.

"We wanted to enjoy every [moment] of this winter. It is abnormally warm for Astana," said 30-year-old Yerbolat Uatkhon, who brings his family to the Rowing Channel behind the Kazakhstan Ice Hockey Arena, otherwise known as 'Akbulak' in Astana to skate every year. "I think if every winter were like this in Astana, the city would attract a lot more people; this would be great for small businesses, tourism and the city as a whole. But we [locals] know that in February, the snowstorms return to Astana," he said.

Here, anyone can rent skates for as low as \$2.73 per hour and skate and glide until late evening; if one has their own skates, entry is free.

"Yesterday, I went there [Akbulak] and skated for one hour with my daughter," one of the visitors, who preferred to stay anonymous, said. "A one-hour skate rental costs 500 tenge (US\$2.73). My daughter got brand new skates! The changing room is warm and comfortable. Hot food and drinks [are] available [on the premises] and there are nice conditions for small children. Everything is pretty well organised."

Food concessions, skate sharpening booths, benches for chang-



Astana residents enjoy 'mild' winter.

ing skates on the ice and other amenities are also offered.

The popularity of ice skating in Astana this year might also be attributed to the success of Kazakh figure skating star Denis Ten, who brought home a bronze medal from

the Sochi Winter Olympics in 2014.

"It is a good thing that we have these activities available here in the capital," 27-year-old accountant Anastasiya Ponomarenko said while taking her 11 and 8-year-old sons out. "What else can we do

in Astana but some sort of winter sport? They [the administration] do a good job with the ice, almost every day it snows and they always clean it up. I can see them at work every morning out of my window overlooking the river. Because of

the view, we come here almost every day. We used to rent skates here, but now we own our own."

"I still think the weather is harsh," Ponomarenko continued as she acknowledged of the challenges the Astana winters bring.

"We originally come from Almaty; this is our second winter and it is very cold, they say it will get even colder, I can't get used to this."

But for now, it is just warm enough to enjoy a few spins around the rink.

## Astana Opera to Tour Italy

By Danna Buzephanova

ASTANA — Performances of "Spartacus" will highlight the first appearance by the Astana Opera ballet troupe at the Teatro Carlo Felice, the ancient theatre and principal opera house in Genoa, Italy. The tour, which will also include the "Gala Ballet," will be held Jan. 21, 23, 24, 25 and 27.

"Getting an invitation from such a famous theatre is a great honour. We are facing an important challenge to honourably represent Kazakhstan's art to the discerning Italian viewer. We hope to gain new fans who would want to visit Kazakhstan and our theatre in particular," said Astana Opera Ballet Art Director Tursynbek Nurkaliyev.

"Spartacus," with storyline and music by Aram Khachaturian, will be staged by master choreographer Yuri Grigorovich. It is imbued with dramatic feelings, artistic images and romantic intonations.

"Spartacus" follows the exploits of the gladiator and leader of the slave revolt known as the Third Servile War, a rebellion ferocious-

ly defeated by Roman Commander Marcus Licinius Crassus in the first century B.C. Khachaturian, who composed the ballet in 1954, was awarded a Lenin Prize that year. To this day, it remains one of the most spectacular and popular with audiences.

The Astana Opera press service reports that the Italian public is looking forward to performances by Kazakh artists, with all tickets for the ballet and the gala programme already sold out. It is not the first foreign tour for the dancers, as "Alem," their inaugural performance, was a notable success both on the Kazakh stage and during the world tour in Vienna, Paris and Seoul. Excitement around the touring theatre is justified, as the national school of classical dance is widely acknowledged abroad.

Italian theatre Art Director Giuseppe Acquaviva also stressed that the Teatro Carlo Felice would become a window to Europe for the company. The troupe consists of 85 people and members of the Genoa Theatre Symphony Orchestra will also participate in the per-

formances, to be conducted by Kazakhstan's honoured artist Aidar Abzhakhanov.

The Astana Opera State Opera

and Ballet Theatre was founded in 2013 at the initiative of Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev. At the opening of the

theatre the head of state stated, "a country which builds factories and roads creates a solid foundation for the years ahead. A country which builds schools and hospitals cares about the future of the nation for decades. A country which builds theatres looks

through the centuries to the future." Founded in 1824, the main hall of the Teatro Carlo Felice can hold up to 2,000 patrons, while a smaller auditorium has 200 seats. The theatre, situated at the Piazza de Ferrari, was named after Duke Carlo Felice.

