



Hungarian Prime Minister's Visit, Business Forum Solidify Ties

By Malika Orazgaliyeva

ASTANA – Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev met with Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban during the latter's April 1 official visit to the country.

"We view Hungary as a true friend. Our countries have common historical roots and similar ways of development. For us, Hungary is an important support in Europe," said Nazarbayev.

The head of state noted the ongoing dynamics of cooperation between the two nations.

"It is not our first meeting. These contacts indicate our desire to strengthen trade and economic relations. We appreciate that Hungary was the first country in the European Union (EU) to sign a strategic partnership agreement with Kazakhstan. We will make every effort to make your visit fruitful," he said.

In turn, Orban thanked Nazarbayev for the invitation and said that Kazakhstan has a reliable friend in the EU in Hungary, as well as saying one of the streets in Budapest is named Astana.

Orban noted that Nazarbayev's participation in the upcoming presidential election is a pledge of stability in Kazakhstan and wished the candidate success on behalf of his country.

The same day, Astana also hosted the Kazakh-Hungarian business forum, where Hungarian Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade Péter Szijjártó announced that Kazakhstan and Hungary will create a joint financial fund with \$40 million in capital.

"This fund will have \$20 million from both sides. The mutual fund



Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban (l) meets Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev in Astana on April 1.

will be a financial basis for cooperation between companies of the two countries. There are also plans to create a joint strategic council between the two governments," said Szijjártó.

"If you want to invest in Hungary, we can offer friendly investment packets, grants, subsidies for education and creation of work places. I have already instructed Eximbank to open credit lines for companies wishing to cooperate. The credit line is \$50 million," he added.

"Despite the fact that two-way trade exceeds \$200 million, it is still quite low. In other words,

there is huge potential for cooperation, because Central Europe is becoming the driving force in Europe and Kazakhstan is the most dynamically-developing country in the Central Asian region," Szijjártó stressed.

Hungary intends to increase the number of its small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) willing to invest in Eastern markets, said Szijjártó. Presently, there are about 2.5-3 million SMEs competing in foreign markets and the country intends to increase the number by 12,000.

More than 300 entrepreneurs from the two countries attended

the business forum. Following the event, there were plans to sign a number of agreements in areas such as the oil and banking sectors and light and food industries.

Szijjártó met the same day with Kazakh Foreign Minister Erlan Idrissov, where the sides discussed a wide range of issues of bilateral cooperation and the international agenda. Szijjártó paid an official visit to Astana Feb. 19-20, when the 2015-2016 work plan between the Foreign Ministries of the two countries was signed. The importance of the successful work of the Kazakh-Hungarian strategic council was also noted at the meeting.

Three Official Election Candidates Announce Platforms, Begin Campaigns

By Malika Orazgaliyeva

ASTANA – The three official candidates for Kazakhstan's April 26 presidential election have announced their campaign platforms and begun campaigning, opening headquarters around the country and addressing audiences in northern, southern, western and central Kazakhstan. The three candidates' campaigns highlight social equality and reclaiming values, promoting environmental and industrial safety, and economic development and institutional reform.

Syzydkov Visits North Kazakhstan, Concentrates on Countering "Dangerous" Western Values

Turgun Syzydkov, official candidate of the Communist People's Party of Kazakhstan (CPPK), opened his campaign headquarters in Astana on March 26 and presented his election campaign platform on March 31. He aims to create social equality through communist socio-economic structures, Syzydkov said.

He will hone in on the negative impact of Western culture and values. Consumer social structures in Europe are responsible for cultural decline, he said, saying consumption as a social phenomenon is based on a system of values that reduce life to a process of satisfying material interests. Western culture has become a business, according to the campaign, and Western cinema is

a striking example of this, with its lucrative violence and depravity. The campaign also opposes Western literature and fast food, with Syzydkov saying, "In general, the entire West suffers from obesity, high blood sugar, cardiovascular diseases and problems with vision, hearing and the musculoskeletal system," at the launch of his Astana office.

"Morality becomes a matter of legal technology. That is why the Western belief in the universality of local culture suffers from three flaws: it is wrong, it is immoral and it is dangerous," Syzydkov stressed.

Mazhilis Deputy Aikyn Konurov is heading Syzydkov's national election headquarters, and introduced campaign plans at a March 26 briefing. During the opening, Syzydkov remarked upon the importance of his campaign, saying, "We are taking part in the election process not for the first time. For us, it is not new: we want to use this opportunity to once again introduce our goals and objectives to the people," this newspaper reported.

The CPPK has begun organising campaign events, beginning in Astana on March 28, when Syzydkov presented his campaign to students at Eurasian National University and to employees of the Astana Thermolectric Power Company on March 30.

Syzydkov travelled to Petropavlovsk the next day to address employees of the Munai Mash public-private company, and spoke to employees of the industrial enterprise Kokshetauminvoda and university students in Kokshetau on the same trip.

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Washington Events Address Revised US Policy on Central Asia

By Michelle Witte

ASTANA – Over two days last week, three events – academic and political – in Washington D.C. addressed geopolitics and strategy in Kazakhstan and Central Asia, following the news that the United States had recently completed an interagency review of its policy for the region.

Both Richard Hoagland, principal deputy assistant secretary of the Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, speaking at Georgetown University on March 30, and Deputy Secretary of State Antony Blinken, addressing the Brookings Institution on March 31, reassured listeners of their country's plans to remain engaged in the region as international troops leave Afghanistan and stressed that increasing Chinese investment in the region complements U.S. goals.

Also on March 31, three academics from Almaty's Al-Farabi University spoke at a Johns Hopkins University Central Asia-Caucasus Institute panel about their nation's security in a complex geopolitical context.

In his remarks, Blinken dismissed fears that Central Asia would be less important to the U.S. after the troop withdrawal, and said instead that the U.S. "wants to broaden and deepen our bilateral relationships with each of the states in Central Asia." American Central Asia policy today is based on two ideas, he said: that a stable, secure Central Asia engaged in battling extremism enhances America's security, and that the region will achieve stability through the development of individual strong, sovereign, connected, accountable states.

"Today, we have three important

objectives for our engagement with each of the Central Asian states: strengthening partnerships to advance mutual security; forging closer economic ties; and advancing and advocating for improved governance and human rights," Blinken said.

The U.S. is supporting efforts around the region to enhance border security and anti-trafficking efforts, Blinken said. He highlighted the new Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty the U.S. signed with Kazakhstan in February as a security milestone, and praised the country for its nonproliferation efforts, as well as for funding the Afghan National Security Forces and police and providing scholarships for 1,000 Afghans to study at Kazakh universities.

Economically, he said, the U.S. supports Kazakhstan's efforts to join the World Trade Organisation, along with Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, which are already WTO members, a goal he said he expected to be realised this year. He also noted that Kazakhstan would host an investment forum for U.S. companies in the summer.

The region still has a long way to go toward creating "open, cooperative and connected" markets, Blinken said. The U.S. is helping this process along through its New Silk Road initiative, which has so far supported business contact programmes, streamlining border procedures, building or rehabilitating roads, developing energy infrastructure connecting Central and South Asia and other efforts, according to the State Department website.

Hoagland described American-Central Asian engagement similarly, referencing "four critical areas of cooperation and concentration in Central Asia – security cooperation, economic ties, promotion of human

rights and good governance, and efforts to bolster each country's sovereignty and independence." He also noted that the U.S. does not see Central Asia as a monolith, a viewpoint Kazakhstan has repeatedly challenged in global strategies dealing with its neighbourhood, most recently advising a more country-specific EU Strategy for Central Asia.

Both speakers addressed Chinese, Iranian and Russian involvement in the region. Iran was noted as a country with significant cultural connections to the region and also with an interest in cooperating on trade, water and other issues. Both officials said China's involvement was not viewed "in zero-sum terms," but on the contrary, as complementary to U.S. efforts. Hoagland commented that the U.S. was consulting with China on ways to collaborate in the region.

"We see an important role for China in supporting the transition in Afghanistan and advancing its own integration into the broader Asia region," said Blinken.

The U.S. is "committed to leveraging our own economic tools to help Central Asia diversify their economies and interlink their markets," to help offset the impact of Russian and Western sanctions, he said.

"We do not ask any country to choose ties with the U.S. to the exclusion of anyone else. We reject the false choices imposed by anyone else. We fully support the aspirations of Central Asian states to pursue a multi-vector foreign and economic policy," Blinken said. Hoagland also went out of his way to state that American soft diplomacy does not have as its goal so called "colour revolutions."

Both U.S. officials said that they would not tell countries not to join the new Eurasian Economic Union

of Russia, Kazakhstan, Belarus, Armenia and Kyrgyzstan, simply that the union should be open and non-politicised.

At the Johns Hopkins CACI forum, speakers Karimzhan Shakirov, dean of International Relations at Al-Farabi Kazakh National University, and professors Fatima Kukeyeva and Kuralai Baizakova of the same school, addressed security issues, primarily events in Ukraine, the development of Afghanistan and the impact of the new EAEU.

"[A]nti-Russian sentiment in Kazakhstan has spread very little, despite the negative assessment of the public opinion of the civil war in Ukraine," Kukeyeva noted, saying, "Kazakhstan is an example of peaceful coexistence and cooperation of Muslim and the Slavic population in its northern regions of Akmola, Pavlodar, Kostanai and Northern Kazakhstan." Government support for ethnic and linguistic diversity supports this coexistence, she said. The main problem Ukraine presents for Central Asian nations is economic, she pointed out, with Russia's troubled economy affecting its neighbours.

What is perceived as a more serious threat is the possible emergence of a new wave of radicalism as a result of refugee and migration flows, Baizakova noted, as well as the possibility of Central Asian extremist religious movements finding fertile ground in an unstable Afghanistan.

Solutions to Afghanistan's problems must be historically and culturally rooted, she said, and the rest of the world should show restraint and not intervene directly in internal Afghan affairs. Instead, socio-economic cooperation programmes supported by the U.S., the EU, Japan and China as well as countries with fewer resources, are needed. "Central Asian countries should develop friendly bilateral relations not only with the central government, but also with local authorities," she said, and develop a regional dialogue on Afghanistan with China, Pakistan, India, and Iran.

Television Station to Broadcast Election Day Exit Polling

By Ardaq Seitimova

Kazakhstan's Strategy Social and Political Studies Centre will conduct public polling leading up to the early April 26 presidential election and exit polling on the day of the vote, according to a report by BNews.kz. The results will be broadcast on the Commercial Television Channel (KTK) and distributed to other media.

"We feel that it is important to take part in the election campaign and we will cover the elections as much as possible. We have enough resources to do it. In the pre-election period, we will be holding a series of public opinion polls about the election. It is important to improve our political culture; we are taking these measures in the interest of our audience. Exit polls are standard practice in developed countries. This will increase the transparency of our elections," Director General of KTK Kanat Sakhariyanov said at a press conference.

On Election Day, KTK will hold live broadcasts from polling stations and in places where the surveys will be conducted. Election Day interviews are allowed to be carried out only after voters have exited the polling station. Two

to three volunteers and one controller will be working at each of the covered 200 stations (overall, there will be more than 9,700 polling stations across Kazakhstan). Interviewers will be identifiable by their uniform and each group will carry a box and sheets with a list of questions. After completing the questionnaire, voters will place them in sealed containers.

"With the support of the KTK, our centre will conduct exit polls. We plan to interview 20,000 voters across 200 polling stations. We have selected this number because we have previously dealt with this amount and this is an already worked out process. Everything depends on voter turnout. Respondent selection will be held at polling station exits. Questions will be asked to every third or sixth voter. Interviewers will hold boxes with the KTK logo on them. It is important that interviewers stand at the polling stations from the beginning to the end of the election," explained President of the Strategy Centre Gulmira Ilevuova.

According to Ilevuova, the questions asked will be standardised and include the respondent's relation to the election, candidate preference, the need for elections and a general assessment of the political situation in the country.

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NATION

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 8, 2015

Three Official Election Candidates Announce Platforms, Begin Campaigns



CPPK candidate Turgun Syzdykov (r) meets citizens.



Abelgazy Kussainov (seated, centre) addresses a campaign event.



A rally in support of incumbent President Nursultan Nazarbayev.

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The candidate then moved on to North Kazakhstan on April 1, meeting with agricultural workers, and to Kostanai, where he briefed employees of the Bolshevichka public-private garment factory and the Bayan Sulu confectionery factory on his election programme on April 2 and 3.

CPPK member and head of the campaign's regional office Talgat Telubayev said that promotional products had been created and would be distributed at events throughout the month.

Kussainov Launches Campaign in Kostanai, Promotes Environmental Awareness, Civic Engagement

Self-nominated candidate Abelgazy Kussainov presented a platform focused on environmental and industrial safety on March 31. Promoting environmentally friendly human development in Kazakhstan is his priority, Kussainov said. Environmental policy should be modernised and civil society engaged in transitioning to green development, he said, and civic participation in environmental issues and conservation activities should be increased.

Society must alter its behaviour to protect natural ecological processes, he stressed. Public control over enterprises must be established, to ensure that their products and operations meet safety standards; technical regulation requirements must be

binding on more than just paper; and the landscape must be protected from construction or industrial development, he said.

"In my programme, I try to explain the basic idea and meaning of the principles of a clean environment and industrial safety in our country. Our common goal is to create a new, balanced model of development based off of the principles of safety and environmentally friendly development for the third millennium," Kussainov said.

On the day he launched his campaign, Kussainov visited Kostanai, meeting residents of the city. "Our primary objectives should be starting to use our natural resources in a rational and planned manner; protecting the environment; introducing a planned system of state control; organising international and public events aimed at the rational use, protection and restoration of natural resources; and securing Kazakhstan's material and cultural needs for future generations," Kussainov told Kostanai citizens.

Rustem Zholaman is heading Kussainov's election headquarters in Astana. "The activities of our election headquarters in Kostanai region have started and individuals responsible for information activities are defined," he announced during the candidate's visit. "Electioneering work will include many activities, such as meetings with students [and] employees of big and smaller enterprises, and so on. Our office in Kostanai is always open to journalists, observers. Everyone can get our leaflets and all the necessary information," Zholaman said.

"We have launched our elec-

tion campaign through printed and electronic media, meetings with voters and training our representatives, who will work to bring the platform of our candidate to every voter and reach the maximum number of people," he said.

On April 2, Kussainov visited the North Kazakhstan oblast and addressed employees of industrial enterprises, discussing the unsustainable use of natural resources and environmental pollution and their impact on biodiversity and environmental degradation. He emphasised the role of human industrial activities in ozone depletion and widespread pollution.

"It is important to remember that natural resources are non-renewable," Kussainov reminded his North Kazakhstan audience.

Nazarbayev Launches Campaign Based on Economic Development, Institutional Reform

Incumbent President Nursultan Nazarbayev has also presented his platform, which is based on continuing Kazakhstan's economic development and reforming the country's institutions in five key ways.

"Over the years of independence, Kazakhstan had to pass a great way. The country joined the top 50 most competitive countries of the world. In 2014, our country's gross domestic product increased 20 times and reached \$13,000 per capita. Kazakhstan has become a leader of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) for a favourable investment climate and has attracted

more than \$200 billion in foreign direct investment. The people's welfare increase is ensured. The average monthly salary increased 27 times; the income of the citizens increased 12 times. Life expectancy of citizens increased to 70.4 years, while maternal and infant mortality rates reduced significantly. We entered the twenty-first century as a dignified and respected country, as well as a reliable and stable partner for the whole world," he said, according to his campaign.

Now, the President says, with oil prices falling, complicated global interfaith and intercultural relationships and new security threats, the country needs the Nurdy Zhol economic stimulus package as well as the on-going Kazakhstan 2050 Strategy, which aims to include Kazakhstan among the world's 30 most-developed countries by 2050.

Five institutional reforms will help the country achieve the goals of those programmes, Nazarbayev said in launching his campaign: creating a modern civil service corps; strengthening the rule of law; ensuring a stable economy; uniting the nation culturally and linguistically; and ensuring transparent and accountable governance.

"Meritocracy should become a universal principle not only for the government, but also for the entire civil sector, including national companies and holdings," the incumbent said.

Nazarbayev suggests rewarding civil servants for performance. Reforming the rule of law will involve increasing safeguards protecting private property and individual rights, as well as introducing a

new system of professional and psychological selection of police officers and ensuring regular promotion and confirmation of their qualifications. Stiffer qualification requirements for judges are also among his recommendations.

Ensuring a stable economy will focus on supporting the middle class, particularly through an industrialisation programme aimed creating jobs and developing Kazakhstan's export potential, the campaign says. To foster cultural and linguistic unity, Russian, English and Kazakh languages are to be developed, and the Mangilik El concept is to support a system of common civil values. Finally, to help ensure transparent and accountable governance, Nazarbayev has suggested increasing the accountability of heads of state bodies, supporting open government concepts that will make decision-making more transparent, and shifting some responsibilities from the government to civil society, including bringing civic participation to budget allocation.

"Each of the five institutional reforms is a huge challenge for the country. It is hard work, requiring financial costs and professional management. The success of such reforms can only be achieved with a strong will of government and people. Proposed measures will radically change the system of social relations," Nazarbayev said at his campaign launch. He proposed establishing a national commission on modernisation to carry out and coordinate these reforms.

In late March – early April, Nazarbayev visited South Kazakhstan, West Kazakhstan, Aktobe and Zhambyl regions.

NATIONAL NEWS IN BRIEF

Starting Jan. 1, 2016, basic registration forms at urban outpatient centres will become fully electronic throughout Kazakhstan, the Ministry of Health and Social Development has stated. According to the ministry, the transition does not require additional finances, but requires funding for healthcare organisations with computers. By April 1, all public health institutions that provide primary healthcare had cancelled their paper forms.

This year, two schools for 1,150 children will be built in Astana using funds from the national budget, Deputy Prime Minister of Kazakhstan Berdibek Saparbayev said at a March 31 meeting titled Astana's Brand: Resident Welfare. According to the deputy prime minister, currently, the country has 99 schools in emergency conditions and 136 three-shift schools, the country is short 15,419 spaces and Astana has one emergency and a pair of three shift schools. "From 2015 to 2020, a gradual transition to a 12-year education curriculum that includes pre-primary education will be implemented. This will not increase the total duration of basic education and financial costs," he concluded.

As part of a memorandum signed on March 31 between the akimat (city administration) of Astana and the Ministry of Health and Social Development of Kazakhstan, 22 vehicles will be purchased to provide medical care, Minister of Health and Social Development of Kazakhstan Tamara Duysenova said at a March 31 meeting titled Astana's Brand: Resident Welfare. "The memorandum authorises the purchase of 22 sanitary transport vehicles using municipal funds and 33 units in 2016 using national funds," Duysenova explained. During the meeting, the akimat and the ministry signed two memoranda. The first document provides for the productive employment and strengthens targeted social protection services and support for the capital's population. The second memorandum is aimed at improving the health of people in the capital.

In order to solve the issues of three shift and emergency schools in Kazakhstan, between 2015 and 2017, 73 educational facilities will be built, Vice Minister of Education and Science Yessengazy Imangaliyev said at a March 26 media briefing at the Central Communications Services (CCS). According to the Ministry of Education and Science of Kazakhstan, 61.9 billion tenge (US\$333.37 million) was set aside for building schools between 2015 and 2017. Of this money, 14.3 billion tenge (US\$77 million) will be used in 2015, 23 billion tenge (US\$123.87 million) in 2016 and 24.5 billion tenge (US\$131.89 million) in 2017. Three schools will be built in the Aktyube region, 26 in the Almaty region, one in Atyrau, five in the East Kazakhstan region, four in Zhambyl, two in Karaganda, two in Kyzylorda, one in the Mangistau region, two in the North Kazakhstan region and 23 in South Kazakhstan, the most populous in the country. It is also planned to build two schools in Almaty and two in Astana. The vice minister also said that 44 schools will be built by the national government and 118 will be built by municipalities.

First grade pupils will have classes five days a week, as opposed to the six day per week schedule prevalent up to now. This educational regimen will be first used in 30 schools in 2015 and 2016. Director of the Department of Preschool and Secondary Education of the Ministry of Education and Science Zhantayeva said on March 26. "Now, we are working on reducing the number of school subjects in 30 schools for the first grade, as well as introducing a schedule of five school days per week for first graders," Zhantayeva said. She said that the pilot programme will be implemented in 30 schools in the 2015-2016 school year. According to Zhantayeva, the principles of the Nazarbayev Intellectual Schools, which use five-day schedules, will be used in Kazakhstan's preschools.

OSCE Launches Presidential Election Observation Mission

By Yelden Sarybay

ASTANA – Observers from the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights announced on March 26 the start of their mission to observe Kazakhstan's April 26 early presidential election.

During a March 26 press conference at the Radisson Hotel announcing the launch of the mission, Cornelia Jonker, head of the OSCE/ODIHR mission, said 30 long-term observers were being deployed. "These experts will evaluate the elections according to principles that will ensure a democratic election process consistent with the principles of all OSCE member states and national legislation," she said.

Jonker also stated that in addition to these long-term observers, ODIHR will request that OSCE participating states provide 400 short-term observers. The observers sent in response to this request will arrive several days before Election Day and will work in teams of two people.

Observers will closely monitor candidate and voter registration, campaign activities, the work of the election administration and relevant governmental bodies, election-re-

lated legislation and its implementation, the media environment and the resolution of election-related disputes.

In the course of its observation, the mission will meet with representatives from state authorities, political parties and candidates, representatives from civil society, the media and the international community. On Election Day, observers will monitor the opening of polling stations, voting, the counting of ballots and the tabulation of results.

The mission will publish one interim report in the course of its work. The day after the election, a statement of preliminary findings and conclusions will be issued at a press conference. ODIHR will issue a final report on the observation of the entire electoral process approximately eight weeks after the end of the observation mission.

Jonker noted that the mission of experts is hoping for a positive and productive relationship.

Minister of Foreign Affairs Erlan Idrissov welcomed the mission at a March 26 meeting with Jonker, and, as quoted by the ministry's press service, said that "Kazakhstan is set for a constructive cooperation with international observers for the upcoming presidential election and looks forward to the objective evaluation of the results of voting on their part."

Kussainov, Syzdykov Bring Campaigns to Regions

By Michelle Witte

ASTANA – Presidential candidates Abelgazy Kussainov and Turgun Syzdykov have brought their campaigns to the regions closest to Astana, addressing audiences in North Kazakhstan and Kostanai.

Kussainov, a self-nominated candidate who opened his Astana campaign headquarters on March 26, travelled to Kostanai on March 31, meeting with the staff of the Kostanaisu city enterprise and discussing his campaign's focus on shifting to sustainable development and a stronger sense of environmental stewardship in Kazakhstan, Kazakh TV reported on April 1. Environmental safety is a key component of his platform, and in his remarks he addressed the country's growing air pollution problem.

Moving on to North Kazakhstan on April 2, Kussainov met the staff of his regional campaign office and the staff of the local Kyzylzharsu enterprise.

"As a result of soil degradation processes, about 7 million hectares of fertile land are being eliminated from the world's annual agricultural use. The irrational attitude of humans to nature can no longer be taken for granted. ... Global environmental problems such as the destruction of the ozone layer, pollution of the oceans, land and soil

cover and the impoverishment of biological diversity are very important now. All these negative consequences were caused by human industrial activity," he told them, as quoted by Kazakh TV on April 3.

Olga Klishina, head of Kussainov's regional campaign office, said they were working on distributing campaign materials and hadn't faced any obstacles. "Work is proceeding without any excesses, very systematically. We have enough human, financial and time resources. We realise our civil rights freely. The regional election commission is the only state institution that actively advises us," she said.

On April 6, Kussainov brought his campaign to the southern oblast of Kyzylorda, where he held a public meeting and reiterated his main campaign themes. "Nature is a key resource of mankind. It should be protected against various types of interventions, pollution [and] negative manmade impacts," he said there, Kazpravda reported.

Communist People's Party of Kazakhstan (CPPK) candidate Syzdykov also opened his campaign headquarters in Astana and regional offices around the country on March 26. Syzdykov is campaigning on a platform of discouraging what he calls "dangerous" and "immoral" Western values, including fast food and Hollywood movies.

Syzdykov began in Astana on March 28, when he presented his

campaign to students at Eurasian National University and then to employees of the Astana Thermolectric Power Company on March 30.

The candidate travelled to Petropavlosk the next day to address employees of the Munai Mash public-private company, and spoke to employees of the industrial enterprise Kokshetauminvoda and university students in Kokshetau on the same trip.

Syzdykov then moved on to North Kazakhstan on April 1, meeting with agricultural workers from the Mamlyut district, Kazakh TV reports, where he discussed Communist People's Party activities aiming to counter the encroachment of Western values on Kazakh society.

In Kostanai, he briefed employees of the Bayan Sulu confectionery factory on his election programme on April 2.

"Western values purposefully form the vulgar consumerism, which devalues morality. There is information influence, directly threatening mental or physical health. For example, even simple computer games cause irreparable harm to mental and physical health," he said at the event.

On April 3, meeting employees of the Bolshevichka public-private garment factory, he said, "Marxism is the creative science that is constantly develops in the process of the world change, accumulation and interpretation of new facts and phenomena in social development. To achieve these goals it is necessary to ensure promotion of Marxism-Leninism and the programme provisions of the Communist People's Party of Kazakhstan and its activities," Bnews.kz reported on the same day.

EURASIA&WORLD

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 8, 2015

EXTERNAL
NEWS IN BRIEF

Kazakhstan's maximum electric power export potential is more than 2,000 megawatts, Mazhilis (lower chamber of the Kazakh Parliament) Deputy Askhat Bekenov said at an April 2 Central Communications Service (CCS) briefing. "The export potential of Kazakhstan's electricity is from 1,350 MW to 2,100 MW," said Bekenov. According to him, the potential markets are Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Russia. "After the [implementation of the] north-south project, the opportunity to export through Uzbekistan to Tajikistan will appear," he added. According to Bekenov, investment in the power sector will amount to 178 billion tenge (US\$958.8 million) in 2015.

According to estimates, Kazakhstan will export about seven million tonnes of grain in 2014-2015, Vice Minister of Agriculture Saparkhan Omarov said at a March 31 Central Communications Service (CCS) briefing. According to him, 4.7 million tonnes of grain have been already exported; 2.1 million tonnes to Azerbaijan, Afghanistan and Iran, 119,000 tonnes to Russia, 55,000 tonnes to China and 61,000 tonnes to the European Union (EU) countries. Moreover, 1.1 million tonnes of flour were exported, including 685,000 tonnes to Central Asian countries and 385,000 tonnes to Afghanistan. "We expect a two-fold increase in the export due to the construction of the railway towards Iran," he added.

Regular flights from Astana to Tbilisi will be launched on June 2, Georgian Ambassador Zurab Pataradze said at the March 30 Kazakhstan-Batumi business forum. Because of an increasing number of tourists, Air Astana decided to launch an Astana-Tbilisi-Astana flight connection. He noted that the new flight will develop the tourist potential of both countries and strengthen trade and economic cooperation. "To date, Georgia has 100 registered enterprises with Kazakh shares. Construction of the Rixos-Borjomi complex is one of the successful Kazakh-Georgian projects and the opening took place on Jan. 14. Moreover, Kazakhstan's bank sector is successfully represented in Georgia, in particular by the network of Halyk bank," said Pataradze.

Kazakh-Lithuanian cooperation, including preparations for the May visit of Lithuanian Prime Minister Algirdas Butkevicius, were discussed at an April 1 meeting between Kazakh Chairman of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, Defence and Security Ikram Adyrbekov and Lithuanian Ambassador in Kazakhstan Vytautas Nauduzas. The senator, who used to be the Kazakhstan ambassador in Vilnius, noted the importance of the visit and expressed the hope that it will give a new impetus to bilateral relations, as well as expand the Kazakhstan and Lithuania legal base. In turn, the Lithuanian ambassador noted the dynamic growth of trade turnover between Kazakhstan and Lithuania and pointed to the great potential for further development of trade and economic relations. According to the diplomat, two effective tools, the Intergovernmental Commission on Trade, Economic, Scientific and Technical Cooperation and the Business Council for Cooperation, were created.

United Nations (UN) Special Rapporteur Baskut Tuncak will be in Kazakhstan from March 26 to April 8 for his first official visit to the country. The expert, who is touring the nation at the government's invitation, will assess the country's human rights record regarding the management of hazardous substances and wastes. The realisation of human rights, such as the right to life, the right to health, the right to information and participation and the right to just and favourable working conditions, depends on the sound management of hazardous substances and waste, Tuncak said in announcing his official mission. Kazakhstan fully supports the work of the UN HRC and actively cooperates with its mechanisms and procedures.

CIS Council of Foreign Ministers Address Border Security, Disaster Prevention

By Altair Nurbekov

BISHKEK – Kazakh Minister of Foreign Affairs Erlan Idrissov took part in a meeting of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) Council of Foreign Ministers (CFM) in the Kyrgyz capital, Bishkek on April 3.

The agenda of the meeting included fifteen issues related to increasing cooperation within the CIS. At the initiative of the Kazakh delegation, the foreign ministers of Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan adopted a joint statement devoted to the 40th anniversary of the signing of the Helsinki Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE). In the document, they stressed the commitment to the basic principles of the Helsinki Act and readiness to work towards the achievement of a goal, reinforced in the 2010 Astana Declaration, of building a common and undivided community of security in the OSCE space.

During the meeting, participants approved a plan for multi-level ministerial consultations to be held in 2015. Ministerial consultations are held in order to coordinate the actions of the organisation in international organisations and in the joint promotion of foreign policy initiatives.

Following the talks, the participants approved a list of draft documents, including a cooperation programme between CIS member states on strengthening border security at external borders for 2016-2020, an agreement on disaster prevention and response and



The assembled CIS Council of Foreign Ministers in Bishkek on April 3.

an agreement on a unified registration system for third country nationals and stateless persons.

"We note a huge potential for the development of CIS," Idrissov said at the press conference after the meeting. "Continuity is the main priority of Kazakhstan's chairmanship in the CIS in 2015. Together we are taking great efforts to increase cooperation in trade, economic, humanitarian and other spheres." As Idrissov noted, this year has quite a few landmarks for the CIS countries, primarily in connection with the celebration of the 70th anniversary of Victory in the Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945. According to him, the heads of the CIS countries are planning to participate in the festivities in Moscow, includ-

ing in the informal meeting of the CIS heads of state on May 8 and the celebratory parade on May 9.

Also, Idrissov also reported that in the framework of Kazakhstan's chairmanship in the CIS, a regular meeting of the Council of CIS heads of government will take place on May 29 in Borovoe near Astana. He also informed that the summit of the heads of state will take place in Astana in October, where a special declaration on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the UN, which is going to be celebrated on Oct. 24, will be approved.

In Bishkek, Idrissov also met with his Kyrgyz counterpart Erlan Abdylidaev. The parties discussed the successful state visit of Kyrgyzstan President Almazbek

Atambayev to Astana on November 7 and the implementation of the reached agreements.

As the result of Atambayev's visit and the fourth session of the Supreme Interstate Council of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, a number of decisions such as an action plan on cooperation between the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Kyrgyz Republic, the development of economic cooperation between Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan in terms of Eurasian integration, as well as cooperation in the field of energy were taken.

Idrissov and Abdylidaev noted that the sixth session of the Kazakh-Kyrgyz Intergovernmental Council will take place this year in Bishkek. Despite negative trends in the global economy, in the past

two years trade turnover between Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan consistently exceeded \$1 billion.

Speaking about the situation in the region's water and energy sector, Kazakhstan's foreign minister noted the need to strengthen the role and importance of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea, restructuring the Interstate Commission for Water Coordination and the Syrdarya and Amudarya Water Basin Associations, as well as the creation of a viable and transparent exchange system in the region.

In this regard, Idrissov proposed the creation of a Central Asian water investment fund and to jointly develop and sign a new five-party document regulating water relations based on international law.

FM Idrissov Attends Afghanistan-Focused CSTO Council in Dushanbe

By Altair Nurbekov

DUSHANBE – Minister of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan Erlan Idrissov took part in the meeting of the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) Council of Foreign Ministers in Tajikistan's capital, Dushanbe, on April 2, where the discussions centred heavily on the situation in neighbouring Afghanistan.

The foreign ministers of the CSTO member states first met in a narrow format to discuss topical issues of international politics and prospects for the development of the organisation in the near future.

The talks continued in an extended format with the participation of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) chairperson-in-office, Serbian Deputy Prime Minister and For-

ign Minister Ivica Dacic and head of the UN Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia (UNRCCA) Miroslav Enca.

The participants exchanged views on intensifying cooperation between international and regional organisations, as well as on strengthening efforts to ensure security in Central Asia in light of developments in Afghanistan.

In his speech, Idrissov said that earlier in the day, the foreign ministers had paid special attention to the situations in Ukraine and Afghanistan. He stressed the exclusively peaceful nature of the organisation and its members' commitment to solving all problems through constructive, peaceful and political means.

"It is necessary to note a qualitative change in the situation in Afghanistan, caused by the appearance of representatives of

the so-called 'Islamic State' on its territory. It was agreed to deal with this situation, carry out careful analysis and develop a plan of action in order to prevent new, emerging security threats to our region in this connection," Idrissov said.

He also congratulated Amanzhol Zhankuliyev of Kazakhstan on assuming the office of OSCE deputy secretary general for political affairs.

Following the talks, the CSTO foreign ministers approved a list of joint statements for 2015 and the plan of consultations for the CSTO member states' representatives on foreign policy, security and defence for the second half of 2015 and the first half of 2016. The foreign ministers also adopted a statement in connection with the 70th anniversary of victory in Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945.

It was decided that the next meeting of the CSTO Council of Foreign Ministers will be held in early fall in Dushanbe, on the eve of the session of the CSTO Collective Security Council of the heads of state.

The CSTO foreign ministers were also received by President of Tajikistan Emomali Rahmon to discuss cooperation within the organisation, the regional situation and his government's priorities.

Idrissov also met with his Tajik counterpart, Sirodjidin Aslov, to discuss a future visit by President Nursulton Nazarbayev to Tajikistan, as well as bilateral and international issues.

Tajikistan is an important political and economic partner of Kazakhstan in Central Asia, and relations between the two countries have great potential for development.

During the meeting, the sides noted their fruitful cooperation within international and regional structures and expressed satisfaction with the growth of trade. Between January and December 2014, the volume of trade amounted to \$700.4 million (with exports at \$518.9 million and imports at \$181.5 million), 23 percent more than in 2013. Kazakhstan is Tajikistan's second-biggest trade partner; Russia is first.

The two sides stressed that the main emphasis of bilateral relations should be strengthening cooperation in mining, non-ferrous metallurgy, mechanical engineering, energy, light industry, transport and communications, as well as agriculture.

Particular attention was also paid to the work of the Kazakh-Tajik Intergovernmental Commission for Economic Cooperation, a regular meeting of which was held in Dushanbe on March 19-20.

In Dushanbe, Idrissov also held talks with Ivica Dacic to discuss bilateral cooperation as well as cooperation within the OSCE given the upcoming 40th anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act.

Astana Welcomes Lausanne Agreements on Iranian Nuclear Programme

By Galiaskar Seitzhapov

ASTANA – The Kazakh Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a statement on April 3, commending the news of a consensus reached at the P5+1 talks with Iran in Lausanne, Switzerland on Iran's nuclear programme.

"We have consistently advocated for the solution of the situation around Iran's nuclear programme ... by political and diplomatic means, which will contribute to strengthening the international security system," the statement said.

The Foreign Ministry reiterated Kazakhstan's position "as a state with a strong commitment to the nonproliferation regime" and high-



EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Federica Mogherini (l) and Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif.

lighted the fact that the two rounds of multilateral talks in Алматы in February and April 2013 "contrib-

uted significantly to the creation of an atmosphere of trust" between Iran and the group of international

negotiators, which helped pave the way for the agreement reached two years later in Lausanne. "We hope that the political will of the participating countries will be maintained and will become a key achievement concerning a comprehensive agreement on the Iranian nuclear programme within the agreed timeframe in the future," the statement concluded.

The international media reported on April 2 that the deal concluded in Lausanne ruled that Iran will reduce its uranium enrichment capacity in exchange for phased sanctions relief. The agreement was described by U.S. President Barack Obama as a "historic understanding" reached with Iran.

According to reports, the group

of P5+1 (the U.S., Russia, China, France, the U.K. and Germany) and Iran committed themselves to drafting a comprehensive nuclear accord by the end of June. The framework agreement was announced by EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Federica Mogherini and Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif after eight days of tough negotiations in Lausanne.

Zarif is scheduled to visit Astana next week to meet his Kazakh counterpart, Erlan Idrissov, and discuss bilateral relations and regional security issues. Kazakhstan has long encouraged Tehran and Western diplomacies to seek a mutually acceptable agreement that would bring Iran's rights to peaceful nuclear research under the control of the International Atomic Energy Agency and dispel any concerns regarding the potential for developing a military dimension of its nuclear programme.

ECONOMY

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 8, 2015

China, Kazakhstan Sign \$23.6 Billion in Agreements, Including Funds for Nurly Zhol Projects

By Michelle Witte

ASTANA – Thirty-three cooperation agreements worth \$23.6 billion were signed during the working visit of Kazakh Prime Minister Karim Massimov to China on March 27, Xinhua News reported – some of which will support projects that fall under the umbrella of Kazakhstan's new Nurly Zhol economic stimulus programme.

"During the talks in Beijing both heads of government noted striking similarities and the remarkable potential for complementarity between the Chinese Silk Road Economic Belt strategy and Kazakhstan's Nurly Zhol programme," Astana-based political scientist and China expert Tatyana Kaukenova told The Astana Times on March 28. "This means that apart from the National Fund's money, the Kazakh government may count on Chinese investments to implement some of the Nurly Zhol projects, especially in those regions



Kazakh Prime Minister Karim Massimov (l) and Chinese Premier Li Keqiang at their meeting in Beijing on March 27.

where China is interested in upgrading local infrastructure."

The agreements concluded in Beijing include deals in urban

transport development, mining, biochemical industries, energy and the auto industry, plus agreements to develop cooperation in

customs and border management, new technology, culture and more. A Chinese company and a Spanish partner have agreed to build a wind farm in Kazakhstan, which is exploring alternative energy sources as part of the government's planned transition to a green economy.

The China Development Bank has also agreed to fund energy, mining and finance projects in the country. Kaukenova noted that China is now a bigger provider of loans to Kazakhstan than is Russia.

Chinese Premier Li Keqiang and Massimov presided over the signing of the accords in Beijing.

During the signing, Li stressed the need to develop innovative projects together and to work to coordinate policy in the two countries, according to Xinhua News. He also called for increased cooperation in nuclear energy, agriculture and the rail transit sector.

While in Beijing, Massimov also met Chinese President Xi Jinping, who emphasised the important stage of development between

the two countries and the need to promote bilateral contacts. "China and Kazakhstan are in a crucial moment of development," Xi said, according to Fox News Latino. Xi also commented on the revival of the Silk Road connecting China and Kazakhstan, part of the Silk Road Economic Belt strategy he announced in a speech at Nazarbayev University in 2013.

Kazakhstan is becoming a significant energy partner for China, and Kazakhstan has a strong interest in developing its potential as a transit route for Chinese goods to Europe.

"The growing importance of economic cooperation between the two countries cannot be ignored or underestimated. Kazakhstan already is a leader in the Commonwealth of Independent States regarding volumes of Chinese investment," Kaukenova said.

Massimov also attended the annual Boao Forum for Asia conference in south China's Hainan Province on this visit.

ECONOMY NEWS IN BRIEF

Within the framework of the second tranche of the National Fund, the Development Bank of Kazakhstan (DBK) allocated 50 billion tenge (US\$269.3 million) to the second-tier banks for processing enterprises financing, the bank recently stated. According to the DBK, long-term loan resources have been distributed among twelve second-tier banks that have loan agreements with the DBK. As a result, soft financing will be applied to the chemical and metallurgical industries and food production, beverages, clothing, furniture, oil products and main pharmaceutical products enterprises. In accordance with approved conditions, no more than 50 percent of the second tranche should finance new projects and 25 percent will be forwarded to refinance previous loans. The nominal rate of return will not exceed 6 percent per annum and the lending term for new projects will reach 10 years. The loan will be issued in national currency and the soft period of main debt will be no more than 24 months. According to interbank lending, the terms of using loan resources issued for investment purposes is 12 month and refinancing of previous loans of the second-tier banks is six months. In December 2014, the DBK received the first tranche of national funds worth 50 billion tenge (US\$269.3 million) from Baiterek National Holding for long-term lending projects in the processing industry. Due to the first tranche, nine commercial projects worth 20.3 billion tenge (US\$109.3 million) were approved as of March 26. Financing of eight projects worth 4.4 billion tenge (US\$23.7 million) has already been launched.

In March, the decrease in prices for certain food products, as well as the reprocessing industry and oil products, was observed, said the Kazakh Committee of Statistics. Beech wheat prices fell 5.6 percent, rye flour by 4.9 percent, meat by 2.5 percent, vegetable oil by 2 percent, milk products and sugar by 0.7 percent and fish by 0.6 percent. According to the committee, there was a 0.5 percent decrease in the processing industry. In addition, oil prices decreased by 1.6 percent, petrol by 0.5 percent.

Four thousand jobs will be created within the government programmes in Astana, Kazakh Deputy Prime Minister Berdibek Saparbayev said at the March 31 meeting, Astana's Brand: Resident Welfare. "According to our forecast, due to the implementation of the government programmes, over 400,000 jobs including 4,000 jobs in Astana will be created," he said. He also noted that there is a shortage of medical personnel in the field. More than 4,000 doctors graduate annually from seven medical institutions. According to Saparbayev, in order to eliminate the resulting shortage of personnel, a long-term planning system is required. In addition, the deputy prime minister instructed to develop accounting rules and employment and accommodation for visitors to the capital in conjunction with the Kazakh Ministry of Internal Affairs and Ministry of Health and Social Development.

Growth in the Kazakh trade sector has reached 13-15 percent per year, Mazhilis (lower chamber of the Kazakh Parliament) member Yelena Tarasenko said at a March 30 Central Communication Services (CCS) briefing. "The trade sector is significant in the economy of the country; its volume reached 5.3 trillion tenge (US\$28.5 billion). During the last five years, trade increased by 13-15 percent annually," said Tarasenko. According to the parliament member, the volume of retail sales increased by 40 times for the period of 1995-2014. Retail sales in Kazakhstan are characterised by the high significance of markets and low share of modern trade formats, she said. Tarasenko also mentioned that trade objects were offered for classification depending on the area in developing the draft law "on amendments and additions in certain legislative acts of Kazakhstan on trade activities to solve the issues of trade recording.

Nazarbayev University Launches New Master's Degree in Economics

By Michelle Witte

ASTANA – Nazarbayev University (NU) launched a new master's degree in economics this month, the vice dean of research in the School of Humanities and Social Sciences of the school told The Astana Times on March 11. The master's degree in economics is a two-year programme that is now the third master's degree to be offered in humanities and social sciences at the university.

"One of the best parts of being at a new university is that you get to create new programmes," Vice Dean of Research in the School of Humanities and Social Sciences Elizabeth Van Wie Davis said in the March 11 interview. Davis, along with the 13 members of the faculty of NU's Economics Department and the programme's partners from the University of Wisconsin shepherded the new degree to fulfilment between September and March. Nazarbayev University has a policy of maintaining multiple international partners; the University of Wisconsin is the partner school of NU's School of Humanities and Social Sciences.

Online applications for the new degree began in early March and will be open throughout April, as the school looks for 15 strong candidates for the programme, Davis

reported. The university is already looking ahead to what a Ph.D. in economics would look like, two or three years down the line.

For the new M.A. in economics and any master's programme, they have two main objectives, Davis said. "One is to make sure that our graduates from the master's degree could go on and do a Ph.D. anywhere in Europe, Australia, the United States, Canada, and that they'd be prepared to be competitive [there]. The other is to make sure that we can take the Bolshak

[Kazakhstan's international scholarship programme] students who have already gotten an undergraduate degree abroad ... that they can come into our master's programme and not feel like anything is being dumbed down for them or anything else." Coming and going, the goal is for students to feel they're in an international-quality programme, Davis said.

This outcome is monitored by Nazarbayev University's quality assurance programme, Davis explained, which provides for con-

stant international checks on the degree process and the candidates for it. "The whole programme was reviewed by the former head of the economics programme at the Colorado School of Mines," Davis reported, as well as by the head of applied economics at the University of Wisconsin. "They looked at the programme as we were putting it together and then gave us feedback, all of which we took."

There must be an external member on the graduate admissions committee and an international faculty member on each master's thesis committee. A professor of economics at Duke University of North Carolina will sit on the graduate admissions committee, Davis said.

They don't expect their brand-new programme to be perfect, the vice dean said. "One of the perks of being new is that you can always adjust, and I don't think anybody expects the first shot to be perfect. So I'm meeting with the faculty that helped put together this economics graduate degree and saying, 'Look, we know our first year, we're going to find out what we did wrong during the planning stage.' And there's going to be something. If we knew what it was, we'd fix it beforehand!"

This is one reason the school is determined to bring in the best possible candidates for the pro-



Kazakhstan Increases Budget for Spring Field Work

Staff Report

A total of 60 billion tenge (US\$320.98 million) has been allocated from the state budget this year for spring fieldwork, which is 20 billion tenge (US\$107.67 million) more than last year. The gross grain harvest this year is expected to total no less than 17.2 million tonnes, Deputy Minister of Agriculture Saparkhan Omarov announced recently.

"The gross grain yield, after processing, totalled 17.2 million tonnes and this year we expect that the gross grain harvest will not be lower than last year," Omarov said at a recent briefing at the Central Communications Services (CCS).

According to preliminary data, in 2015, the country's total crop area totals 21.5 million hectares.

"It is expected that 18.5 million hectares of crops be sown this year. Wheat will occupy 12.2 million hectares and oilseeds will consume 2.2 million. It is planned to sow feed crops on 3.7 million hectares, which is 349,000 hectares more than last year," he explained.

According to the Ministry of Agriculture, in southern Kazakhstan the sowing season has already begun; over 160,000 hectares have been planted.

Meanwhile, the ministry has reduced the amount of wheat being planted, in an effort to increase crop diversity. The wheat crop will be 235,000 hectares less than in 2014 and the rice crop will shrink by 8,500 hectares to make way for more feed grain, legumes and cereal crops which will increase by 103,000 hectares.

"In order to diversify the area and eliminate the adverse effect on wheat monocultures, the standards of subsidised wheat production as well as additional funds, were reduced. Increased levels of subsidies for other priority crops have been set. The agriculture ministry and the akimats (regional administrations) signed memoranda reducing the amount of wheat and increasing the amount of feed grain, legumes, oilseeds and forage crops," Omarov added.

About 78.2 billion tenge (US\$421.2 million) is to be allo-

cated to subsidise this year's harvest.

Agricultural machinery across

the country is being prepared at the same rate as last year.

"The willingness of agricultural

producers to take part in spring field work this year was considered satisfactory," the vice minister said.



BUSINESS

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 8, 2015

BUSINESS NEWS IN BRIEF

Transportation investments will reach \$20 billion by 2020, First Deputy Minister of Investment and Development of Kazakhstan Zhenis Kassymbek said during the March 30 Kazakhstan-Batumi business forum. "Investments in transport generally go into projects of an East-West direction, including infrastructure towards the Caspian Sea and on towards Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey. Most funds have been invested in the construction of a new railway called the Beineu-Zhezkazgan, as well as the second transfer point towards China (Altynkol-Khorgos) in order to attract Chinese traffic headed towards the Persian Gulf and the Caucasus," Kassymbek said. "I think that the implementation of these projects and the expansion of the Aktau sea port will bring traffic towards the Caucasus." According to him, the volume of external trade turnover between Kazakhstan and Georgia is \$115 billion. Kazakhstan has 80 joint enterprises with Georgia. Kazakh companies such as KazTransOil and KazMunaiGas invest in the Georgian economy.

Under the Nurly Zhol programme, citizens will be able to receive preferential car loans under certain circumstances. A total of 15 billion tenge (US\$80.78 million) will be provided for the loans by the National Fund, Vice Finance Minister Ruslan Dalenov said at a March 27 media briefing at the Central Communications Service (CCS). "Citizens can take a car loan at a reduced rate of 4 percent for a period of 3-5 years; of course, the loan will be in tenge," Dalenov said. According to him, the number of cars will vary depending on the model and a complete set that the user selects. This year, 92.5 billion tenge (US\$497 million) will be allocated to build rental housing with or without a purchase option. About 10,000 such apartments will be built.

The Committee on Statistics of the Ministry of National Economy of Kazakhstan reported on April 1 that the level of inflation in March 2015 in comparison with February was 0.1 percent. At the same time, according to agency data, March food prices increased by 0.2 percent and paid services by 0.1 percent. Non-food prices over the last month have not changed. Meanwhile, since the beginning of the year, inflation was 1.1 percent, while in annual terms, it was 5.2 percent. The committee also reported that in March, a 2.5 percent increase in the price of fresh vegetables was observed and a 1.6 percent increase for fresh fruit; olive oil prices increased by 1.5 percent; canned fish and tea by 1 percent; melted cheese by 0.9 percent; sausages and meat by 0.7 percent; confectionery and alcoholic beverages by 0.6 percent; baked goods and flour-based confectionery products by 0.5 percent; premium wheat flour and cottage cheese by 0.4 percent. The reduction of the price of sugar has been fixed at 2.5 percent; poultry at 2.2 percent; eggs at 2.1 percent; sunflower oil at 1.6 percent, rice at 1.1; buckwheat, kefir and potatoes at 0.9 percent; rennet cheese at 0.8 percent and raw milk at 0.7 percent. The increase in prices for pharmaceutical products was 0.9 percent, prices for detergents and cleaning products, newspapers and periodicals went up by 0.6 percent, clothing and footwear, goods for personal use increased by 0.5 percent. Gasoline prices fell by 1.6 percent and diesel fuel by 1.7 percent, liquefied gas fell by 11.4 percent. The price level of banya services increased by 1.3 percent, restaurants and hotels by 1.2 percent, healthcare by 0.6 percent, recreation, entertainment, preschool and culture related services by 0.4 percent. The price of long distance passenger rail tickets fell by 2.9 percent, air transport fares increased by 5.1 percent.

EBRD to Finance Ore-Processing Plant in Karaganda

By Michelle Witte

ASTANA – The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) will loan \$100 million to finance the construction of a new plant for processing copper and gold ore in a remote region of Karaganda, the bank announced on March 31.

The loan will go to the Altai Polimetally and Terekty Ken Baity companies, which are developing the Koktaszhal copper and gold deposit in Karaganda, an EBRD press release said. It is to be used to develop the Koktaszhal mine and build a plant to produce copper-gold concentrate, the press release said, including funding the purchase of efficient milling and processing equipment and conveyor belts. The EBRD website says

the new plant is to have an annual capacity of 4 million tonnes.

"The new conveyors and other technologies used in the plant will eliminate the need for conventional diesel-fired heavy machinery and trucks. The new plant and modern equipment will also help the operators substantially reduce dusting and emissions, and water use will be halved compared with projects using conventional machinery," said the EBRD press release.

According to EBRD Director for Energy and Natural Resources in Russia and Central Asia Aida Sitdikova, the loan will support the development of the deposit at new standards of resource and energy efficiency, plus support investment in the region, create jobs and boost the local economy.

Ruslan Yun, chairman of Altai Polimetally, said, "We appreciate

the bank's support in developing this state-of-the-art mining project. Based on our experience studying numerous copper-gold mines around the world, we are using the best equipment and techniques to make Koktaszhal a showcase for the world mining community in terms of efficiency as well as environmental and health and safety standards, which will contribute to minimising emissions and dust and substantially reducing water consumption. From a social perspective, we are supporting the local community. To attract the best mining engineers and their families to work and live in the project's region we are building a modern village with all necessary infrastructure, including an Olympic-size swimming pool, sports centre, park and market place," according to the press release.

TCO Plans to Press Ahead with Expansion at Tengiz Despite Low Oil Prices

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – The twofold drop in oil prices on the world market didn't change the investment strategy of Tengizchevroil. The company, a joint venture between Chevron (50%), ExxonMobil (25%), KazMunaiGas (20%) and LUKOil (5%), is developing another major expansion at its Tengiz field in the Atyrau region which, when completed, will increase oil production from the current 24 million tonnes to 36 million tonnes per year.

The third-generation plant, part of the so-called Future Growth Project, will be among the most-technologically advanced in the world. Despite financial difficulties faced by oil companies due to lower oil prices, Tengizchevroil

made the decision to continue to progress in critical areas, including infrastructure, camps and site preparation activities already underway at Tengiz, said its supply chain manager Jerry Jacobson.

Tengizchevroil has already concluded 30 contracts for construction work and supply of the necessary equipment to the amount of \$1 billion. Sixty-six percent of this amount is local Kazakh content, he added.

Preliminary design has been completed, but detailed design work will be made in Atyrau, Almaty, Aktau, the U.K. and the U.S. Project infrastructure works are in process and construction is expected to be finished in 2019, as quoted by the [teeconstruction.com](http://www.teeconstruction.com) website.

"To date, early and preliminary

work on construction sites is being conducted at the deposit; that is the construction of the new camp and building infrastructure for future facilities for the project," said Murat Munbayev, Tengizchevroil head of strategic planning.

First Vice-Minister of Energy Uzakbai Karabalin spoke about the threefold increase of resource base in the stateat the March 12 Kazakhstan geology, oil and gas forum. The forecast is based on the results of a full-scale study of 15 sedimentary basins in the country. The review, pursued in recent years, showed that deep-lying resources of the Caspian Sea trench are estimated to contain 67 billion tonnes of coal equivalent and 27 billion tonnes of oil equivalent, according to the [EnergyNews](http://www.EnergyNews.com) website.

Rail-Air Connection Can Bring Goods from China to Europe Quickly

By Irina Bektiyarova

In December 2014, the KTZ Express joint stock company implemented the Rail-Air project to transport goods from China to Europe quickly. In an interview with this newspaper, President of KTZ Express Sanzhar Yelubayev discussed the results of the project.

Do you think that this project is a landmark for multimodal companies, such as KTZ Express?

Certainly, Rail-Air is a unique decision on cargo transportation. This is the first multimodal transportation pilot project [to bring goods] from China by railway to Almaty airport and then by air to Europe. Jointly with our logistics partners, we implemented a successful transfer of electronic equipment from China to Europe, a distance of 9,900 kilometres, in just seven days!

Previously, air and road transport were used to implement such schemes. There are also ocean-air connections; for example, when goods are sent to Dubai by sea and then to Frankfurt by plane.

For the first time, we found a solution using a regular container route from Chongqing to Duisburg as a component. The pilot project is carried out in a single customs-transit regime, which was approved by the airport, the Customs Committee and our company. This is necessary in order to avoid customs clearance operations while taking the rail cars with cargo to the airport.

The operation started in Chongqing, where one special 45-foot



Sanzhar Yelubayev

container maintaining a certain temperature was connected to the train. At the Dostyk border station, the railcar was disconnected and sent to Almaty. There it was unloaded at the temporary storage warehouse and afterward sent by cargo flights to Amsterdam.

In terms of transit time, the potential of this pilot project is six days, which is a good indicator. For example, air delivery would have cost about \$50,000; rail transportation takes 14 days and costs \$10,000. Rail-Air costs about \$30,000.

Of course, the cargo could reach the destination by air in one day. But it would have cost more. In our case, the difference between one day and six days was not so critical for the shipping company, when compared with 30 days if the goods were sent by the ocean-air scheme.

Rail-Air includes reorientation and a good alternative to air trans-

portation in terms of reducing the price and introducing an important option for cargo that needs to quickly get to the market.

I believe this approach is the perfect solution for freighters who are interested in the prompt arrival of goods to the market. We are the first to work out such a scheme with the railway, customs, airport and airline. No doubt, it is quite troublesome in terms of documentation and technology development. The cargo is assembled in refrigerators in Chongqing. Our representative in Chongqing observes the process. At the Dostyk station we load the container, which is kept closed until it reaches the final consumer. This is one of the advantages of the scheme.

We managed to fully ensure the security and safety of cargo on the route. I think this trend has a great future.

You noted the profitability of the scheme for customers. Is there a loss of profit on railway transport turnover for KTZ Express?

In this case, goods are not diverted from rail transportation, but from air transportation. It is an alternative to air transportation. If we did not introduce this service, the cargo would pass straight by plane from Chongqing to Europe.

In winter, from October till summer, container trains from Chongqing to Duisburg do not run by rail. In the cold months, simple containers holding electronic equipment freeze while crossing the northern regions of Kazakhstan, Russia and some parts of Europe. Therefore,

Ministry of Finance Plans to Support Conscientious Entrepreneurialism

By Kseniya Voronina

In an effort to encourage conscientious entrepreneurs, the Kazakh Ministry of Finance will be developing the institute of authorised economic operators. The announcement was made during the recent briefing dedicated to interaction issues with Eurasian integration.

"We will continue working in support of conscientious entrepreneurs. We have already made the appropriate changes to the legislation so that the requirements for activities of the authorised operator became more rigorous and today we are going to conduct a major revision of the work that has been done. The approved operators will benefit from additional simplifications concerning traffic growth. In addition, such operators will qualify for international recognition in the framework of the programme of mutual recognition, which is now under development and carried out by the State Revenue Committee," said Deputy Chairman of the Finance Ministry Customs Control Committee Dina Mamasheva.

Moreover, in order to reduce customs regulation and operation terms, the committee is planning to develop and implement a simplified customs declaration procedure for investment firms this year and start providing services for investors on the single window principle. In addition, a green corridor for large local companies will be provided, as well as a mechanism of transcendent control, starting from the delivery of goods to sales within the country.

Speaking about the role of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), Kazakh Vice Minister of Finance Ardak Tengebayev stressed that one of the main goals of the union is the possibility to unite the capabilities of each country's economy in order to promote its economic modernisation and competitiveness. He also reported about results achieved in this field. "The first step made was the con-

vergence of the customs systems of our states by the introduction of the customs code of the Customs Union. To date, a draft of the customs code has been prepared. This document was developed with the direct participation of the business community and is currently under the state's approval. The draft includes 16 norms of existing international agreements," said Tengebayev.

Principles of taxation have not been changed; however, several innovations have been implemented since Jan. 1. In particular, one of the modifications is the possibility to postpone indirect tax payments in the case of goods imported from developing countries. This item is intended for large taxpayers who are included in the monitoring list.

"This will allow taxpayers to save their current assets, because terms for payment are extended up to six months. Also, since the beginning of this year there is the possibility to provide an application concerning import of goods and indirect tax payments only in electronic form, which is the basic document confirming the export/import of goods in the framework of bilateral trade. This simplifies the proof of the export/import process and speeds up the bureaucracy. However, the application can be also provided in paper form as per the taxpayer's desire," said Tengebayev.

He also explained that an advisory committee on tax policy and administration is operating to improve tax administration and deal with all issues related to mutual trade. If necessary, this body would prepare and submit changes to the existing international law.

"I want to note that the activities of the Ministry of Finance in the framework of improving tax and customs administration are aimed at simplifying business activities, as well as an expansion of the trade capacity of the country," said Tengebayev.

during this time, freighters traditionally switch to marine transport, or to air transport in urgent cases.

What measures have been taken by KTZ Express to transport goods that are temperature sensitive?

In order to accomplish cargo transportation year-round, we obtained a special type of rolling stock. These are specialised 45-foot refrigerated containers with climate control Unit-45 systems, which can operate in autonomous mode for up to 22 days. For any sub-zero temperatures in winter and above zero temperatures in summer, we can maintain the temperature essential to our customer.

Since our pilot project was carried out in winter, refrigerated containers with expensive electronics sensitive to temperature conditions were kept at about plus 5 degrees.

By the way, at the moment, new combined trains with both refrigerated and universal containers are being formed. Laptops can be stored in the refrigerated containers, while less sensitive printers can travel in the universal ones.

Are there negotiations underway on using this method commercially?

At the moment, the pilot project is being evaluated. Then negotiations will be held with our freighters [and] major manufacturers of sensitive electronic equipment. In January and February we will work through all the issues relating to the volume of project technology.

It should be added that a similar product is being worked out with the provinces of Zhengzhou, Wuhan and Chengdu. Let me note that the monthly volume of the Rail-Air scheme is not very large – from five to 30 containers. However, in marginal commission it exceeds the forwarding of cargo by railway transportation by several times.

I emphasise that the multimodal scheme is one of our demonstration products. Of course, there are other logistics solutions. But the effectiveness of Rail-Air can be demonstrated by our results.

KTZ Express, an international multimodal transport and logistics company, was created in June 2013 within Kazakhstan Temir Zholy. The company oversees the international Aktau trade seaport, the Khorgos-Eastern Gate Special Economic Zone and 11 airports across Kazakhstan. It integrates rail, sea, air and road transport, port and airport infrastructure and a network of terminals and logistics centres. KTZ Express is directly involved in the development of container transport through Kazakhstan. By the end of 2014, the company had transported more than 2 million tonnes of cargo. As a whole, over the past year, the company's gross income comprised 10.9 billion tenge (US\$58.69 million); income of operational activities reached 1.1 billion tenge (US\$5.9 million).

EDITORIAL & OPINIONS

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 8, 2015

Agreements with Iran Show Engagement, Not Exclusion; Give Chance for Development

The news last week from Switzerland of a political framework agreement reached at the talks over Iran's nuclear programme is a major step forward. No one should underestimate the complexity of the problems still on the table or the difficulties which will have to be overcome to reach a final agreement by the summer deadline. All sides will need to compromise and show trust. But the willingness to keep talking in good faith and go to major compromises gives us all hope that a major source of tension and potential conflict can be removed from the international stage.

Although Kazakh diplomacy is not a direct participant in the talks, Astana, of course, has had both a major stake and interest in their success. As a country which has warm relations with all the P5+1 participants and Iran, President Nursultan Nazarbayev offered Almaty as a venue for the discussions two years ago. The two rounds of talks held in the city did not deliver the hoped-for breakthrough but they did create an important momentum and Kazakhstan earned the gratitude of all parties for hosting the negotiations and keeping everyone at the table.

There was no surprise, of course, that Kazakhstan should be so determined to do all it could to help ease international tensions and advance the cause of nuclear security, and, ultimately, a nuclear weapons-free world. Working for peace through multi-lateral dialogue and an awareness of the terrible threat of nuclear weapons have defined this country's international relations since our earliest days as an independent nation.

The first major decision Kazakhstan took – even before we had formally become independent – was to close the Semipalatinsk nuclear test site. This was closely followed by the voluntary renunciation of the world's fourth biggest nuclear arsenal. Kazakhstan's work with both Russia and the United States to ensure both goals were achieved safely remains a model of international co-operation.

Over the last 23 years, our country has continued to take the lead in trying to reduce the threat of nuclear weapons, and have championed the end of nuclear testing. The establishment of Central Asia as a nuclear weapons-free zone in 2006 has since been supported by all the permanent members of the Security Council, an important step towards the formal establishment of the zone under international law. The ATOM Project, another initiative coming out of Kazakhstan, continues to raise awareness internationally of the terrible risks the world is running in keeping open the possibility for nuclear weapons testing.

These steps, along with the lasting human and environmental damage from the hundreds of nuclear explosions within our borders, has given Kazakhstan the moral authority to speak out on the threat these weapons pose to humanity and planet. They have also provided a real example of a country which has not lost global influence or international stature by the bold decisions we have taken. The evidence shows, in contrast, that our position in the world has been strengthened because we have turned our back on nuclear weapons.

But while Kazakhstan has taken every opportunity to demand the end to nuclear testing, to oppose nuclear proliferation and to work for a world free of nuclear weapons, our country absolutely recognises the right of countries to have their own civilian nuclear programme. As economies move towards a carbon-free future, it seems certain that nuclear power, which is both safe and clean, will play an important part in the energy mix of many countries. It is how to strike the right balance between these two goals which is at the heart of the negotiations between Iran and the international community.

According to government sources, Astana and the International Atomic Energy Agency work to set up a bank of low-enriched uranium fuel under the IAEA auspices, which is going to be an

important element of ensuring the security of the nuclear fuel cycle internationally. Astana's offer to host the international fuel bank received a warm response from the IAEA and negotiations are said to be on the right track although it seems that there is some way to go on agreeing technical details. As the world's largest producer of natural uranium with its own established processing industry, Kazakhstan's experience of nuclear security and leading role in the international community make it a proper candidate.

The importance of an agreement between Iran and the international community on its nuclear programme goes wider than the issue itself, vital as that is to peace and stability. A reduction in tension and an increase in trust are also key to finding solutions to many other problems.

Iran is a major regional power. Progress on a wide range of issues will not be possible without its full involvement. We are already seeing in the crucial battle against violent extremists in Iraq what can be achieved through better co-operation. Iran also contributes to regional stability by playing an observer role in the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, as well as working with Kazakhstan and other littoral states to produce a solution acceptable to all on the Caspian Sea delimitation.

The continuing tensions and instability in the Middle East are a major risk to the entire region and wider world. The international community needs to find mechanisms to bring countries together rather than isolate them. It is significant in this regard that the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building in Asia (CICA), initiated by President Nazarbayev, remains one of the few regional organisations to number both Israel and Iran as members.

Nor does Astana believe that economic sanctions are the best way to bring about change. They are a blunt instrument which, as our country knows to its cost, can have a damaging impact well beyond the borders of the supposed target. Iran is an important part of the wider regional economy and the effects of sanctions are felt not just by its leadership but the population as a whole and by surrounding countries. But freed from these shackles, its large population and developed economy can help drive growth and prosperity across the Middle East and Central Asia.

Iran is, as a close neighbour of Kazakhstan, an increasingly important trade partner. President Hassan Rouhani's successful visit to Kazakhstan in September 2014 and the visit of Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif this month are signs of the determination of both countries to increase co-operation with infrastructure, agriculture and tourism among those areas singled out for new partnerships.

Iran is already, for example, Kazakhstan's largest market for grain with exports of wheat and barley increasing three-fold last year alone. The rapid growth in agricultural exports products has already been helped by the new Kazakhstan – Turkmenistan – Iran railway, which was finally completed in December. The new line is expected to boost rail traffic between the three countries from three million to ten million tonnes a year – a figure forecast to double again by 2020.

But the benefits of a new rail route linking Central Asia and beyond to the Persian Gulf will go much further than the immediate three countries. Opening the final stage of the railway between Uzen and Gorgan in Iran, President Nazarbayev hailed the creation of a new Silk Road, which would boost the entire regional economy and give a boost to jobs and prosperity.

Kazakhstan and Iran must continue, as close neighbours and good friends, building trade links. But a lasting solution to the problems surrounding Iran's nuclear programme would see the country again fully integrated into the regional and global economy. Coupled with the removal of a flashpoint which had the potential to threaten wider peace and stability, this is the prize now within our grasp.

Kazakhstan's Unique History Informs Global Anti-Nuclear-Weapons Stance

By Nurtas Zhanibekov

The current international geopolitical stage and the global economic situation are in the midst of complex times. This period is especially difficult because of the new political and military conflicts around the world. Nonetheless, we should admit that it could be much more dangerous and threatening to global security if the growth of nuclear programmes did not stop in the last century.

This year, the world is celebrating a very important date: the 45th anniversary of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, commonly known as the Nonproliferation Treaty or NPT. The treaty entered into force on March 5, 1970. Today, more than 190 states have ratified the historic document. The NPT is important because its mission includes preventing the spread of nuclear weapons and weapons technology, promoting cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and achieving nuclear disarmament and general and complete disarmament, according to official UN information.

However, there is much more to nuclear disarmament than the NPT. The world today knows how terrible and scary the consequences of nuclear testing can be. Each nuclear test left an unhealed scar on our planet. One of the biggest such scars is in fact in Kazakhstan: the Semipalatinsk Test Site or the STS. It was the primary testing venue for the Soviet Union's nuclear programme and is located on the country's northeastern steppes, not far from the Irtysh River and numerous settlements.

According to official information, the Soviet Union conducted 456 explosions between 1949 and the cessation of atomic testing in 1989. The country's 456 explosions included 340 underground blasts (borehole and tunnel) and 116 atmospheric (either airdrop or tower administered) explosions. The Soviet leadership had little concern for the testing's impact on the local people and environment. The total damage of these explosions was more than that of 2,500 of the bombs dropped on Hiroshima. This information and other data about the full impact of radiation exposure and nuclear explosions came out only after the closing of the test site in 1991.

The closing of the test site in Semipalatinsk was an extremely important event not only for Kazakhstan, but also for all of



Central Asia and the anti-nuclear movement around the globe. The first President of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev and the Kazakhstan anti-nuclear movement Nevada-Semipalatinsk, which was formed in 1989, did the most to get the STS closed. This movement was one of the first and biggest major anti-nuclear movements in history. One of the leaders of this movement was Olzhas Suleimenov, who was also a member of Parliament at that time.

Kazakhstan's sad tale and the radioactive after-effects, which directly impacted the health of about 200,000 local residents at any given time, showed the world the true danger of nuclear testing. Nazarbayev's positive role in promoting global understanding of the necessity to fight nuclear threats manifests itself in his decision to decline nuclear power status on his country's behalf. Due to the political will of the President, the country voluntarily renounced the world's fourth largest nuclear arsenal, which it inherited from the Soviet military machine. According to Nazarbayev, the arsenal consisted of more than 110 ballistic missiles with 1,200 nuclear warheads able to reach any point on Earth.

This decision was historically important and rightly guided. It is also very important because Kazakhstan is the second largest possessor of natural uranium reserves in the world and ranks first in its production. In a speech, the President mentioned that the closure of the Semipalatinsk test site opened a new stage of global nuclear non-

proliferation and disarmament. Later, in September 2006, in cooperation with the United States and Russia, Kazakhstan, together with other nations, signed the Semipalatinsk Treaty, which declared Central Asia a nuclear-weapons-free zone.

The world today should not underestimate how real and dangerous the nuclear threat is. Another initiative of Kazakhstan's President in promoting the anti-nuclear-weapons movement around the world was the launch of The ATOM Project (which stands for "Abolish Testing. Our Mission") at a parliamentary assembly in Astana on the UN's International Day against Nuclear Tests in 2012, a commemoration that takes place every Aug. 29. Through such projects, people are able to support the anti-nuclear-weapons movement. In addition, they can help build global support for a permanent end to nuclear weapons testing and even secure the total abolition of nuclear weapons through peaceful methods.

Today, people from all over the world have another chance to support the anti-nuclear movement by participating in the Global Wave 2015 on April 26–27. This event will unite young people, activists, celebrities, stars, political and religious leaders and other active representatives of prominent global society. One of the most important ideas in the anti-nuclear-

People have another chance to support the anti-nuclear movement by participating in the Global Wave 2015 on April 26-27.

weapons movement is defending and promoting the idea of a nuclear-weapons-free world. A nuclear-weapons-free world is a common goal for which all countries in the world should strive. Kazakhstan's story shows the world that nuclear, or any type of military power is not a strong pawn in foreign policy. Today, we understand the true meaning of the words of President Nazarbayev, that only by acting together, we can make our world a safer and better place.

The author is a senior research fellow at the Analytical Complex of the Library of the President of Kazakhstan.



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Roman Vassilenko
Editor-in-Chief
The Astana Times

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WEDNESDAY, APRIL 8, 2015

A Tribute to Nurlan Kapparov

By Stephen Tull

I am moved this week to write this open letter of tribute to an exceptional Kazakhstan civil servant, Nurlan Kapparov. The news of his untimely death last week shocked me as well as other expats who had been privileged to work with Mr. Kapparov. I am certain that many in the diplomatic and business community share the sense of loss and mourning felt most deeply by his family and long-time friends.

I came to know Nurlan as the Minister of the Environment and Water Resources, and admired two things most about his professional-



Stephen Tull

ism. First, Minister Kapparov held a progressive and ambitious vision of "the possible" and was evidently driven to do the right things. Second, he was a skilled pragmatist and he pursued objectives with sound judgment, tact, and respect for the views of others.

Minister Kapparov took on the job five months before the June 2012 Rio+20 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development. While the Kazakhstan leadership had by that time aligned the long-term national goals with sustainable development, there were open questions as to how to proceed. Minister Kapparov worked tirelessly within the Government



Nurlan Kapparov

to solidify Kazakhstan's commitment to green development, which was the key to positioning Kazakhstan in Rio as a regional leader ready to use its own modernization to the benefit of other nations – the Green Bridge. This resulted in the inclusion of Kazakhstan's Green Bridge initiative in the Rio+20 outcome document.

After that first success, Minister Kapparov led and facilitated deep research and planning for the national transformation to a green economy. This work supported the President's Strategy Kazakhstan 2050 as well as the winning application for EXPO 2017. Along the way, Minister Kapparov in-

troduced into the public discourse crucial issues concerning integrated water management, waste management, and climate change. In his later capacity as Chair of Kazatomprom, he continued to explore modernisation with the same verve and openness for which he will be remembered.

I will remember Nurlan Kapparov as a true professional and a gentleman. He took carefully considered risks, and he made a transformative impact on Kazakhstan's future.

The author is United Nations Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative in Kazakhstan.

Central Election Commission Focuses on Voters Rights, Says Commission Member

By Yulia Mager

The presidential campaign began in Kazakhstan on March 26. Tatyana Okhlopokova, a member of the Kazakhstan Central Election Commission, explained the rules that apply to candidates and their campaign staff in an interview with this newspaper.

Could you explain the general campaign rules and conditions?

Ensuring voter rights during campaign season is always taken very seriously; this is reflected both in legislative regulations and in the elections themselves. The Constitution and the Constitutional Law On Elections guarantee equality in election participation and the principle of true competition amongst citizens based on the diversity in candidate choices.

The manner in which the elections are to be prepared and executed were approved via a decree of the Central Election Commission on Feb. 26 that provides 30 days for election campaigning be-



Tatyana Okhlopokova

ginning on March 26 and ending at midnight on April 24. On Election Day and the preceding day, campaigning is prohibited.

Legislatively speaking, campaigning is defined as an activity that encourages voters to vote for or against any particular candidate.

The Constitutional Law On Elections sets the cornerstone of

the country's election campaigning policies concerning media statements, public events, such as gatherings, meetings with voters, debates and discussions, rallies, demonstrations and so on, as well as personal meetings between candidates and their agents with voters, the issuance and the distribution of print, audio-visual and other campaign materials.

I would like to emphasize that candidates and their agents should be aware that all printed campaign materials must contain information about the organisation that published the given materials, where they were printed and circulated and the people who placed their order and provided funding. In addition, all printed campaign materials must be manufactured in Kazakhstan.

What funds can candidates use to organise and conduct propaganda work?

The state guarantees equal funding to presidential candidates from the state budget for campaign purposes.

The Central Election Commission, in a March 25 decision, set the total amount that can be used for campaign activities at 7,010,000 tenge (US\$38,244) that can be put towards a 15-minute statement on television, a 10-minute radio statement, the printing of two articles no longer than 0.1 of a printed sheet, rent for a venue for voter meetings, the publication of printed campaign materials and transportation costs.

Candidates also have the opportunity to form an election fund. It may consist of the candidate's own funds. The total amount must be within 5,000 times of the minimum wage (no more than 106,820,000 tenge (US\$575,226)). Funds allocated to candidates nominated by national public associations may total no more than 149,548,000 tenge (US\$805,316) and voluntary donations from Kazakhstan citizens and organisations can total no more than 320,460,000 million tenge (US\$1,725,677). Thus, election funds can total no more than 576,828,000 million tenge (US\$3,106,219).

If the candidate is self-promoting, the size of his election fund is to be no larger than 427,280,000 tenge (US\$ 2,300,903).

The state also guarantees all citizens and public associations the right to an unhampered election campaign that does not require funding.

What other "taboos" relating to campaigning exist?

The Constitutional Law On Elections contains sufficient regulations defining what is prohibited.

Campaigning by providing voters with free or reduced price goods, services or securities is strictly prohibited. Lotteries, charitable doings and giving money, or the promise of such is also forbidden. Only printed materials and a variety of promotional products, such as flags, badges, cards, etc., specially produced for the election campaign, are authorised.

There is a ban on organising charity events and pre-election campaigning using images of a person without his or her written

permission or the written permission of their heirs.

Employees of national level state agencies, local governments and their officials while in the performance of official duties are forbidden from campaigning or distributing any campaign materials; members of the armed forces and other military units, national security officials, law enforcement officers and judges are prohibited from campaigning as well along with election commission member and religious associations. Foreigners, stateless persons, foreign legal entities and international organisations do not have the right to carry out activities that promote or hinder the election of any candidate.

Election workers can be held liable to varying degrees for violations.

The main goal of the campaign and all participants is to provide voters with complete and accurate information about presidential candidates and their agendas and to ensure maximum openness and transparency in the election process.

Kazakhstan Seeks Italian Business Involvement in Innovation Programme, Says Ambassador in Rome

By Gulbarshyn Sabayeva

Italy is one of Kazakhstan's main European trading partners and the third overall after the Russian Federation and China. Trade turnover between the two countries exceeded \$16 billion. Kazakh Ambassador in Italy Andrian Yelemessov explained how Italy and Kazakhstan cooperate in the spheres of economy, culture and education.

The first visit of Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev to Rome in September 1994 created the foundation of Kazakh-Italian relations. Since then, cooperation between these countries has been driven by a new impetus and Italy has subsequently become one of Kazakhstan's leading European partners. How do you assess the current stage of Kazakh-Italian relations?

Bilateral relations between Kazakhstan and Italy have a long history and cover many areas. Diplomatic relations were established in 1992. We successfully cooperate in all areas of politics, economy and culture. As the Kazakh Ambassador in Italy, I am particularly encouraged by the fact that our countries have no contradictions or disputes. Italy is a major investor in Kazakhstan – in the period from 2000 to 2013, the volume of Italian investments in Kazakhstan amounted to \$6.1 billion.

There are about 400 companies with Italian participation which are involved in virtually all areas of Kazakhstan's economy. For us, it is important that the Italian side also gives our country priority, seeing Kazakhstan as its main economic partner in Central Asia.



Andrian Yelemessov

This is evidenced by a significant intensification of contacts between the parties at the high level. In addition, Italian Prime Minister Matteo Renzi's visit to Kazakhstan in June 2014 gave the necessary impetus to bilateral trade and economic and investment cooperation, utilising the existing potential for increasing the volume of trade between the two countries.

I also want to note that in February, Rome held the seventh meeting of the Kazakh-Italian intergovernmental working group on industrial and economic cooperation and exchange, a good platform for the formation of the agenda of cooperation between the parties. The event was quite informative in identifying promising areas of cooperation. Today's discussion affects virtually all areas of bilateral cooperation.

In your opinion, what areas of bilateral cooperation in the economic sphere are promising?

First of all, our interest is to actively involve Italian business

in the implementation of the Kazakh programme of industrial-innovative development, as no doubt the latest Italian technology will be in demand in the Kazakh economy. Another high standard of economic development was set in last year's presidential state-of-the-nation address on Nurly Zhol, which set out ambitious economic goals for the coming years and will enable foreign, including Italian companies to take part in the realisation of these objectives. Support is provided at all levels to create good working conditions in the Kazakh market.

Good prospects for the development of economic cooperation include the fields of engineering, agriculture, the chemical industry and the development of alternative energy, where Italian businesses have a competitive advantage. Italy is a highly-industrialised country; as the third largest economy of the Euro zone, it has sufficient industry experience and is able to provide technology transfer and convey its know-how, which is necessary for the modernisation of Kazakh enterprises, creation of new production facilities and, as a consequence, increase the industrial potential of our country.

In addition to the importance of economic cooperation, partnership between Kazakhstan and Italy occupies a special place in terms of a cultural component. Could you elaborate on the development of relations in the cultural field?

In Italy, we see great interest in Kazakh culture and observe active work in this direction. Due to the assistance of the embassies of both countries, concerts and exhibi-

tions have frequently been held. In March 2013 we organised the Days of Culture of Kazakhstan in Italy with the screening of "Kazakhstan – the Sky of My Childhood." The programme was very intense and included the Days of Kazakh cinema and meetings with famous Kazakh actors and directors, a photo exhibition of modern Kazakhstan, an exhibition of craftsmanship and national costumes, presentations of books about Kazakh culture and way of life, concerts by a symphony orchestra and the National University of Arts orchestra of Kazakh folk instruments. Performances of Kazakhstan's orchestras were held in the best concert halls in Italy,

a living bridge between peoples, is not only common but also helps to know the inner world of our nations. We will try in the future to please our Italian friends with new and exciting projects.

Cooperation in the field of education plays a crucial role in bilateral relations. What are the most interesting areas of study for young Kazakhs who come to Italy?

The priority professions in the context of the general policy of our country, which is aimed at developing innovative technologies and industrial sectors, are the engineering profession and specialties relat-

ed to tax legislation is continuing to intensify. The Al-Farabi Kazakh National University is successfully cooperating with the University of Florence, Bologna University, University La Sapienza in Rome, Catania University, University of Padova and others. The cooperation agreement signed by the University of Trieste and the Polytechnic Institute in Karaganda provides for the exchange between students and teachers, as well as joint projects on energy conservation and new technologies. In May 2013, agreements on cooperation were signed between the Kazakh National Academy of Arts, T.K. Zhurgenov and the National Academy of Dramatic Arts of Silvio D'Amico and the Academy of Fine Arts in Florence to develop further cooperation in cultural, humanitarian and information fields.

At present, the question of signing agreements on cooperation between Kazakh and Italian universities such as the University of Perugia, University of Ca Foscari (Venice), University of Teramo, University of Genoa and the University of Pisa is being taken into consideration. In addition, this year the University of Pisa, the Polytechnic University of Milan and La Sapienza University of Rome were included in the list of leading foreign universities recommended for study in the framework of the 2015 Bolashak international scholarship. It is clear that there are strong ties between universities of the two countries; many students from Kazakhstan stay in Italy to continue their studies in the master's programme. Thus, national and political diplomacy go hand in hand.

Good prospects for the development of economic cooperation include the fields of engineering, agriculture, the chemical industry and the development of alternative energy.

such as Milan's Dal Verme, Teatro Verdi Florence, Turin Alfieri and the world-famous Roman scene auditorium.

The embassy maintains consistent and purposeful work on interaction with various Italian film festivals, cultural centers and foundations, including the Rome Film Festival Aziatikafilmmediale, Levante Interneshenel, Associazione Arte e Spettakolo, and others. Kazakhstan's leading opera singers improve their skills in La Scala. Cooperation at the inter-university level has been developing successfully.

I am convinced that through culture and art we can learn more about each other, because culture,

ed to the IT sector, with an area of nano- and biotechnologies. Medicine, ecology, chemical industry, architecture and design are also among the most popular subjects. And, of course, many talented guys from Kazakhstan travel to Italy to improve their arts knowledge in areas such as opera and stage skills.

Nowadays, the inter-university cooperation between Kazakhstan and Italy is developing successfully; for instance, within the framework of Tempus some of Kazakhstan's universities collaborate with the University of Milan Santa Cuore in the field of social work management. Collaboration between the University of Ferrara and KIMEP University in the field

EURASIA&WORLD

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 8, 2015

Kazakh FM Identifies Security, Connectivity and Diversification Among Key Components of EU Strategy for Region under Review

By Michelle Witte

ASTANA – Kazakh Foreign Minister Erlan Idrissov addressed the March 30 French-German regional meeting of ambassadors, thanking them for their work on revising the EU Strategy for Central Asia and stressing the need for increased effort – and funding – for economic growth and integration and even calling for a “Central Asian Marshall Plan” to support regional development.

Fostering growth and integration, “is a very challenging task; I’ll be very frank with you,” Idrissov told the French and German ambassadors and other diplomats from Central Asia, Afghanistan, China and Russia which gathered in the Kazakh capital for a meeting which was rather unusual in the choice of venue. “We have to be strategically patient with regard to this reality and find practical ways of bringing a new future for Central Asia,” he said. He went on to detail Kazakhstan’s steps toward development and its advice on the new EU strategy for the region.

Idrissov noted that the meeting’s main thread of discussion had been the growth and development of Central Asia. He also thanked participants for the ongoing work within the EU on elaborating a new EU strategy for Central Asia for 2015 and beyond. Kazakhstan had identified three priority areas: security issues, connectivity and economic diversification, he said. He also identified environmental and water management issues as well as institution building as key sectors.

Economic diversification would be crucial, Idrissov said. “The economies of this part of the world are very weak,” he said. Major effort and resources – human, financial and other – would be needed to ensure sustainable growth, particularly in countries that lack clear economic strategies. Kazakhstan would be happy to join hands with the EU to support the development in the region, Idrissov said. “A lot of effort should be given to make sure that they find their way to economic growth and development,” he added.

Kazakhstan has a bigger, stronger economy than some of its neighbours, the foreign minister noted. “We are not rejoicing about that



Kazakh Foreign Minister Erlan Idrissov addresses the March 30 French-German regional ambassadors' conference in Astana.

We believe that our strength lies in the strength of our neighbours, therefore we are trying to develop policies to support them,” he said.

Among environmental issues, water remains the bone of contention, Idrissov noted, and a new water culture is needed in the region to curb water waste he called “shocking.”

“I think the water initiative of the European Union is a useful tool,” but thoughts and policies must be translated into practical steps, he said. A new culture of treating water would be no less important than finding the right ways to distribute water and power throughout the region, and it must be developed along with policy solutions on water management, Idrissov counselled. Wasted water is a problem in every country in the region, he said.

Institution building would also be a key aspect of development, Idrissov said. Institutions are weak across the region, he added. “Therefore, institution building presents a very crucial aspect of policy with regard to this part of the world.”

What this comes back to is local capacity building, Idrissov said. “In fact, when we talk about all these aspects – security, economic development, diversification, connectivity – we have to talk about enabling these countries and enabling the actors within these countries to achieve those goals.” Without stakeholders and actors within target countries, nothing will happen, he said. “Building this capacity particularly on the grassroots level, building capacity through institutions, nurturing the middle class – this is the most important task.”

Economic development will fail without the development of viable private sectors, he noted, saying every country in Central Asia could have a stronger private sector, including Kazakhstan.

“We understand that capacity building is a huge exercise and we are trying to allocate resources and focus our attention on these aspects in Kazakhstan,” Idrissov said. He highlighted President Nursultan Nazarbayev’s recent articulation of five key reform areas to develop, and brought three to the forefront: the development of human capital, the rule of law, and gradual political growth and liberalisation.

Idrissov connected the rule of law with supporting the middle class. “The middle class are the ones who will be the stakeholders in successful development – economic, political – in today’s Kazakhstan and they will be the most motivated parts of society to make sure that these institutions and development is sustained. ... This fully applies to other Central Asian countries.”

Finally, Idrissov said, Kazakhstan does not shy away from conversations about democratic growth and liberalisation. “Our message is very simple. We are not going to be Jeffersonian democracies tomorrow or even the day after tomorrow.”

“The most important task is developing a new political culture in our society. ... We should not forget that we came out of a completely different political culture of the former Soviet Union,” Idrissov explained.

Expecting a quick change is “naive,” he said, when policy is important, but the change will be mostly generational. “All Central Asian countries are living through an important period of generation change, which creates lots of speculation in the West about succession and succession issues. Our answer to succession is very simple: reliance on better educated, more sophisticated and forward looking young generation.”

Kazakhstan is doing this through,

among other efforts, Nazarbayev University and the Bolashak Presidential Scholarship Programme, which sends students to study overseas. Kazakhstan pins its hopes on the young generation, he said, and in the meantime, continues to focus first on economic development, second on political development, as its society continues to evolve.

He also called upon Europe to invest in Kazakhstan and Central Asia. “I will tell you very openly that the expectation of Central Asian countries is that the strategy will bring resources,” Idrissov said. “All countries lack resources. A sort of Marshall Plan for Central Asia could be contemplated,” he said, referring to the American initiative, worth about \$160 billion in today’s dollars, to help Europe recover after World War II. “I dream of this type of approach, and of enhancing the policy document with serious resources – well structured, well articulated and well delivered,” the Kazakh foreign minister said explaining that these are largely “pragmatic” expectations from other countries in the region.

The new strategy should take into account country-specific needs of Central Asian nations and consider offering “something practical” to make their participation in regional integration processes seem worthwhile.

The 2007 strategy viewed Central Asia too much as one whole. “Country-specific knowledge and education will help produce better regional projects and better regional approaches – this is how we see it and we hope this message will be heard,” Idrissov said.

Idrissov also called for projects on a grander scale. “The second strategy should be a new step in terms of target-orientation. It is better to focus on bigger projects rather than scatter resources and efforts through many small projects,” he said.

Concluding, the foreign minister noted that Kazakhstan was in the midst of a shift from one group of countries to another, from an aid recipient to a donor nation, with its new KazAID official development assistance programme. “We hope we can find synergy between our own programme with external supporters like the EU and with bilateral donors like your countries. ... We see the merits of this type of combined approach.”

EU Planning New Roadmap for Central Asian Strategy

By Malika Orazgaliyeva

ASTANA – The European Union is working on adapting its 2007 strategy for Central Asia with a greater emphasis on different approaches to relations with individual countries, a top European diplomat said.

Toivo Klaar, head of the Central Asian Division of the European External Action Service (EEAS), spoke with The Astana Times following a March 27 meeting with Kazakh Deputy Foreign Minister Alexey Volkov. EEAS is the foreign service of the European Union (EU) and the session was held in the framework of the trade, investment, energy, environment and transport sub-committee of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) between the EU and Kazakhstan.

While Klaar noted the existing EU strategy for Central Asia is “a solid foundation,” he said plans, pushed forward by the Latvian EU presidency, are underway to adopt a new road map for its implementation and focus in specific areas. EEAS will prepare the draft of the document and present it to the member states, whose representatives will discuss and possibly modify certain points. The EU Council of Ministers is expected to adopt the revised document “in late spring or early summer,” he said.

Initiated by Germany and adopted in 2007, the strategy is reviewed every two years, Klaar said noting the current revision is a subsequent modification. Each review highlights certain aspects which are considered based on the context of the present geopolitical and economic situation and state of the EEAS relations with the individual countries.

“The Strategy of 2007 was more oriented on the Central Asian region [generally],” Klaar, who has been with the EEAS five years, including three months in the current position, said. “In the final edition of this review, we put greater stress on the individual approach to each country, considering different needs.”

While the EU strategy for Central Asia covers relations with the five traditional states of the region, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, Klaar added that the developments in neighbouring Afghanistan would have an important effect on bordering countries, as well as the entire region. He noted when talk centres

on security, it is important to include Afghanistan in the discussion, which was in fact the case during a recent session of the so-called High-Level Security Dialogue between the EU and Central Asia in Dushanbe, Tajikistan.

The revised strategy is expected to cover issues such as security, energy connections, the environment and water resources usage in the region. Building relationships between the EU and Central Asia will also be addressed.

Turning to relations between the European Union and Kazakhstan, Klaar explained that a major effort is underway to translate the draft of a new enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement into the 22 official languages of the EU. The parties announced the conclusion of negotiations on the new agreement during President Nursultan Nazarbayev’s visit to Brussels in October 2014, and in January 2015 the document was initiated in Astana, paving the way for its eventual signature.

“I would hope that we can sign it quickly. We have multiple institutions and languages to translate and all of that requires coordination,” said Klaar. “I hope by the end of the year it will be signed.”

Ratification by the national parliaments can be a lengthy process, as the EU has 28 member countries, Klaar said adding that in some countries regional parliaments will also have to ratify the document. As a result, some provisions of the agreement, which covers 29 areas of cooperation, may come into force before the ratification, the European diplomat explained adding this was a normal practice.

He recalled a similar situation with the Association Agreement which was signed by his native Estonia with the EU in mid-1990s and which was partially implemented before many years have passed prior to its full ratification by all parliaments.

Taken as a whole, the European Union is Kazakhstan’s largest trading partner, accounting for roughly 40 percent of its annual foreign trade of \$100 billion. The EU is also the largest foreign investor in Kazakhstan with more than \$50 billion invested already. The negotiations on the new enhanced PCA began in 2011 following the expiration of the previous agreement that went into effect in 1999.

Czech Ambassador Seeks to Share Kazakh Culture with her Countrymen

By Michelle Witte

ASTANA – Czech Ambassador Eliška Žigová is in Kazakhstan to help bring this country and hers together – or, more specifically, to bring Czechs of all kinds to the steppe.

The job can be a bit one-sided sometimes, she said in an April 2 interview with The Astana Times. As she discovered when she arrived, Kazakhs often know quite a lot about the Czech Republic – from its beer, which is much appreciated in this part of the world, to its spas and famous crystal work. “But from our side, people know almost nothing,” she admitted. “So it would be nice to inform them, to bring more tourists.”

Czechs would be very interested in Kazakhstan’s natural beauty, she said, especially if there were tour packages on offer. “Czechs are hikers, they like to go to the mountains, to see something new, but they don’t know about this place,” Žigová said.

The ambassador herself is a hiker, and makes a point of talking to the people she meets in small steppe towns and on train journeys. This is one of the perks of this mission, she notes: the ability



Eliška Žigová

to communicate in Russian, and how relaxed conversation with local people is.

“I feel very free to speak to anybody,” she said. This was not as easy in some of her previous missions, in the Middle East, for example. Here, Žigová says, people are open; she feels safe and she has an opportunity to learn directly from Kazakhstan’s people how they feel about their country and their government – which, she notes, is not exactly the same as the broad black and white strokes seen in what is written about the country.

“I feel very good here,” Žigová said. “I’m free, it’s interesting, it makes sense for a Czech diplomat to be here.”

Part of why it makes sense to be here now is the 2012 visit by Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev and the concurrent Kazakh-Czech business forum that led to the signing of some \$250 million worth of agreements and joint ventures. Interest in investing in Kazakhstan has been growing, and in 2013, sales between the two countries just exceeded \$1 billion, this newspaper reported in November.

“Now, a lot of business ... is turning from Russia to Central Asia,” Žigová said. “And if you say Central Asia, you see Kazakhstan. We also see some potential in Kyrgyzstan, but [it’s mainly] Kazakhstan.”

The ambassador was surprised at the intensity of the interest before she arrived. When a new ambassador is appointed, she said, a meeting is usually arranged with interested businessmen and other parties. “And you know, it was a full room – people were standing in line to introduce themselves. And I realised that they are willing – some had never been to Kazakhstan –

to come, to try to start to make businesses here.”

She hopes to encourage them to come and to stay. “[President Nursultan] Nazarbayev told us very clearly: ‘We need you here; we need joint ventures.’ Because they also want the know-how,” Žigová said. “They want to be more connected to Europe.” Trade policy in Kazakhstan is like foreign policy, she observed – it looks to all sides. “[A]nd Europe is coming,” she said. “But it takes time. And the point of stability is very important for business.”

Žigová’s mission began shortly before the visit by Czech President Miloš Zeman in November 2014, which was both an exciting and an exhausting way to start her work here, she confessed. The visit “was kind of a kick-start for our cooperation,” she said. They followed up with a round-table meeting with Kazakhstan’s ministries, as well as interested business parties, where they talked about how to maintain this momentum.

The key areas of cooperation in focus today are infrastructure development and transit infrastructure – which the ambassador notes dovetail nicely with the Nurly Zhol economic programme – as well as food processing, producing

pharmaceutical and health equipment, and medical research. Czech companies are already active here in food processing and building roads, and deals are on the table on health cooperation, the ambassador reported. Civil aviation is another area the Czech Republic is hoping to break into – building both light aircraft and airports for Kazakhstan’s domestic market. “These are the main areas in which we can cooperate and in which we can compete with bigger countries,” she said.

Because there is competition in Kazakhstan these days. “Now is the time,” she said. “Central Asia is opening, and there is big competition!” However, here, it must be remembered that trade relationships follow the political bilateral connection, she commented. “I want to push my people to come,” the ambassador noted. “[T]o trade with Kazakhstan, you need very good bilateral relations on an official level. ... It’s very important.” She’s hoping for high-level visits this year in both directions, and would like to arrange more working consultations on a variety of levels.

Person-to-person contacts in general are important to the ambassador. There are some 1,500

students from Kazakhstan studying in the Czech Republic now, Žigová said, and the embassy waiting room is full of people seeking visas every day. “I feel happy when I see so many people asking for visas,” she said.

But though they try their best, not everyone can be granted a visa, she admits – a situation she hopes to see change soon. And while not every Kazakh student in the Czech Republic will come home with an advanced degree, they will come back speaking some Czech and with a new connection to the country, she said. For that reason, Žigová is hoping to increase and formalise education exchanges – to encourage more students to study in the Czech Republic in English and to get Kazakhstan to more formally promote education in her country. “We would like to ... make some kind of agreement, to have more control from the Kazakh side, to come with people who are able to study. ... to have more of an education pipeline,” the ambassador said.

Kazakh people seem to like Czech people and the Czech Republic, Žigová has noticed over time here. She can’t put a finger on why, but she appreciates it. “It is very interesting that these two countries, even though they are so far apart and different historically and in point of view ... how close they are, with this Soviet experience and, perhaps, with being small countries between big neighbours and learning how to survive.”

Nation & Capital

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CULTURE

Kazakhfilm to Release Historical Drama Beginning with Formation of Kazakh Khanate

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SOCIETY

Kazakh Delegation to World Bicycle Forum Discovers Cycling Cities in Colombia

B5

SPORTS

Women's Ice Hockey Team Beats Britain, Is Promoted to Division I

B7

Kazakh Figure Skater Ten Takes Bronze at Shanghai World Championships



Denis Ten performs in Shanghai.

By Dmitry Lee

Kazakh bronze medalist at the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi Denis Ten 10 also took bronze at the March 23-29 World Championships in Shanghai, China.

Despite a fall and a technical failure with the music during Ten's short programme, he managed to

come back and win the free skating programme to recapture his third-place position.

"I was shocked by my performance during the short programme because I was very well prepared. Of course, I wasn't in the same shape as when I was in South Korea, but I managed to maintain a high level of [my] condition. When

I fell, and this incident with the music, I was disappointed but not because I fell or because of the music, because I couldn't get over myself and this little incident sidetracked me and I lost focus. But life went on and I knew the free skating programme was ahead and I was glad that I won it," he told vesti.kz in an interview after the event.

Ten also thanked his fans for their support and shared his plans for the future.

"My goal is to radically progress further. I want to skate in South Korea in 2018 [the next winter Olympic Games]. And I need to reach the peak [of my career] by that time, to be ready and feel myself absolutely sure. After the [past] Olympic season it's absolutely important for me to be prepared to work towards my paramount goal," he said.

Ten, 21, is the Almaty 2022 Winter Olympics bid ambassador and has been campaigning for the success of his home city's bid.

Spaniard Javier Fernández won gold with the total score of 273.90, finishing the short and free programmes in second with 92.74 in the short and 181.16 in the free programmes. Japanese skater Yuzuru Hanyu scored 271.08 to take silver overall. Hanyu won the short programme with a 95.20 score and finished the free programme third with 175.88 points. Ten scored a total of 267.72 points; 85.89 in the short programme to claim the third spot and 181.83 points to win the free programme.

Reproductive, Sexual Healthcare Increasingly Comprehensive

By Michelle Witte

ASTANA – As a Central Asian country with a Muslim majority and a name ending in 'stan,' Kazakhstan might not be expected, by Western observers, to be a place where women are promised access to a spectrum of mostly-publicly funded reproductive options, including a variety of birth control options, abortion, and vaccines against the human papillomavirus (HPV) that are controversial in some parts of the U.S.

On paper, however, Kazakhstan indeed has a variety of public reproductive health options available. In response to questions from this newspaper, Kazakhstan's Ministry of Healthcare and Social Development explained some of the country's laws and practices regarding health care.

A Dec. 15, 2009, decree established a list of healthcare services that are guaranteed, free of charge, to citizens of Kazakhstan. For women, the ministry said, these

services include gynaecological exams, abortions and intrauterine devices, which are accessed at perinatal centres, maternity hospitals and gynaecological departments of hospitals. Birth control, however – including condoms and contraceptive pills – must be paid for. It is available in the country's pharmacy network, which has barrier methods, hormonal methods, spermicides and more, the ministry reported. Costs generally range from 1,100 tenge to 2,500 tenge per package of pills (US\$5.92 – \$13.47), which was confirmed by Kazakh women interviewed for this article.

When it comes to abortion, Kazakhstan exists within two strong but separate traditions. Throughout most of the 20th century, abortion was the principal method of birth control in the former Soviet Union, according to many sources. After independence, contraceptive methods began steadily replacing abortion, and abortion rates are declining.

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Pottery Maker Speaks of Passion for Art and Country

By Yelden Sarybay

The Kulanshi Modern Art Centre conducted master classes in pottery making and jewellery design on March 25 during the Nauryz holidays. The free classes attracted more than 140 people.

Yerbolat Karabdal, the master behind the potter's wheel who showcased the basics of his art to young children and working professionals, gave an interview to The Astana Times.

Please tell us about yourself. Where do you work?

How long have you been making art?

I was born in a creative family. My mother and father taught me the secrets of clay since I was a little child. While the kids in the neighbourhood grew up in kindergartens, I was raised in my father's studio.

An interesting thing is that my toys at the time were all handmade. Now that I think about it, that was the beginning of my journey. As I grew up, so did my creative abilities, and my parents wanted me to become a painter-designer. I, too, wanted to fol-

low in my father's footsteps.

When I was fully grown, I decided that I needed to study the field of law, something that the country needs. Today, I work in the General Attorney's office, working in two fields at once.

What was the purpose of the master class?

The event took place in the Palace of Peace and Harmony during the holidays. The Kulanshi Modern Art Centre is located there and its director is the master painter Leyla Mahat.

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A visitor admires Yerbolat Karabdal's jewellery.

Students Tour Capital's Green Industries

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – Students from the Vyacheslavskaya School recently visited the capital where they participated in two competitions dedicated to EXPO 2017, toured the Astana solar plant producing solar modules and were presented with the achievements of the state in environmental protection technologies and solar power engineering.

Astana Solar, which is planning to install an experimental three-kilowatt solar power station in the school, organised a guided tour of the plant and demonstrated a low-power solar station. The students were shown the solar module production process, a short film and presentation about the plant operation, according to Kazinform.

Nikita Chaus, an eighth grader in the ecological-economical school, considers the sun to be a unique source of energy. "I would like to install a KazPV 230 M60 solar module at my home," he said after the guided tour.

Mariya Potekhina, eighth grade mistress and biology teacher, is a project enthusiast. "The opportunity to introduce the children to

an operating plant such as Astana Solar and to show real achievements of the state in environmental protection technologies and solar power engineering is great assistance for us, teachers in education, and the development of scientific potential," she said.

The Vyacheslavskaya School, located approximately 60 kilometres southeast from Astana, implements environmental protection technologies not only for academic activity, but also in practice. Led by their teachers, the students initiated projects such as a solar water collector, energy-saving light fixtures in the school, solar dryer, underground greenhouse, drip irrigation system and solar hot house. This year they began operating a pyrolysis furnace to heat the school, saving 75 tonnes of coal and decreasing the carbon dioxide burst to the atmosphere. The students received grant financing for all of the projects, winning different academic, republican and international competitions.

School director Tatyana Netsman has a genuine interest in environmental protection technologies and attracts highly-qualified personnel to the school.

Bolashak Switches from One-Year to Six-Plus-Six Month Language Training System

By Dmitry Lee

The Centre for International Programmes (CIP) of the Ministry of Education and Science of Kazakhstan, administrator of Bolashak Presidential Scholarship, recently announced that they would be switching from the current 18-month language training system to 12-month programme to optimise the intensity of the language courses and save the country money.

"In 2015, the CIP is planning to implement the new initiative on language training in Kazakhstan within the framework of 6+6 [formula]. The new formula implies that the first six months of



Gani Nygymetov

language preparation will be taken in Kazakhstan and then they will start further training abroad," CIP President Gani Nygymetov told The Astana Times.

"Such a formula not only lets us save money for the budget, its main objective is the optimisation of the language courses' intensity. Scholars with a low level of English will get an opportunity to enhance it in a common environment. One of the outcomes we are expecting to receive is the growth of language teaching potential in Kazakhstan; [the] Bolashak language courses might be the basis for the future development of an international level school for studying foreign languages," he explained.

According to Nygymetov, CIP is planning to introduce another new project this year.

"[The] 6+6 formula is not the programme's only innovation. This

year, we are also starting the full implementation of the Split PhD project, which had been successfully tested last year in partnership with [the] Nazarbayev University. The Split PhD is a doctorate programme that makes it possible for students to conduct research in two partner universities – one in Kazakhstan and one abroad. Such mechanism lets Kazakhstan scientists develop their national research projects in the world's leading universities. This also serves as an instrument for the enhanced integration of Kazakhstan in international scientific society," he said.

The CIP president also stressed that the centre is preparing to celebrate its 10th anniversary this month.

Bolashak Recipients Discuss Life after Graduation

By Kuanysh Taishibekov

The Bolashak International Scholarship Programme is one of Kazakhstan's most successful educational initiatives. The programme sends some of Kazakhstan's best and brightest college students to study abroad at

the world's elite universities on the agreement that they return to Kazakhstan after graduation and work on behalf of the country for a period of time.

The programme is very popular among Kazakhstan's young people who send in applications year after year. So The Astana Times caught up with three Bolashak programme

graduates, Talgat Ramazanov, Daniyar Bakhtagaliyev and Nargis Saginova, to discuss life after the scholarship.

"My Dream Job"

"I am very happy and thankful to the Bolashak programme and our President that I had an opportunity

to fulfill myself as a professional in that very unique field of industry of naval architecture in the Republic of Kazakhstan, the country which is mostly situated inland," said Ramazanov, who received his Master of Science and Engineering from the University of Michigan, United States, class of 2013.

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THINGS TO WATCH & PLACES TO GO

ASTANA CENTRAL PARK

April 11, 12 at 2 p.m. Tai Chi and Qigong Open Sessions

DAIKON RESTAURANT

April 12 at 6:30 p.m. Comedy Stand Up Show

ASTANA MARRIOTT HOTEL

April 13 at 10 a.m. Open Day

ASTANA OPERA

April 18, 19 at 4:45 p.m. The Sleeping Beauty, Ballet

April 20 at 7 p.m. Abai Armony, Concert

KOBYZ SARAIY

April 22 at 7 p.m. Tunes of the Peoples of the World

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 8, 2015

Almaty Little League Reaches 20th Birthday

By Yelden Sarybay

Chingiz Bura, president of the Almaty Little League, gave an exclusive interview to The Astana Times. An Almaty native and entrepreneur, Bura is aiming to revitalise the baseball scene in Kazakhstan starting with the youngest athletes.

Tell us about the Almaty Little League.

Well, the history of the league in Almaty is really exciting. American companies and employees of the American Embassy who were trying to develop baseball in Kazakhstan among children and promote healthy lifestyle founded it in 1995.

I personally started to play baseball at the inception of the league. I was nine years old at the time and it became the best experience in my life and still is. Back then, baseball was an unfamiliar game for us but it was very fascinating and a friendly sport activity.

The best side of baseball is simply teambuilding. You realise that the whole team depends on the efforts of each player. The results reflect on every single player on the team. In my opinion, this game is good for people who strive to accomplish one goal. We went to the championships of Europe, Asia, Africa and Kutno, Poland and became bronze champions in Little League Baseball three times. I highly appreciate my coaches for the chance they gave us to become good people, inspired us to love the sport and to always be honest.

How developed is baseball in Kazakhstan?

When the league was established in 1995, baseball was a very popu-

lar game and its development was growing fast. However, for the past three years the popularity of the game is in decline. We are trying to take this game to a new level and achieve great heights.

You were recently elected president of the league. What are your plans for the organisation?

My one and only mission is making baseball one of the most popular games in Kazakhstan. If we can make everything based on charity and sponsorship, I want to give a chance to every single kid in our society to grow up a strong, honest and healthy person.

This year we will celebrate the twentieth anniversary of baseball in Kazakhstan and my goal is the revival of this game. I hope many people will join us and give support for the development of this sport in our country. My plan is to reconstitute this game in Almaty city like it was before, when we had a couple of stadiums and strong support. Unfortunately, today we only have one field, the Lavington Stadium at School No. 95.

Next year we plan to open up a baseball league in Astana, followed by other big cities such as Shymkent, Karagandy and many others to make this game popular and represent our country in the European Championship in Kutno, Poland where we are already registered. We believe our team can play in the World Series in Pennsylvania.

How many teams already participate in the league?

This year we are planning to build up 10 teams of 9-12 year olds. We are going to start a new generation of baseball players. So our goal is to train good, healthy and strong young people.

Pottery Maker Speaks of Passion for Art and Country

Continued from Page B1

During the holidays, the centre invites residents and guests in Astana to try their hand in arts and holds master classes. For this Nauryz festival, the centre decided to hold master classes in two disciplines at once. The main goal of the event was to give the members of our society who spend most of their time in front of the computer the opportunity to hold clay in their hands, feel its natural texture, let their minds feel freedom and create something beautiful. There were a lot of parents who brought their children to this free master class. What was meant to be a three-hour seminar lasted well into the evening. The event proved that the ancient art of pottery is still in demand in modern times.

Another reason was to show that Kulanshi holds regular classes in pottery making and other fields of art.

What does one need to make art?

To make art, the most important things are talent and goals. When I place the clay on a potter's wheel, I aim to create a different world. I try to add to the art of jar making, to develop it. I still remember when I made my first jug and created a piece I called "Otyrar and the Cosmos." It still stands in the collection of my father, Kendebei Karabdal's museum. The creation inspired me to make more other worlds. I learned that our forefathers used to make most everyday items out of clay and I wanted to learn the secrets of that technology. At first my planned ideas didn't turn out, but as I studied more I



Yerbolat Karabdal teaches students at Kulanshi Art Centre in Astana.

learned different techniques. Today, we know that ceramic vases have seven natural colours. Ceramics are mainly fired at 1,200 degrees Celsius. I noticed ceramic heating ovens waste a lot of fuel, so my next goal was to improve the quality of the product by using less fuel. Over time, I have come up with an enhanced method. I think there are still a lot of secrets in the making of pitchers. What I know is only one grain.

What would you like to add?

Human physiology benefits from the calcium contained in clay. I think the Ministry of Education and Science should teach the art of pottery in school during labour classes with clay instead of plastiline so that the pupils would get their calcium necessary for bone hardening by kneading it with their palms. What's more, they won't be able to lose the skills they learn. Clay can prevent

many children's psycho-physiological diseases. For example, the palm of one's hand has sensory connections to the eyes, ears, nose and other senses and working with this improve vision and hearing and the ability to think and create. Pottery making teaches people's hands to listen. It forms a sense of love for the country, which is important in a child's education. In addition, it is great to feel the earth one was born on.

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WEDNESDAY, APRIL 8, 2015

Hungarian National Ballet Stars Bring 3D Swan Lake to Astana Opera

By Julia Rutz

Two stars of the Hungarian National Ballet, Kazakh prima ballerina assoluta Aliya Tanykpaeva and principal dancer Zoltan Olah performed a new 3D production of Swan Lake at the Astana Opera Theatre. The magic of the classic Tchaikovsky masterpiece was resented April 1-2, according to the opera press service.

Both artists expressed great anticipation before the premiere and said it is an honour for them to perform on the opera stage together with the Kazakh ballet company.

"Swan Lake is one of our favorite classic performances. It is a fascinating tale that became a world-famous phenomenon," said the dancers.

There are more than a thousand interpretations of the classic work and this time ballet lovers will enjoy the staging created by Kazakh honoured artists Tursynbek Nurkaliyev and Galiya Buribayeva.

Italian designers Ezio Frigerio and Franca Squarciapino made astounding and colourful stage decorations and costumes.

An Oscar winner, Squarciapino presented garments with folklore motifs for every national group presented in the ball scene, such as Hungarians, Poles, Spaniards and Napoli people. The incorporated 3D technology enlivens the lake, making the audience feel like the water is striving to wash over the stage into the hall.

Tanykpaeva, a Kazakh honoured artist, graduated from the A.W. Seleznev Choreographic Institute and T. Zhurgenov Kazakh National Academy of Arts in Almaty. She held the position of prima ballerina in the Kazakh Academic Ensemble of Classical Dance (1999-2001), Imperial Russian Ballet (2001-2005), Vienna State Opera (2005-2009) and Zurich Opera House (2009-2011). Since 2012 the Kazakh dancer has worked in the Hungarian State Opera House. Tanykpaeva was the

2003 Grand Prix winner of the International Ballet Competition in Luxembourg and took third place the following year at the International Ballet Competition in Perm, Russia.

Olah graduated from the Hungarian National Academy of Dance in 2001, then improved his professional skills in Germany, Austria, Great Britain, Spain, the United States and Japan. Since 2001, Olah has been the soloist of the Hungarian State Opera. The dancer took second place at the Second National Ballet Competition in Pecs, Hungary in 1998 and third place the next year at the International Ballet Competition in Vienna. Among his numerous awards are the Nivó (2001), Tériné Horváth Margit (2001), Gyula Harangozó Prize (2006), Gundel Art Prize (2008), Junior Prima (2008), Hungarian Ballet and Modern Dance Award (2008), EuroPAS (2010) and The Best Dancer of the Year (2014).



Paris Hosts First Conference on International Decade of Rapprochement of Cultures

By Malika Orazgaliyeva

Paris hosted the first international conference March 24-25 dedicated to implementing the action plan of the International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures (IDRC) (2013 - 2022). The designation, adopted by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation's (UNESCO) Executive Board in April 2014, was subsequently approved by the UN General Assembly in December.

The conference was held in

UNESCO headquarters with the participation of leading experts, scientists and representatives of a number of UN specialised agencies. The results of the meetings will be included in the road map for building priorities to execute the IDRC action plan from 2015-2017.

As the lead agency of the UN system for the decade, UNESCO will be called upon to mobilise different individuals to set the basis for promoting mutual understanding conducive to the harmonious coexistence between peoples and countries.

The opening of the event included speeches by UNESCO Assistant Director-General for Social and Human Sciences Nada Al-Nashif and Kazakhstan's Ambassador and Permanent Representative to UNESCO Nurlan Danenov.

Al-Nashif underlined Kazakhstan's special role and support in promoting the global initiative. The official inauguration of the 10-year programme took place in August 2013 in Astana with the participation of UNESCO Director-General Irina Bokova and the High Representative of the UN Secretary General for the Alliance

of Civilisations Nassir Abdul Aziz Al-Nasser.

In his speech, Danenov informed participants about the measures being taken at the national level, as well as efforts by President Nursultan Nazarbayev aimed at maintaining intercultural and interreligious dialogue and an atmosphere of respect, tolerance and stability in Kazakhstan's society. He also drew attention to the forthcoming Fifth Congress of the Leaders of World and Traditional Religions, to be held June 10-11 and considered to be a practical contribution to implementing the IDRC action plan.

The conference emphasised that a key success factor of the IDRC is the direct participation of countries to implement various projects at the national, regional and international levels. President of the Culture Foundation and Kazakhstan's famous poet Olzhas Suleimenov presented "The Great Migrations of Peoples," the Kazakhstan-initiated project realised under the auspices of UNESCO.

The results of the 10-year undertaking may make an important contribution to the complex process of rapprochement of cultures and peoples in consideration of

peace and sustainable development.

The history of European migration and settlement was in the limelight at The Great Migrations: The Colonisation of Europe, the international conference held at Spain's University of Granada Dec. 11 through the initiative of Kazakh scholars. The event, organised by the Kazakh embassy in Madrid in cooperation with the university and UNESCO, brought together leading experts and scientists in the fields of migration, palaeontology and archaeology.

Kazakhfilm to Release Historical Drama Beginning with Formation of Kazakh Khanate

By Lyazzat Shatayeva

ALMATY – As Kazakhstan marks the 550th anniversary of the Kazakh Khanate, Kazakhfilm is preparing to start filming a new historical drama series titled "Kazakh Yeli."

"The project has been under development for quite a long time. There have been ongoing talks on the need to shoot this type of historical work. As we celebrate the 550th anniversary of the Kazakh Khanate, this idea has matured. The film series will be a chronicle of Kazakh history from 1465 when the Kazakh Khanate was founded," said Deputy Head of Kazakhfilm Arman Assenov during a press conference earlier in March.

Timur Zhaksylykov and Smagul Yelubai are the two scriptwriters who are currently crafting the series' complex characters, designing plot twists, fact-checking and ensuring that the future masterpiece is historically accurate. Yelubai, in his interview with Radio Zattyq, said that the script will be heavily based on the first book of Ilyas Esenberlin's famous trilogy titled "Nomads."

One of the film directors, Rustem Adbrashev, in an interview with KTK, promised that the series will be a highly artistic drama featuring realistic massive battle scenes, lavish costumes and compelling props. He also says that the series will be based on two basic story lines. The central idea of the first story line will be a struggle for power and dynastic conflict, depicted through the



Kazakhfilm gives press conference on preparations for filming "Kazakh Yeli" in Almaty on March 6. Photo credit: www.inform.kz

evolution of the khans and sultans. A parallel story line will be a narrative of akyns and zhyraus (singer-narrators), inspired by Asan Khaigy, a legendary poet and philosopher, who witnessed and described the major events that took place during the formation of the Kazakh Khanate.

The series will begin with the arrival of Kazakh nomads led by Zhanibek and Kerei in Moghulistan, in the Eastern Chagatai Khanate. The events will unfold in the middle of the XV Century in

Eurasia, where after the collapse of the Golden Horde, several independent khanates were formed. One of them, the White Horde (Ak Orda) occupied what is now Kazakhstan. However, after the death of Barak Khan in 1428, the White Horde Khanate split into Abilkhair Khan dominion and the Nogai Horde. Dissatisfied with the rigid policies of Abilkhair Khan, several nomadic tribes led by Sultans Zhanibek and Kerei migrated to Moghulistan, which is located between the rivers Shu and Talas

to later create an independent state called the Kazakh Khanate.

Ten installments of the series will be made in the Kazakh language. The Almaty region was selected as the main filming location. Filming begins in June, reported inform.kz. Currently, auditions are open to local actors and casting is under way. According to Assenov, all leading parts will be played by Kazakh actors.

The series is scheduled for release on Dec. 16, the Independence Day of Kazakhstan.

Kazakh Beauty Wins Grand Prix at Face of Central Asia Model Contest

By Alibek Baltabekov

Astana-based model Innara Yusupova of Astana's Ok-Models won Grand Prix during the March 17-20 Face of Central Asia model contest and is now preparing to represent Kazakhstan at the international Asia Model Awards festival in South Korea.

The contest took place in Kapshagai, Kazakhstan and gathered 42 young models from Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. The competition was held as the qualifying round before one of the most prestigious Asian model festivals, which will be held for the 10th time. The Asian festival will gather models from 16 Asian countries, such as Malaysia, South Korea, China, Japan, Thailand, Singapore, Taiwan and others. Kazakhstan will take part in the festival for the first time.

The jury of the Face of Central Asia contest consisted of the president of the Association of Models of South Korea, the ambassador of South Korea in Kazakhstan, the Akim (Mayor) of Kapshagai, the director of the TV channel Muz-Zone, the president of the Association of South Korean Make-Up Artists and Kazakh model Irina Asherbekova.

According to the results of the competition, 14 models and Yusupova were selected to represent Kazakhstan at the international



Innara Yusupova

festival in South Korea. The festival will take place in Seoul from April 19-25.

According to Director of the OK-Models agency Olga Kryukova, this competition has no equivalent in Kazakhstan.

"This is not a beauty contest, so we can't predict who is going to win, as the organisers are focused on trends in modeling. Selected models have interesting facial features to work with, especially abroad, so I think they have very good chances to sign profitable contracts with foreign agencies," said Krukova.

NATION&CAPITAL
COUNTRY

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 8, 2015

Kazakh Doctors Make Cardiac Surgery History with Innovative Device

By Dmitry Lee

ASTANA – Cardiac surgeon and Chairman of the National Research Cardiac Surgery Centre (NRCSC) Yury Pya performed breakthrough surgery Feb. 28, introducing the Asis device for the first time in cardiac surgery. The operation was performed during a master class for colleagues from Germany, Turkey, Serbia, Poland and Italy.

“For the first time in the world these new devices were implanted in Kazakhstan. We had undergone a specific American expertise and were permitted to go through a certain drive, which was attended

by 10 leading centres in the world, including ours. We have demonstrated very good results. Now, foreign specialists come to us to learn; they requested to come to us and we agreed,” said First Deputy Chairman of the Board of NRCSC Makhabbat Bekbossynova in an interview with the Khabar TV.

According to the NRCSC press service, Kazakh cardiac surgeons have successfully performed over 150 surgeries in the past five years on artificial heart ventricle implantation and transplantation of donor organs. Such a successful run couldn't have gone unnoticed by foreign experts.

“For me, it's really a new ex-

perience of implantation of such a complex device as Heart Made 3. In my hospital in Germany, I had not yet implanted devices of the third generation. Today, we have the opportunity to adopt this experience from the Kazakhstan specialists,” German cardiac surgeon Christian Chelensak told the Khabar TV.

Asis is an artificial ventricle that acts as body support. Thanks to the device, an individual can wait for transplantation surgery for years and in some cases even live with it for the rest of his or her life.

“I had a feeling that something miraculous was going to happen on [my] 20th [birthday] and

it did. On my birthday I received a [phone] call from doctors with some great news. I couldn't even react normally and express my happiness at that moment,” said Askhat Kalekeshev in an interview with the Khabar TV.

Kalekeshev's life was saved by a special quota provided by the Kazakh government. One transplantation costs 25 million tenge (US\$134,662), while a surgery on an artificial heart costs 40 million tenge (US\$215,459). Under the state quota, these operations are performed free of charge. At present, there are about 150 people waiting for their chance to be saved.



Reproductive, Sexual Healthcare Increasingly Comprehensive

Continued from Page B1

Views within Islam on abortion diverge, with one common view that abortion is permissible up to four months of gestation, though it is not uncommon for abortion to be viewed as completely impermissible. The Russian Orthodox Church, the second most popular religion in the country, forbids abortions, though in cases where the life of the mother is threatened, the procedure is not ground for excommunication.

Secularly-governed Kazakhstan, however, provides abortions through its code “On people's health and the health care system.” Article 96 of the code says that individuals have the right for free reproductive choice, reproductive health protection and family planning services, infertility treatment and the use and free choice of contraceptive methods,” the ministry said. Article 104 of the code, dated Sept. 29, 2009, gives women the right to an abortion.

The procedure is legal and free upon request for pregnancies up to 12 weeks, “for social reasons” for pregnancies up to 22 weeks, and at any point during gestation for indications that the life of the woman or fetus is at risk, including abnormal gene disorders, incorrectable congenital malformations and other fetal conditions incompatible with life, the Ministry of Healthcare and Social Development said, and all inter-

national methods of terminating a pregnancy are available within the country.

Abortions for women under 18 are available with the consent of their parents or legal representatives, they said.

Diseases that affect women are also receiving increasing attention. Since 2008, women have been able to access free screenings for the early detection of pre-cancerous breast disease and cervical cancer, the ministry reported, and since 2013, a programme of free HPV vaccinations has been offered to girls from 11 – 15 in Pavlodar, Atyrau, Astana and Almaty. In May, the Astana.gov.kz website announced that the programme to vaccinate girls age 11 – 12 would be gradually expanded to cover the entire country.

“This year the opportunity to protect girls from cervical cancer and other dangerous diseases caused by HPV will be provided in some more provinces of our country, and in the next few years it will be accessible for all regions of the country,” the May 6, 2014, report said. Kazakhstan joins Australia and New Zealand and a number of European countries including Denmark, Switzerland and the U.K. which provide publicly funded HPV vaccines to citizens.

However, accessing healthcare options provided by the government can sometimes be a challenge in reality. “Women in big cities have access to reproductive healthcare services, but it is difficult to have such

access in non-urban areas,” said Galina Grebennikova, executive director of the nongovernmental organisation, Kazakhstan Association on Sexual and Reproductive Health (KMPA). And despite the ministry's report that 72 percent of doctors in the country are women, there is also a lack of women's specialists in the country, she said, and a lack of information about existing services.

Astana's National Research Center for Maternal and Child Health.

The ministry reported that more than 350 family-planning offices are operating in primary healthcare centres, offering “family planning methods and services ... preparation for pregnancy, contraception, and selection of optimal birth spacing.” There are also youth health centres, the ministry said, plus telephone hotlines and health promotion centres like young mother's schools and clubs to share information on reproductive health.

In schools and universities, seminars on preventing pregnancy are conducted, the ministry said, and work on preventing abortion and sexually transmitted diseases is conducted through youth health centres “to provide confidential legal, medical and psychological assistance,” the ministry said.

However, this information may not be reaching its targets as effectively as some would hope. Arguably, there are more healthcare options available to women than there is good information about

them. “As of today, most women in our country are active users of the Internet and they have access to different sources of information, but unfortunately, we often see that women remember misleading information or they don't know where to find reliable sources,” said Grebennikova.

“Healthy Life Centres in Kazakhstan distribute informational booklets and posters. ... The problem is that often, women have information but don't use it. For example, they know about hormonal contraception, but it isn't used in actual fact,” she said.

A 27-year-old Astana resident who did not want to be identified concurred: “No doctor ever offered or told me about contraception,” she said in a February interview. “I had to find information on the Internet,” she said. “I'm not shy and when I needed contraception, I asked my doctor which one is better for me.”

“I would be happier if, by the time my children get older and start having sex, the Ministry of Healthcare will inform teenagers about methods of contraception! It's hard to control sexually transmitted diseases among teenagers. When I was a teenager, I didn't want to have sex because my mom frightened me about the consequences, while my peers had sex with different people and didn't hear about contraception or felt ashamed to go to the pharmacy and buy condoms.”

Women interviewed also preferred paid clinics to free public clinics. Thirty-eight year old Astana resident Shinar Bekisheva said, “Doctors in private centres check patients more thoroughly: we have to do a lot of tests. On one hand I think it's because they are responsible. On the other hand, it's business: analyses are expensive.”

“[At public clinics], you have to wait in long queues and wait for hours. And the quality isn't so good,” Bekisheva said. “Sometimes it just depends on the doctors. But people who really care and have money, they go to private doctors or institutions.”

The anonymous Astana resident said, “In the free clinic [in my district], the gynaecologist is so

young, I don't actually trust her.” She went to another state clinic, she said, but since it was out of her locality, she had to pay 10,000 tenge (US\$53.75) for another appointment. She also said she'd never heard of family-planning offices.

“The Ministry of Healthcare has done a lot. A woman can get medical care from a gynaecologist, antenatal care, childbirth and antiretroviral therapy absolutely free of charge in a hospital.” Grebennikova said. She noted that since 2010, the Kazakh government has allocated money for free fertility treatments for some problems. (The country is currently trying to build its population as well as extend life expectancy. On a visit to South Kazakhstan oblast (region) on March 27, President Nursultan Nazarbayev announced that life expectancy in the country reached 70 years.)

“I think that a lot of work has been done, but we have to do much more in the future,” including developing a new state programme of healthcare, improving access to different contraceptive methods and allowing NGOs to provide social projects under Ministry of Healthcare and take part in discussions of existing problems, Grebennikova said.

Semey Engineering Launches New Armoured Fire Fighting Vehicle



The BMP armoured fire engine. Photograph by Army Recognition.

By Michelle Witte

ASTANA – The Semey Engineering company, which produces combat and armoured vehicles, has created a new, unique, armoured vehicle for use in fighting fires, Kazakh TV reported on March 24.

“It's a Kazakh vehicle,” said Deputy Director of Semey Engineering Ramil Bayazitov, as quoted in the Kazakh TV report. “We

have the rights to it. The development is ours.”

The machine is designed to allow firefighters to combat fires without leaving the vehicle, and has a video surveillance system that will allow them to see what they are doing. The new vehicle, described as very agile and manoeuvrable, was in development for about a year before its launch, Kazakh TV reported.

Bayazitov said that the demand for machines of this type is very high in the armed forces, and that the vehicle was recently tested at Kazakhstan's Ministry of Defence.

Semey Engineering, a subsidiary of Kazakh Engineering, is primarily engaged in the maintenance, repair, overhaul and upgrade of armoured vehicles, according to an Army Recognition website report from May 2014, which said the Kazakh government had ordered \$49 million-worth of equipment from the firm since 2010. The company's website describes it as the only specialised company in Kazakhstan engaged in this type of work.

In November 2014, a Janes.com report announced that the firm intended to expand into the armoured vehicle manufacturing market by 2021. Managing Director of Kazakhstan Engineering Nikolai Pospelov said the company had created a design bureau to begin working on the technical documentation required for armoured vehicle production, Janes and other sources reported.

Semey Engineering is a regular participant in Kazakhstan's biennial KADEX Defence Technology Expo.

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SOCIETY

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 8, 2015

Kazakh Delegation to World Bicycle Forum Discovers Cycling Cities in Colombia

By Yelena Yerkovich

ALMATY – A couple of weeks ago, a delegation from Almaty came back from Colombia, where they had been participating in the fourth World Bicycle Forum in Medellín. The forum brought together more than 6,000 participants from five continents, and the Kazakh delegation shared the results at a meeting with the cycling community in Kazakhstan.

Despite the long flight, the delegation also made sure to visit Colombia's capital, Bogotá, and took part in Ciclovía, an event that has been held every Sunday for more than 15 years. Ciclovía clears the streets of motorists and opens them to residents and visitors for seven hours every week.

The principle of open streets for anyone who wants to safely enjoy biking, walking, skateboarding, jogging and other active forms of recreation has reached more than 300 cities around the world and gained more than 110 million

members per year. Former Mayor of Bogotá Enrique Penalosa, who legalised Ciclovía and pushed more fundamental reforms in urban mobility, accompanied the Kazakh visitors on a three-hour tour around the city. He said that bikes and bike paths, for him, have always been a sign of social equality and respect for city residents. The Kazakh delegation had a chance to explore them as they covered an amazing stretch of 392 kilometres of the bicycle paths that serve as a social bridge between rich and poor districts in the city of 9 million people.

At the forum, the UNDP-Global Environment Facility (GEF) project, City of Almaty Sustainable Transport (CAST), shared problems in promoting cycling as a form of transport and shared approaches to the design of modern bicycle paths offered to the administration of Almaty. Discussions have shown that the problems of cyclists around the world are basically the same: mass motorisation in developing countries and

aggressive marketing campaigns by the automotive industry are obstacles that prevent the treatment of cyclists as equal participants in traffic and a cause of aggression in drivers.

At the city level, a network of safe bicycle paths connecting residential areas, parks and business centres reduces the number of road accidents. At the same time, an intensive cycling movement provides the daily physical activity recommended for keeping up good health. There is now an emergent trend of bicycle sharing, enhancing access to bikes for occasional trips. The CAST delegation was pleased with the growing number of state and public educational programmes for children, promoting cycling in schools around the world. Various foundations fund these social projects, allocating bikes, helmets and uniforms to schools and teenagers, and teaching them how to behave on the road and to handle bikes safely.

Zhanar Sambetova, cycling advocate from Almaty and a partici-

part in the forum, noted, "We just have to adapt these wonderful programmes for Kazakhstan's schoolchildren. We can include them in the school curriculum optional programme. Of course, access to financing for such programmes and active support from the formal education system, the Department of Internal Affairs and traffic police will make them sustainable and improve the overall safety of cycling in our cities."

Another participant, cycling activist from the Velo-Almaty cycling community Timur Jurkashev, enjoyed discovering Latin America for himself as a land of active, hospitable and creative people. "I saw Colombian cities in the mountain valleys that are much bigger than Almaty, but without the smog and dirt. [There], these problems have been solved thanks to strong political will and the participation of all citizens."

The World Bicycle Forum again drew attention to a significant global trend: the design of urban space with people in mind, which has become an integral part of the



concept of a sustainable city, and the participants from Kazakhstan intend to continue to promote programmes for sustainable mobility in the cities of Kazakhstan.

CAST, which supported the participation of bicycle activists in the World Bicycle Forum, conducted a travel habitat survey in 2012, according to which the number of trips taken by bike in Almaty is less than 1 percent, despite the fact that almost every family owns

a bicycle. The Almaty Sustainable Transport Strategy 2013 – 2023 sets the ambitious goal of increasing this figure to 5 percent by 2023, but it needs to invest in safe cycling infrastructure and actively promote cycling among all ages and social groups.

The author is manager of the UNDP-GEF CAST Project in Almaty.

Linguists Seek More Accurate, Culturally Sensitive Kazakh-Language Advertising

By Julia Rutz

Due to problems with poor translation of advertising text into Kazakh, Almaty public activists have suggested creating the job of advertising manager in Kazakh language, reported Tengrinews.kz. The suggestion was made during a roundtable devoted to the difficulties of developing the Kazakh language in the urban environment and the participants believe the new profession will solve the issue.

"As a solution, we are considering the introduction of a new occupation. The specialists will learn not only the language, but also the particularity of Kazakh culture, as the advertising should be targeted to the Kazakh-speaking segment of the population," explained Deputy Director of the Akhmet Baitursynov Institute of Linguistics Anar Fazylyzhanova.

According to her, a specialist who has excellent Kazakh language skills can not only improve the appearance of the city, but also

increase the sales of the advertised goods and services. Fazylyzhanova noted the absence of a terminology committee in Kazakhstan and the necessity to solve this problem in the near future.

The institute's chief scientist Nurkeldy Uali also proposed reforming the philological education.

"For example, in Russia a philologist of the Russian language studying programme has 42 various branches, such as speech language therapist, scholar assistant, philologist and advertising manager. Unfortunately, we continue studying in accordance with the traditional Soviet educational system. The demand for Kazakh language content is growing, but the number of philologists who could meet these needs is very little," said Uali.

Answering the critique concerning regular mistakes on advertising billboards in Kazakh, the director general of the Kazakh alliance of advertising companies Bolat Kozhakov explained the main reason why translation fails. Ac-

ording to him, most of the advertising slogans are translated from English to Russian and only then to Kazakh. Moreover, all advertising drafts should be approved by the city Department for Language Development before printing.

"The responsibility lies on those who check these drafts and approve them. I'm not sure that the city department representatives who are responsible for Kazakh advertising are perfectly competent to manage this task," said Kozhakov.

Kozhakov also mentioned the recent proposal of the National Chamber of Entrepreneurs to reduce the number of licensing procedures for companies.

"In this regard, our organisation was asked to transfer full powers to local centres for the development of language or other expert committees for approving the advertising texts. We don't need people who can speak Kazakh language, but real professionals who are able to do a high-quality translation," concluded Kozhakov.

Bolashak Recipients Discuss Life after Graduation

Continued from Page B1

"After coming back to Kazakhstan, I expected to find a good job immediately. But to find a job for a marine engineer in Kazakhstan was not an easy task. The marine and naval architecture industry is not yet developed in Kazakhstan, a country, which is located very far from the oceans. The only place where a marine engineer can work in Kazakhstan is Aktau city, which is located on the shore of the Caspian Sea. I started applying for a job in that city and was not very successful at that time. Then, after three or four months of job hunting, I decided to start my work experience at Nazarbayev University School of Engineering in Astana as a laboratory assistant at NU Research and Innovations Systems. The work was interesting, however, it was not my dream job. I wanted to use my skills and knowledge as a marine engineer in my job. I kept looking for a job and after five months of searching, I finally found a job at Kazmortransflot, the national maritime shipping company. The only marine operator in Kazakhstan, the national company deals with transportation of oil and other cargo in the Caspian Sea and international waters."

Ramazanov's dream is to keep

working and contribute to the development of Kazakh naval architecture and marine engineering.

"Studying and Working"

"Now I understand that the Bolashak programme not only gave me a diploma and a 'Bolashak graduate' label; it also gave me an opportunity to find and develop my professional skills, to become a highly-qualified specialist and to get experience that I could bring and use back home," Bakhtagaliyev told The Astana Times. Bakhtagaliyev received a bachelor of statistics in 2013 from George Washington University in the United States.

"I never considered myself to be a better candidate for a prospective job since I was lacking work experience, tonnes of various useful skills and mostly understanding the difference between studying and working," said Bakhtagaliyev, who now works for Philip Morris Kazakhstan as a statistics and reporting engineer.

"My first interview happened three days after I arrived in Almaty at the National Bank of Kazakhstan and I got my first job the same day. Now I am not really sure what would have happened if I hadn't studied really hard and become competent in my area of expertise."

"I remember the day"

Nargis Saginova earned a Bachelor of Public Policy and Management in 2012 from York University, Canada and gives much credit to the Bolashak programme.

"Bolashak gave me the chance to become stronger and wiser and the know how to set goals and what should be done to achieve them," said Saginova. "I remember the day after returning to Kazakhstan very clearly. A young graduate is full of ambitions, ideas and what's more important, a great desire to implement the knowledge that I have acquired, with lots of questions inside. A variety of feelings embraced my soul: excitement, fear, huge responsibility, happiness, peradventure."

Saginova is now a head manager at the Bolashak Alumni Relations Office at the Centre for International Programmes.

"Bolashak label"

Looking back, Ramazanov, Bakhtagaliyev and Saginova say they are thankful they were able to take part in the Bolashak scholarship programme and the opportunities it has given them to work to develop the country as "Bolashakers," as they are known.



WWII Victory Parade Plans Being Finalised

Staff Report

The last military train loaded with military equipment that will be used in an upcoming military parade dedicated to the 70th anniversary of victory in the Great Patriotic War arrived in Astana from Almaty on March 28, according to a press service of the Ministry of Defence of Kazakhstan.

The Central Military Orchestra of the Ministry of Defence welcomed the troop train. In order to accommodate the arrival and unloading of the equipment along a 2.2-kilometre stretch of railroad of military unit No. 68665 near the Sorokovaya train station, a special ferry-bridge was constructed. This measure allowed three trains to be unloaded per day instead of two.

Moreover, the unloading process was accelerated with the use of lo-



cally produced multi-purpose fasteners. These devices allow quick securing and unfastening of military equipment on the platform.

The May 7 parade will include servicemen and cadets from different military schools. Before the event, they will be accommodated

in a special tent camp located near Astana. According to the plan, 500 railcars with military equipment and about 900 soldiers from different regions of the country, who will be specially trained for the event, will participate in the celebratory parade

NATION&CAPITAL

TOURISM

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 8, 2015

Capital's Airport to Undergo Major Expansion for Upcoming EXPO 2017

By Dmitry Lee

ASTANA – Astana's International Airport is undergoing a major renovation in preparation for hosting the expected influx of tourists for the upcoming EXPO 2017 international exhibition. Those preparations will include the construction of a new terminal and a new two-level parking lot by 2017, said Chairman of the Astana International Airport Kairat Zhaukhanov during a briefing at the Central Communications Services on March 3.

"If you can imagine the airport's vicinity, the parking project will be built on two levels," said Zhaukhanov.

According to the chairman, currently there are two parking lots, one with 250 spots and the other one with 170 spots. Additionally there is a free parking lot outside the airport's premises. He also noted that the maximum passenger traffic is now 3 million people per year, reached full five years ahead of the plans, and the parking area equals 22,000 square metres. The airport's new terminal, currently under construction, will increase both, he said.

"I will not reveal any major state secret if I say that, at the time of construction, planners were expecting Astana [International Airport] to reach its maximum annual passenger traffic capacity of 3 million people by 2020, and yet we reached this number by the end of 2014," Zhaukhanov told the media briefing.



Chairman of the Astana International Airport Kairat Zhaukhanov at a CCS briefing on March 3.

He explained that the airport in Astana is already the second busiest in the country, after Almaty. "The Astana airport services 16 airlines which service 15 domestic and 19 international routes," he said adding that that means there are around 160 flights processed daily.

"The area of the new passenger terminal will be 45,000 square metres, which is two times more than the current area. We are also planning to increase the passenger traffic to 7.5 million people a year by 2017," Zhaukhanov said.

The Astana International Airport received \$900 million for the

makeover of the capital's major airport, Director General of the Airport Management Group LLP Claude Badan announced on Jan. 29 at a Central Communications Service briefing.

The investment will be made over the next five years, Badan said in January, with many large-scale projects to be implemented between 2015 and 2017. Work is ongoing now on new terminals at the Astana and Kyzylorda airports and other upgrades, including introducing new systems to control queues, are being put into place, Badan told The Astana Times.

Air Astana Begins Direct Flights to Paris

By Aiman Turebekova

ASTANA – Paris has long been one of the most-favourable travel destinations and the increasing number of tourists from Kazakhstan highlights its desirability. Convenient opportunities for travelers, such as a direct flight between Astana and the City of Lights, could further help to encourage the tourist trade.

Kazakh and French transport authorities signed a protocol to launch a three-time-a-week direct service between Astana and Paris during Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev's official visit in June 2011. Despite some restrictions on Air Astana's flights to Europe since 2009 due to the decision by the European Union air safety commission, the airline is able to increase its number of flights to Europe.

A new service from Almaty to Paris via Astana began March 29 on a Boeing 757, which can carry 228 passengers and is configured with 16 business and 150 economy class seats. Moreover, passengers to and from Paris have the opportunity to choose the economy sleeper class, benefited by three seats in a separate cabin and a mattress and pillow for a comfortable trip.

Carrying a full planeload of passengers, the inaugural flight left the Kazakh capital at 2 p.m. on March 29, and arrived 5:05 p.m. local time at Charles de Gaulle Airport. More than 20,000 passengers are expected to take advantage of this direct flight by the end of the year, said Air Astana President Peter Foster.

"The new service to Paris is a major step in developing Air Astana's European network and serves to strengthen economic, diplomatic, cultural and tourism links between



Air Astana President Peter Foster (l) and French Ambassador to Kazakhstan Francis Etienne announcing the new flight.

France and Kazakhstan," he added in comments carried over by Air Astana and at the press conference to announce the new flight on April 1 at Astana's Radisson Hotel. "If we take into account the fact that the development of tourism is one of the main priorities of Kazakhstan, the comfortable direct flights play a crucial role in terms of encouraging tourist attraction."

His comments were echoed by Francis Etienne, French ambassador to Kazakhstan.

"The beginning of direct flights between the two capitals will improve relations and cooperation between the two nations," he said elaborating on how this will impact not only tourism, but also cultural and educational ties. "Sixty-five million people in France and 17 million people in Kazakhstan are the millions of reasons for this flight," he said at the press conference with Foster.

Travel has also been aided by the decision of the Kazakh government to provide a visa-free regime from July 15, 2014 to July 15, 2015. Citizens of the United States, the Netherlands, Great Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Malaysia, the United Arab Emirates, the Republic of Korea and Japan and holders of valid diplomatic, official and national passports can repeatedly enter, exit and fly through Kazakh territory without visas up to 15 calendar days after crossing the state border. As a result, French tourists can easily go to Kazakhstan using the direct flight.

In addition, Air Astana is planning to open new international routes this summer from Astana to Seoul and Tbilisi. The direct connection between the capitals of Georgia and Kazakhstan will begin operating June 2 and on the same day the airline will link the Kazakh capital with its South Korean counterpart.

Kazakhstan's Largest Int'l Tourism Fair to Celebrate 15th Year in April

By Rufiya Ospanova

ASTANA – The Kazakhstan International Travel Fair (KITF), the largest tourism forum in Kazakhstan, is celebrating its 15th anniversary this year. Celebrations will take place from April 22-24 at the Atakent Kazakhstan Centre of Business Cooperation in Almaty, the organisers announced.

Tourism is seen as a priority industry and indicator of sustained economic development everywhere in the world. Kazakhstan also attaches great importance to

exhibition also serves to define tourism trends for the coming year.

The anniversary exhibition will include new developments in the tourism industry, informative seminars, training programmes, cost effective solutions and special offers.

Around 500 companies this year from over 40 countries and regions will put on displays. These include the Andalucia (Spain) and Frankfurt (Germany) tourism boards, which will be present for the first time, Travel Daily News reported.

Leading tour operators taking

From 2008 to 2013, the number of tourists, both local and domestic, increased from 4.3 million to 7.7 million, or by 80 percent.

the development of tourism and considers it a vital industry, which is evidenced by the country's tourism development plans, which have been laid out until 2020. These plans were approved by the government of Kazakhstan in 2014 and will help prepare the country for EXPO 2017.

Today in Kazakhstan, international tourism is a rapidly expanding economic sector. From 2008 to 2013, the number of tourists, both local and domestic, here increased from 4.3 million to 7.7 million, or by 80 percent.

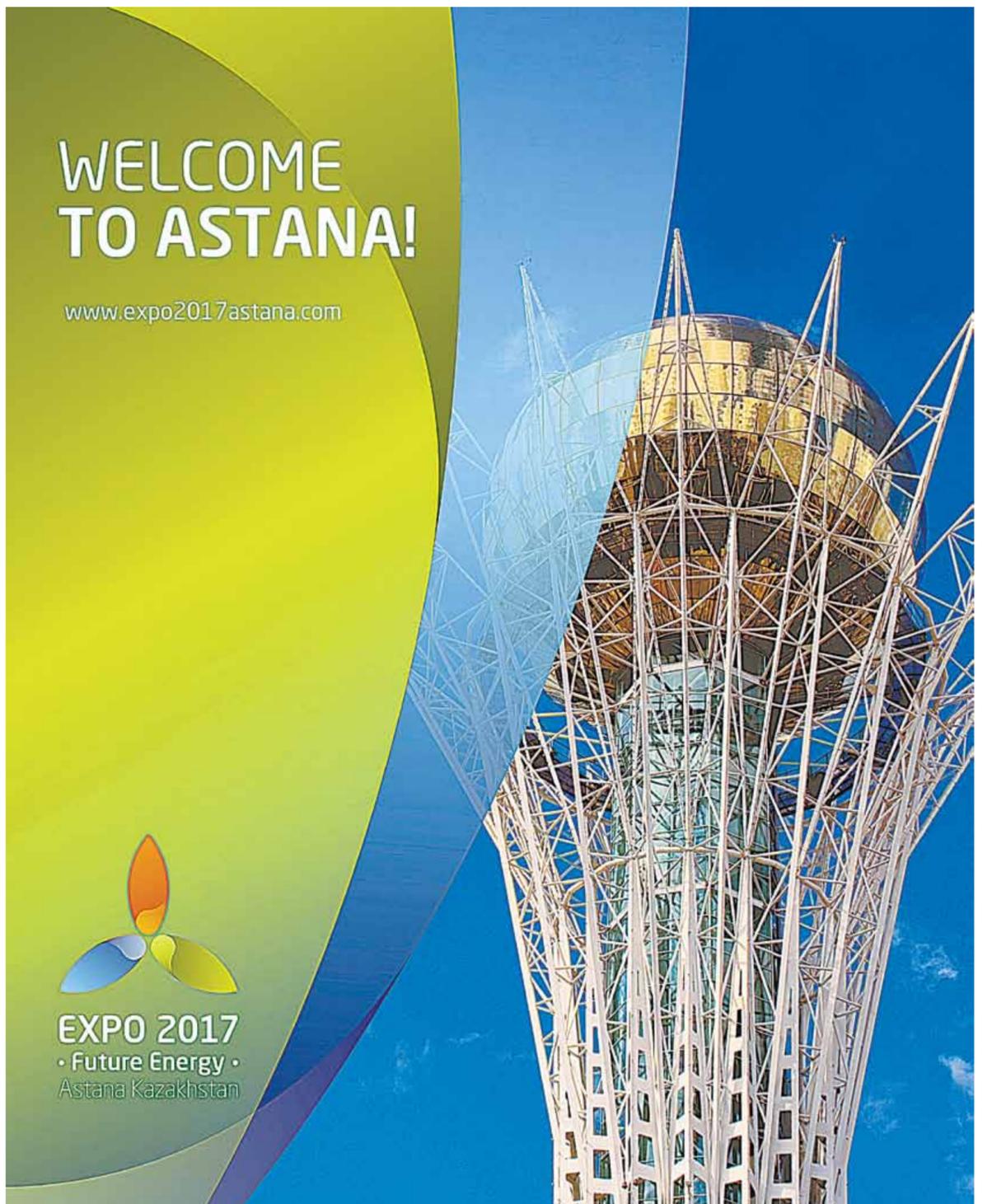
KITF, as the largest tourism exhibition in the region, provides opportunity to promote the image of Kazakhstan around the world and expand commercial ties. The

part in KITF 2015 include Travco, Gartour, American Best Getaways, Resort Life Maldives, Look Asia Holidays, Ada Tours, Natalie Tour, Mouzenidis Travel and others.

Sponsors of the KITF 2015 event include the Comelia hotel chain (the event's official sponsor) and the Tourism Board of Malaysia representing the partner country.

KITF, being an important marketing tool for presenting new travel packages, is a place to learn about the latest developments in the industry through its specialised business programme.

During the last KITF event, 85 percent of exhibit participants signed contracts and made agreements on site, KITF organisers said.



WEDNESDAY, APRIL 8, 2015

Hockey Star Thoresen Talks Almaty's Olympic Chances, his Place Among Current Greats

By Arsen Dilim

This season, Astana Barys defender, Canadian-born Kevin Dallman, who once again plans to play for Kazakhstan's national team at the World Cup, crossed the 300-point mark in his Continental Hockey League (KHL) games. This is the sixth instance of someone passing this mark in the KHL and is an absolute first among defenders.

In the short history of the league, only five forwards have been able to pass this milestone. One of them is Norwegian Patrick Thoresen of St. Petersburg SKA, whose club is battling in the West Conference finals with Moscow CSKA for the Gagarin Cup.

Thoresen spoke to The Astana Times about hockey's popularity in Norway, the Astana Barys and Almaty's chances of hosting the 2022 Winter Olympics.

You played against Barys a few times. Is it true that their attack is one of the most powerful in the league?

In fact, Barys plays some very entertaining hockey. The team's first tactic is to play in a fast attacking manner. I agree with the fact that they are one of the best teams in the KHL. I played against Barys and Ufa's Salavat Yulayev when we were neighbours in the general KHL's Chernyshev Division and now as part of SKA. During the most recent match in St. Petersburg, we had a very tough game. We were holding the game with a comfortable advantage, but Barys brought it to a minimum.

From year to year, the Norwegian national team participates in the World Championships. In 2012, the team beat Germany in the World Cup with a crushing score. Do you remember that fantastic victory?

Yes, of course, we ourselves were slightly shocked. Everything went well during that game.

There is talk in the press that the Norwegian club Valerenga may join the KHL. Is this true?

Yes, it is being discussed. However, it is too early to say that

THORESEN: In fact, Barys plays some very entertaining hockey. The team's first tactic is to play in a fast attacking manner.

Valerenga will join the KHL. This is a question that will linger for the next few years.

Today, a modern skating rink is being built in Oslo. The main goal of this Norwegian hockey club today is to complete its rink in order to be able to host KHL games. Of course, this will benefit Norwegian hockey.

Do you dream of playing for Valerenga post accession to the KHL?

No, at the moment, I have different goals. I am a realist and do not have any such dreams.

Which game is most popular in Norway: hockey, football or bandy?

Football, no doubt.

Is hockey continuing to gain popularity?

Yes. Over the past six to seven years, hockey has gained extraordinary popularity in my country. The national team's matches, which are getting better and better, contribute to this a lot. In addition, our country spends a lot of money on promoting hockey, including broadcasting reports and media publications. The situation in this respect is getting better and better.

By the way, the Bandy World Championship for men just took place in Khabarovsk. The sport is very popular in both Kazakhstan

and Norway. In one of your interviews, you said that children in Norwegian villages are surprised when they see hockey with bands. Is this true?

Today, the situation has changed in favour of classic hockey. Such cases can occur only in the north of Norway, where there are not very many hockey rinks.

As with any other Norwegian, you probably have ski raced?

Yes. I skied during childhood.

Do people in your country remember Kazakh skier Vladimir Smirnov (Smirre)?

Yes, many people know about him in Norway. In particular, we remember the great confrontation between Smirre and our famous compatriot Bjørn Dæhlie. Those were some great battles.

As you know, after Oslo dropped from the race for the 2022 Winter Olympics, there are only two contenders left, the Kazakh city of Almaty and the Chinese capital Beijing. What is your position on this important issue?

As for me, I believe that right now, Almaty is the best contender.

What is your personal opinion on Oslo not moving ahead in its bid?

As for me, I certainly would have preferred that the 2022 Olympics were held in Norway. First of all, because sports infrastructure in Norway will change radically for the better. But most of my countrymen did not support the idea of holding the Olympics in Oslo.

Who was your hockey idol during childhood?

First of all, like all Norwegian boys, my idol was Espen Knutsen and the famous Swedish hockey player Peter Forsberg.

Well, our traditional question. Can we call you All-Star Patrick Thoresen?

Only if everyone knows that you are joking.

You have earned the title

Ok. But in regards to who is top dog, for defense, that would be Kevin Dallman of Barys and Finlander Patrick Nummela. In regards to offense, my colleagues Czech Roman Cervenka of SKA and Swede Tony Mortenson deserve the title most. Well, third place, I would like to reserve for myself.



Patrick Thoresen

Astana Arlans Remain Undefeated, Best USA Knockouts in Miami

By Dmitry Lee

ASTANA – Kazakh World Series of Boxing (WSB) team Astana Arlans confidently continued its winning streak on March 28 at the Miccosukee Resort in Miami when they defeated the USA Knockouts 5:0 in front of the Knockouts' home crowd.

The tournament's opening bout was between flyweight category (up to 52 kilogrammes) boxers Temirtas Zhussupov of Kazakhstan and Joshua Franco. Zhussupov won the match by a split decision. In the lightweight (60 kilogramme) bout, Kazakh Meirbolat Toitov dominated Francisco Martinez to pull the Arlans ahead 2:0.

Kazakh Samat Bashenov won by another split decision against Tyrek Irby in the welterweight (69 kilogramme) category to give his team a 3:0 lead.

In the light heavyweight (81 kilogramme) category, Kazakhstan's Meirim Nursultanov confidently handled Kalvin Henderson to make



An Astana Arlans boxer is announced the victor in the March 28 bout.

it 4:0 on the scoreboard for the Arlans and in the super heavyweight (91+ kilogramme) category, Vassil

iy Levit dominated Adrian Taylor to close out the team tournament. The Arlans are undefeated this

season and will next travel to Puerto Rico to face the Puerto Rico Hurricanes on April 11.

Kazakhstan's Footballers Close Out March With Loss, Tie

By Arsen Dilim

In the last days of March, Kazakhstan's national football team lost a home game against Iceland in the Euro 2016 Qualifying Round Group A, then flew to Moscow for a friendly match against Russia.

The Icelandic footballers, who were ranked 34th by FIFA, arrived in Astana as one of the group's leaders, ahead of the Netherlands and Turkey, both of which have strong national teams. Kazakhstan entered the match ranked 138, more than 100 positions below Iceland.

Both teams had chances to score early on, but the guests managed to do so first. Iceland Coach Heimir Hallgrímsson noted at the press conference following the game that his team was lucky to score first. In the second half, Iceland scored twice. Kazakhstan fought to come back, but were defeated, 3-0.

After the game at home, Kazakhstan's team flew to Moscow for a friendly match with the Russian

team. This is not the first friendly between the two teams, and many fans on both sides will remember the match from seven years ago, which Kazakhstan lost, 0-6.

This time, three Kazakh players made their national team debuts: goalkeeper Stas Pokatillov, midfielder Georgy Zhukov and striker Toktar Zhangylyshbai. The players were very confident, but the score remained 0-0. Given that Russia's team is ranked higher than Kazakhstan's by more than 100 points, the score should be considered satisfactory.

After the match, Coach Yuri Krasnozhan of Kazakhstan noted, "We had a lot of young players, so the experience of Samat Smakov, Yuri Logvinenko and Mark Gurman was very important. We were not successful in the first half, but I liked the game in the first 15 minutes of the second half."

The Russian coach said that before the game he warned his players that the Kazakhs play organised football, do a lot of running and bring good pressure.

Women's Ice Hockey Team Beats Britain, Is Promoted to Division I

By Dmitry Lee



Players on the women's national hockey team celebrate their win over the U.K.

ASTANA – The Kazakhstan national women's ice hockey team finished the fourth International Ice Hockey Federation (IIHF) tournament Division 2A held March 30 to April 5 in Dumfries, Scotland undefeated and got promoted to the 2016 IIHF Ice Hockey Women Championship Division I, Group B.

According to vesti.kz, in the final game against the host of the tournament Great Britain, Kazakhstan scored twice; Madina Tursynova and Olga Konyshva

lifted Kazakhstan into Division I of the IIHF.

The Kazakh national team managed to score the most goals in the group and allowed the least goals against (30-2), to claim the top spot in Group A of the second division. Kazakhstan beat South Korea in the opening match 2:0, then defeated Poland 4:1, New Zealand 10:0 and Croatia 12:1.

Kazakhstan is bidding to host the 2022 Winter Olympic Games in Almaty. The country hosted the 7th Winter Asian Games in 2011, and won the overall medal tally with 32 gold, 21 silver and 17 bronze medals.



CAPITAL

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Astana Receives New Technologically Advanced Firefighting Vehicles

By Yerbolat Uatkhonov

ASTANA – The Astana Emergency Situation Department received new fire fighting vehicles on March 20. The vehicles will help Astana emergency personnel improve their effectiveness and increase the speed of fire-fighting operations in emergency situations.

The AC-3-40 firefighting vehicle is equipped with a Hiromax system and is designed for fire protection of cities, rural settlements and industrial projects. High fire extinguishing efficiency is ensured by the fact that the aqueous mist is a mixture of air and water microdroplets that is supplied into the fire using air or another gas. The CAFS ACL-32 fire truck delivers a foam-air mixture to a height of 400 metres above the ground under high pressure.

The Hiromax system is produced in Switzerland. The NEFAZ company, a subsidiary of the KAMAZ

group of companies, produces special-purpose machines in Nizhnekamsk, Russia, and the KAMAZ Engineering automobile assembly plant in Kokshetau installed this system on the KAMAZ-43502 truck with four-wheel drive and a Euro-4 engine.

The Hiromax system provides water mist with standard water, which is five times more effective

The Hiromax system provides water mist with standard water, which is five times more effective than firefighting using standard pressure water and 2.5 times more effective than firefighting using high pressure water.

than firefighting using standard pressure water and 2.5 times more effective than firefighting using high pressure water. The system significantly decreases the

consumption of water. The water microdroplets create a surface that provides for the evaporation of a large quantity of heat. The low water consumption requirement allows firefighters to use fire fighting vehicles with Hiromax systems in districts that lack significant water supply.

The firefighting vehicles were

purchased centrally and distributed by the Committee for Emergency Situations of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan in 2014.



Astana's Comedians Have New Platform for Stand-Up Performances

By Yelden Sarybay

ASTANA – Humour and raw fish rolls are on the menu every two weeks when the Astana stand-up show entertains the audience. The latest live performance, on March 28, was held at the Daikon sushi bar on the right bank of the Ishim River.

Approximately 60 people showed up to watch the five to ten-minute monologues, many delivered by student performers on stage for the first time. The jokes ranged from relationship misunderstandings and self-criticism of Kazakh national qualities to poking fun at local advertisement techniques.

Organised by Dias Zhumadilov, a fifth-year student at Astana Medical University, the stand-up show attracts mainly a young crowd of students and professionals and the occasional high schooler.

Born in Semey and raised in Almaty, 23-year-old Zhumadilov said that despite his chosen profession, he has always aimed to develop his creativity. His interests range from politics and economics to more down-to-earth activities such as watching a good movie, having some homemade food or swimming in the pool.

Zhumadilov has been trying to develop his entrepreneurial skills since fifth grade in pursuit of financial independence. Starting from sales of A3 paper in art class, he smoothly went the way of speculative trading.

"At 19-20, I began to study the production of various small items and tried selling them. But I soon

realised that large profits require large-scale production, for which I had no resources, neither material nor human," he said.

In his quest for financial gain, the stand-up show was a minor one of ten other projects Zhumadilov started to realise.

"In time the financial attractiveness of it has disappeared, but I became more involved in it when I realised this was a field for creative self-realisation," he explained. "I'm not a fan of these shows on TV. I must confess I found out about the stand-up genre in late August and we had our first event in September. It is more interesting that KVN, which as they say 'is not the same as it used to be.' Although stand-up comedy is humorous in my opinion, it is much more versatile and the thoughts of the performer are deeper. It is rather satirical, ironic and often very sarcastic."

He shared his story and plans for the future in an interview with this reporter.

Have you ever had experience in organising events before?

I had a little experience in the organisation of stand-up. For a whole year prior to it I organised small student parties. We had workshops in preparing interesting dishes such as maqluba, sushi rolls and tiramisu. We played board and video games. The main goal was to meet new people and to strengthen ties with friends. Sometimes we often see good people, but due to the fact that they do not ride the same bus home or are enrolled in a parallel class, we cannot communicate with them closely, although

we want to. I decided that it is necessary to create such circumstances. I have organised almost 30 events per year, including two trips to Burabai with a big, friendly company.

Has anything changed between the first stand-up show and the tenth?

Changed? Yes, everything changed. Venues changed from the informal Kotokafe and Nekafe to Rivas Café and Art Café. We then held the event in a karaoke club, but soon we were invited to Daikon sushi bar where we currently operate. The participants also changed. Anyone can take part in the event, but there is always a core group. I'm happy with my small team with whom we are working on new material, rehearsing jokes. There are also changes in the audience, in their age as well as liveliness. Photographers and assistants have hanged, but some things have remained the same, which are a packed hall and myself as the host. This is not the limit of the metamorphosis; I hope that soon we will grow even more.

What are your plans for the future?

My plans for the future are very diverse. As for the stand-up show, we plan to find sponsors. We want to raise the level of the quality of the events. We want to reach a bigger audience. We want to hit the big screen. And finally, we want to fully institute the stand-up genre just as KVN was once established. There are other ideas, but I won't say anything about them yet.



Job Fair Connects Disabled With Jobs

By Shynar Ospanova

ASTANA – The Employment Centre of the Astana Akimat (city administration) recently hosted a job fair for people with disabilities in order to provide them with job opportunities.

"It is the third year we have held a job fair for people with disabilities. Every year, the interest in this event is growing from both the employers and citizens. Today, more than 30 organisations are presented here, which are interested in the employment of persons with disabilities," said Olzhas Omar, director of the employment centre of the Astana akimat.

According to him, people whose physical abilities are limited have become increasingly interested in the conditions and special programmes for the disabled and they often attend such exhibitions and



Astana city administration

come to meet and talk to each other.

"As a rule, jobs at such fairs are provided by small- and medium-sized businesses, [such as from the service sector], catering, shops as well as government agencies. For example, the call-centre 1414 very actively invites people with disabilities," Omar said.

The centre tracks the employment activity of citizens as well as where they work and how faithfully an employer behaves. Statistics show that about 60 percent of those who receive jobs through the centre are women. In 2014, 90 people with disabilities found jobs, according to statistics.

