



Re-elected President Inaugurated, Announces Five Reform Efforts



President Nursultan Nazarbayev greets supporters following the inauguration ceremony near the Palace of Independence in Kazakhstan's capital Astana on April 29.

By Malika Orazgaliyeva

ASTANA – The official ceremony of the inauguration of President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev took place at the Palace of Independence in Astana on April 29.

Prominent figures of Kazakhstan, including judges of the Supreme Court, Parliament members, representatives of the presidential administration and the prime minister's office, members of the government, the heads of diplomatic missions, government members, akims (mayors), members of the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan and many others gathered to welcome the newly re-elected President.

At the beginning of the ceremony, Nazarbayev put his right hand on the Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan and gave an oath to the people of the country.

In his inaugural speech, the President said the presidential election clearly demonstrated the power of unity in Kazakhstan's society.

"The people of Kazakhstan once again have given me great confidence to serve our motherland. Together, we have passed a difficult path: we started to believe in ourselves, gained independence, built a state and opened Kazakhstan to the world, declared ourselves as a single and great nation. Your trust al-

ways inspired me, gave confidence and strength. Today, I want to say with full responsibility that I will serve the people, protect the country and welfare of citizens, as well as defend our highest national interests, as I did before," he said.

Nazarbayev drew attention to a number of external challenges that continue to overshadow the country's development. He mentioned the ongoing turbulence of the global economy, sanctions and trade wars, climate change and disputes in the world that can have an effect on Central Asia.

The President stressed his intention to concentrate and consolidate

the state apparatus on the implementation of reforms.

"In response to the turbulence of the world economy, we have developed a new economic policy – Nurly Zhol. It consists of brave and swift actions, primary oriented to the creation of new jobs and the strengthening the foundation for new economic growth. However, it is important to understand that external threats are growing. In order to cope with external threats, we need to strengthen internally. It is a big mistake to think that delightful success and well-being achieved over the years is firm," he said.

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Nazarbayev to Continue Current Policies, Institute Reforms in New Term

By Michelle Witte

ASTANA – President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev, who was announced the winner of the country's presidential election early morning on April 27, expressed his "grand satisfaction" at the country's record-breaking voter turnout and said it was important to him to get a fresh mandate from the people in order to embark on the major infrastructure programmes and "colossal" reforms he campaigned on.

The election atmosphere was one of celebration, he commented during a press conference at the Akorda presidential residence on April 27, adding that his victory is "proof of the policy I have conducted." He said he had no new policy directions to announce. "The most dangerous thing to do is to begin some sort of sudden new turn," he said in response to questions. "In my opinion, yesterday's election proved that people support the priorities in domestic and foreign policies. Therefore, we do not need to change them."

The President continued his post-election remarks by reiterating one of the themes of his campaign: that Kazakhstan needs to enact five key institutional reforms to enter a new stage of national development. Among these reforms are the creation of a professional state apparatus, and Nazarbayev explicitly condemned kinship, as well as any qualities other than professional merit, as a means of rising through state ranks. He did, however, warn that some of these reforms, which include measures

to strengthen the rule of law, establish a modern and transparent government, support the middle class and diversify the economy, would be "painful and colossal" and that it was necessary to get a new mandate for them.

He announced that one of the first acts that he plans to sign in his new term would be the one establishing the national modernisation commission whose remit will include concretising the five institutional reform areas he outlined in March.

The President also reiterated that there would be no devaluation of the tenge following the election, saying the prerequisites for that weren't present and that the government was working on a targeted exchange rate with the International Monetary Fund and looking at a five-year timeframe. "The people of Kazakhstan know me. If something is up, I will be the first to say it," he said.

Questions from the 100 or so assembled media representatives addressed economic and cultural development, the viability of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), foreign or domestic policy changes and more specific concerns.

Regarding the viability of the EAEU, the grand economic union of Russia, Kazakhstan, Belarus, Armenia and, in a few days, Kyrgyzstan, that launched just as falling oil prices and economic sanctions on the union's biggest economy, Russia, brought economic uncertainty to the region, Nazarbayev said, "The economic crisis is a global crisis, not a Kazakh crisis."

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Central Election Commission Announces Nazarbayev's Win with 97.7 Percent

By Nurlan Amerkulov

ASTANA – Kuandyk Turgankulov, chairman of the Central Election Commission of Kazakhstan, announced at a news conference at 10 a.m. here, televised live on Khabar TV, that the incumbent President Nursultan Nazarbayev won re-election

with a landslide majority of 97.7 percent.

A record figure of 95.22 percent of the registered voters exercised their right to choose their country's leader, Turgankulov added as he announced the preliminary results of the voting that took place in this Central Asian nation on Sunday April 26.

According to the official, Turgun Syzdykov of the Communist People's Party who railed against the "decadent Western values" received 1.6 percent of the votes cast. The self-nominated Abulgazy Kussainov who stood on the platform of protecting the environment received 0.7 percent, Turgankulov added.

Nation Celebrates Kazakhstan People's Unity Day

By Yerbolat Uat Khanov

ASTANA – On May 1, the people of Kazakhstan celebrated People's Unity Day, which was created to mark the friendship and unity among the 130 ethnicities living in the country.

The celebrations started early in Astana with events in many of the capital's main squares, including public areas near the Baiterek Tower, in front of the city municip-

pal building and on the Yessil River embankment. The public also gathered in city parks.

More than 35 formal celebration events were held in Astana. The heart of the events was in Kazakh Yeli square, where ethnocultural associations and a variety of artists and musical bands performed and gave presentations. Concerts were held almost non-stop from 10 a.m. to 11 p.m.

The occasion also allowed for the unveiling of the new Atameken

Kazakhstan map, which showcases new buildings and architectural structures in Kazakh cities.

Kazakhstan is a multi-ethnic nation and the holiday has been celebrated since 1996. President Nursultan Nazarbayev signed the decree "About Declaration of May 1 as Kazakhstan People's Unity Day" on Oct. 18, 1996. On Dec. 13, 2001, the Law "On Holidays in the Republic of Kazakhstan" elevated Kazakhstan People's Unity Day to an official state holiday.

Assembly of People of Kazakhstan Seeks to Strengthen Interethnic Harmony

By Malika Orazgaliyeva

ASTANA – The 22nd session of the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan (APK) was held at the Palace of Peace and Accord April 23 under the chairmanship of Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev. The agenda of the session was defined as Mangilik El: One Country – One Destiny.

More than 1,500 people attended the gathering, which was held on the assembly's 20th anniversary. Speeches were given by APK veterans from all regions, chairmen of national and regional ethnic and cultural associations, deputies of Parlia-

ment, heads of central executive bodies, political parties, religious organisations, NGOs, representatives of the diplomatic corps and representatives of science, art and the media.

"We took the fate of the republic into our own hands and built the state respected worldwide. We did it in the name of our present happiness and well-being, as well as of future generations," said Nazarbayev.

"Today, all the people in Kazakhstan know, can see and experience how their wellbeing has improved thanks to the economic growth. It's a completely different country today com-

pared to 1995, for instance. The GDP per capita has grown by 18 times in 18 years since 1995. This is a Kazakh miracle, this is the reason we are living in these conditions today," the President stressed.

More than 93 percent of the people in Kazakhstan are satisfied with the state of affairs in the country, stated Nazarbayev quoting from the opinion poll conducted across the country by British pollster Ipsos MORI. That poll surveyed a nationally age- and gender-weighted sample of 1,000 adults older than 18 years old from March 16 to April 3.

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Assembly of People of Kazakhstan Seeks to Strengthen Interethnic Harmony

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He spoke at length about the history of Kazakhstan in the 20th Century which saw up to 5.6 million people forcefully exiled or relocated to the country through various Soviet efforts. And he proposed, that given how warmly the Kazakhs embraced the newcomers, many of whom we on the verge of starvation and death, to introduce a national day of gratitude among ethnic groups and towards the Kazakhs and to mark it on March 1, the day the APK was established.

"Today, I have to sincerely thank and praise non-Kazakhs who study the Kazakh language, and to the parents who teach their children to speak the language of their homeland from kindergarten. This will unite and create our single citizenship. The development of the Kazakh language has never in history seen such a scale and pace," the Kazakh leader said, urging parents to continue to encourage their children to learn the state language.

The President awarded jubilee and other medals to the APK members who were behind its creation and activists of ethno-cultural associations.

During the congress, Nazarbayev appointed new APK deputies Lyubov Ni and Oleg Dymov, and he stressed the importance of developing cultural-humanitarian exchange within the newly formed Eurasian Econom-



During the 22nd APK session President Nursultan Nazarbayev outlined initiatives, including the Strategy 2050, the Nurly Zhol, the five national reforms and Mangilik El concept to build a stronger nation.

ic Union (EAEU), referring to the union as a bicycle that would fall without constant movement.

A statement was adopted at the end of the session which noted that at the initiative of the President, the Year of the Assembly is marked by the inviolability of the politics of peace, harmony, stability and unity of people in achieving the well-being and prosperity of the country.

The APK session expressed full support of the Mangilik El, the national basis of civil values

and spiritual imperative of society. Nazarbayev noted that all the initiatives, including the Strategy 2050, the Nurly Zhol new economic stimulus programme, the five national reforms and Mangilik El concept are designed for many years ahead and only a powerful national mechanism can make it happen.

"These can be [the foundations of] a single nation of the future. We form a unique and still never repeated model of people's unity. We are united, first of all, by a

common love for our common home - Kazakhstan. Second is a social consensus in relation to the history of our ancient land and development of languages. Third is deep faith in the present and the future of our great state and its citizens. This is the basis of our eternal motherland, Mangilik El," Nazarbayev said.

The members noted the absolute priority of the new Kazakh national values, rule of law, state traditions and patriotism.

In the appeal, the session called

on all citizens to take part in the presidential election.

After the assembly completed its work, a gala concert was held in its honour.

The creation of the assembly in 1995 was a signal of the determination of the country and its President to ensure Kazakhstan, a country of more than 130 ethnic groups, did not fall into the abyss of inter-ethnic strife. Its representatives, drawn from all the ethnic groups living in Kazakhstan, are the guardians of the country's rich and harmonious ethnic diversity and ensure it is a strength rather than a weakness.

As part of this role, the assembly assesses all laws to make sure they meet the rigorous standards set out in the nation's Constitution to uphold the rights of ethnic groups - rights which were often ignored in the Soviet era - and promote respect and tolerance. But they also positively promote this diversity by operating cultural centres, specialist schools and media across the country.

APK is responsible for running nearly 90 schools providing education in the many languages of the country's varied population. It supports close to 200 specialised linguistic centres where children and adults can study 30 different languages and provides funding for newspapers and broadcasts in the native languages of its many citizens.

NATIONAL NEWS IN BRIEF

Immediately following newly elected President Nursultan Nazarbayev's inauguration on April 29, Nazarbayev re-nominated Karim Massimov Prime Minister of Kazakhstan. The re-appointment came later in the day by presidential decree following a plenary session of the Mazhilis (lower house of Parliament) with members of the legislature giving their unanimous consent to Massimov's candidature. Earlier the same day during a meeting with leaders of parliamentary factions, Nazarbayev nominated Massimov for the position of prime minister. The heads of factions also unanimously supported the nomination. "We are starting a new programme. I need to approve a commission, which immediately after the [May 1] holidays will proceed to the work. To save time on the process of familiarisation, I think we should maintain the continuity of the government. Karim Massimov is doing well, he has the potential, all the necessary knowledge and we can rely on him in accomplishing this job," said Nazarbayev. Massimov expressed gratitude for the President's trust and said he would direct all his efforts to accomplishing the President's goals.

"Kazakhstan has built an effective training system for its athletes that allows them to excel in international competitions," Vice Minister of Culture and Sports Saken Mussaibekov said at a May 4 media briefing. Recently, in Slovakia and Spain, Kazakhstan's team took third place at the 27th Winter Universiade, winning five gold and six silver medals. A week ago, Kazakhstan's men's national ice hockey team, scoring four wins in a row in Group A of the first division, entered the top of the highest division for the 2016 World Cup. According to the vice minister, such success is an indication of the quality of coaching success and the high quality of training of Kazakhstan's teams. "Our students' achievements are the result of very organised and painstaking training. In Central Asia, the future of winter sports is a hot topic and everyone knows that it will take a lot of resources to train our future generations of Olympians," Mussaibekov said. Last year, there were 15,761 people engaged in winter sports. Today, Kazakhstan has quite a system of training for athletes that fosters them from their initial steps and guides them to the peak of their career. Regional and national sports training schools teach students the finest sportsmanship. Students from these schools are then inducted into Kazakhstan's national teams, Mussaibekov said.

On May 3, the Birligi Mykty El Ozady Marathon, held in honour of the 550th anniversary of the Kazakh Khanate, began in Almaty. The marathon stretched from Almaty to Taldykorgan to Ayagoz to Akzhar and finished with the opening ceremony of the Dauletbai Batyr monument in the administrative centre of the Tarbagatai district of the East Kazakhstan region in Akzhar. "These events are the public's initiative. The 550th anniversary of the Kazakh Khanate is connected with the people and heroes of that time; today's youth need to know about them," coordinator of the public socio-cultural movement Uly Dala Kyrandary Aidyn Yegeubayev said. He also noted that on May 6, at the House of Culture in Akzhar, the national scientific-practical conference was held. A five-metre tall bronze bust of Dauletbai Batyr was opened on May 7.

It is planned to open offices representing the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan (APK) in all higher educational institutions in Kazakhstan, head of the APK Department at Gumilev Eurasian National University and member of APK Anatoly Bashmakov said at an April 30 press conference at the Central Communications Service (CCS).

Nazarbayev to Continue Current Policies, Institute Reforms in New Term

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"We knew we would face challenges," he commented. Falling commodity trade turnover, as Kazakhstan and Russia have seen recently, is to be expected under these conditions and does not speak to the viability of the union, he said. A more accurate indicator of the value of the union, he said, is the interest of more than 40 countries, including Vietnam, Turkey and countries of Eastern Europe, in establishing free-trade zones with the EAEU. Neither this crisis, nor sanctions, nor the war in Ukraine are perpetual conditions, he added. One day, there will be peace again there, he said, and with it, prosperity.

The President also said that he would be in Moscow to watch the May 9 Victory Day parades and expected to meet jointly and bilaterally with EAEU leaders to discuss trade the day before.

Nazarbayev also explicitly linked his Nurly Zhol economic stimulus package, which rests heavily on infrastructure development, with China's New Silk Road Economic Belt initiative. The two are "connected in a very interesting way," he said, noting that the Western Europe-Western China highway would be completed this year and would add to Kazakhstan's growing transit sector, which includes a railway that can transport goods from China to Germany and the newly opened railway through Turkmenistan to Iran, which Nazarbayev also called important. "Shipping from China to Europe grows week to week," he said.

The President announced that he expected a visit by Chinese President Xi Jinping early next month, during which they would consult on Chinese investment projects here, particularly projects relating to Kazakhstan's massive infrastructure development programme, Nurly Zhol.

On foreign policy, Nazarbayev said, "The priority is our neigh-

bours, "and China and Russia, as the biggest neighbours, will be Kazakhstan's focus. However, the country's multi-vector foreign policy will not change, and relations with the European Union, Kazakhstan's largest trading partner with \$56 billion in annual trade, the U.S. and South Korea, the other country he mentioned by name, are good and expected to remain so.

The P resident once again confirmed that, despite going into "economy mode" in the country, there would be no economy in social spending. He pointed out last year's streamlining of the government, in which the number of ministries and agencies were slashed, quipping that "that's what bureaucrats are good at - reproducing themselves," and said there would be no such streamlining of social payments or programmes.

The country will also continue to invest in its agricultural sector, he said, noting Kazakhstan subsidises its agriculture far less than the U.S. and EU do and that the country has great agricultural potential. According to Nazarbayev, agricultural subsidies were the last sticking point in Kazakhstan's negotiations on the World Trade Organisation (WTO) accession, which he was hopeful the country would achieve this year. He also said he was in personal control of the country's spectrum of development programmes and would ensure only beneficial ones survive.

Asked about the long-delayed Kashagan oil project, Nazarbayev admitted it was, in a sense, "a pain for us." But he said he hoped the project's problematic pipes would be replaced soon and that oil would be flowing by the end of this year or next year. A recent Royal Dutch Shell report estimated production restarting in 2017. The Kashagan oil project is about 10 years behind its initial timeline. Nazarbayev also added that he

believed the delay in the start of oil production wasn't all bad as this basically meant more oil remained in the ground for future generations to use.

Kazakhstan must develop in all directions, not only economically, Nazarbayev pointed out in response to questions, and in the country's quest to join the 30 most developed countries of the world, must equal them in culture as well. "[We] need new, modern works of art that show Kazakh values and traditions." He also said that the country's values of "tolerance and respect for each other," should be retained as Kazakhstan works to develop new values.

"Yesterday, I saw the results of all of the paths that we have walked," the President said when asked about his achievements. He repeated that he was "elated" at the result and at the voter turnout. "People can get tired of you," he said, but clearly this has not yet happened in Kazakhstan in relation to him.

During his tenure as leader of the country, Nazarbayev said, he helped "drag Kazakhstan out of the abyss of the early 1990s," when the country "was like a broken plate, cut off from everything." But from a starting point of \$400 per capita gross domestic product in the early 1990s, the country has reached \$13,000 today, and in the process built Astana, built universities, schools and infrastructure. It was not easy, he said. "Complicated times require complicated missions," he noted, but the country's social development and unity are achievements he is especially proud of.

Returning to the election itself, the President said he was sure there would be criticism of the election. "It would have been undemocratic if I were to intervene and try to influence the results of 97 percent [that voted for me] and the 95 percent [turnout] that are surreal to Western eyes. I could not," he said.

Re-elected President Inaugurated, Announces Five Reform Efforts

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The President said that he sees five large-scale domestic tasks facing the country.

"Firstly, we need to increase the proportion of the middle class as a support of our stability, develop business and help the country to become a state with a predominant number of middle-income residents. Secondly, we are a big country. Therefore, we need to develop a single internal market and balanced development of all regions. Thirdly, combating corruption is one of the main priorities of our work. Fourth, creation of new jobs. For this reason the industrial programme is being carried out and business is developing. Fifth, strengthen the unity of the nation at a new stage of history," Nazarbayev said.

The President noted that times of global change force nations to choose to reform or to regress. In his words, the task of the upcoming years is to strengthen Kazakhstan in spite of global storms to steadily become one of the top 30 most-developed countries.

"I offered five institutional reforms, which became my election platform. I view the result of voting on April 26 as a direct mandate of the nation for immediate reforms. And I am going to show all my will and determination, focus the government and consolidate efforts of society on the implementation of these reforms. In the nearest future, the National Modernisation Commission under the President will be created, with a mission to manage a phased implementation of five reforms and co-ordination of government bodies, the business sector and civil society," Nazarbayev stated.

In addition, the President announced the upcoming prepara-

tion of what he called a new Plan for the Nation.

"At the first meeting of the commission, I will present the Plan for the Nation which will include 100 Concrete Steps of Further State Building, which will explain what we are going to do in the framework of five reforms. The 100 Steps is our response to global and domestic challenges, as well as the plan to join the top 30 most-developed countries in the new historical conditions," Nazarbayev said.

The President explained that there is a clear sequence of implementation of the reforms.

Firstly, the upcoming reform will touch the civil service, which will be based on the principle of meritocracy.

Secondly, the reform will build an impartial judicial system that is affordable for businesses and investors.

Thirdly, the fundamental reforms will touch economic, educational, health care, industrial and transport systems.

Fourth, the implementation of the Mangilik El idea that will strengthen common civic identity, values and the unity of the diversified society of Kazakhstan.

Fifth, the reform will make the work of the government transparent and accountable to the citizens. It will ensure their safety in a troubled world, as well as comprehensive modernisation.

Later in the day, President Nazarbayev moved swiftly to re-nominate Karim Massimov as Prime Minister. Massimov was unanimously supported for the reappointment by the Majilis of Parliament, and appointed by a presidential decree. He now has up to 10 days according to the law to nominate the members of his government.

EURASIA&WORLD

WEDNESDAY, MAY 6, 2015

EXTERNAL NEWS IN BRIEF

During the recent meeting of Ambassador of Kazakhstan to Germany Bolat Nussupov with President of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of North Rhine-Westphalia Werner Gehrig, the parties agreed to organise a Kazakhstan Economy Day in Cologne at the end of June. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan specified that during the talks with Gehrig, the German side learned about the investment opportunities of Kazakhstan, the Nuryl Zhol new economic policy, the prospects for closer cooperation within the State Programme of Accelerated Industrial and Innovative Development (SPAIID) and the possibilities of cooperation within Astana EXPO 2017.

Deputy Executive Secretary of the UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Andrey Vassiliyev said that at a May 1 special meeting of the UNECE, Kazakhstan was unanimously elected chairman of the international organisation for the next two years. "In contrast to many of the most developed countries, Kazakhstan competently enough is passing through the global financial crisis without any social consequences for citizens. The country was able to become one of the important players in the international arena," he said. "I have followed the elections in Kazakhstan. I'm impressed by the fact that President Nazarbayev immediately after the election announced to the world community clear and specific plans for the further development of the country," he added. "I would like to congratulate the people of Kazakhstan and Nazarbayev on the election. This shows very broad popular support for the course that the President and the leadership of Kazakhstan have led in recent years and the belief that this course will lead people and the country to new achievements. The President said that there are two priorities: Eurasian integration within the [Eurasian Economic Union], as well as integration with China and Asian countries within the revival of the Great Silk Road. We are very encouraged by the fact that Kazakhstan was elected the chairman of our committee. For two years we will be working under the direction of Kazakhstan," he said.

Travel itineraries for guests of the Astana EXPO 2017 will be ready by the end of this year, announced Deputy Chairman of the Astana EXPO 2017 National Company Vera Kobalia at the recent opening of the Kazakh pavilion for EXPO 2015 in Italy. "We believe that it is necessary to offer specific tours to different people – tourists interested in visiting the nearby sights. In cooperation with travel agencies and experts in the field of tourism, we are working out travel itineraries, and they will be ready by the end of this year," Kobalia said. She also added that in 2016, travel packages and tickets for the exhibition will become available for potential guests. "I think that most of the visitors will be interested in our sights. If a tourist comes for a short time, he will be invited to visit the Burabay resort, and if he has few days, he can make a tour to the southern capital, Almaty," she added. Commissioner of the Astana EXPO 2017 Rapiil Zhoshybayev said that in the near future, negotiations with global stars to perform at the exhibition will begin and that experts are currently analysing who will be most likely to visit.

On May 1, the national pavilion of Kazakhstan began its work in Milan. Visitors there can learn about the agriculture, aquaculture and environment of the country. As experts expect, Kazakhstan's pavilion will be visited every day by 6,000–10,000 people. It should be noted that the area of the exhibition EXPO 2015 in Milan is more than one million square metres. The exhibition will last until Oct. 30, and organisers are expecting the arrival of 20 million visitors over the course of the expo.

Kazakh Delegation Urges More Progress at Major UN Non-Proliferation Conference



Kazakh Deputy Foreign Minister Yerzhan Ashikbayev delivers his remarks at the plenary session of the 2015 Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons on April 27 in New York.

By Aiman Turebekova

Kazakh Deputy Foreign Minister Yerzhan Ashikbayev addressed the plenary session of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) review conference April 27 in New York.

The senior diplomat said Astana remained convinced that the NPT is the "foundation of the non-proliferation regime and global

security," which "should be fully strengthened."

According to the foreign ministry's press release, Ashikbayev said "Kazakhstan considers that it is necessary to seek effective and balanced implementation of the three components of the treaty: nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and peaceful uses of atomic energy."

Ashikbayev's remarks emphasised further that in the face of

the "deteriorating situation" with international security, adherence to the fundamental principles of international law was vital, including "peaceful settlement of disputes, non-use or threat of use of force, territorial integrity and inviolability of borders."

Addressing the conference delegates, the deputy minister also highlighted his nation's contribution to nuclear disarmament and non-pro-

liferation. The diplomat mentioned Astana's already-implemented initiative to declare Aug. 29 as the UN International Day against Nuclear Tests and a proposal on adoption of a UN Universal Declaration of a Nuclear-Weapons-Free World. He also urged the delegates to back The ATOM Project, a Kazakh-sponsored campaign seeking to raise worldwide awareness of the tragic impact of nuclear tests and mobilise support for early ratification of the treaty banning the tests altogether.

As co-chair of the Conference on Article XIV of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), which will be held in September in New York, Ashikbayev once again called upon the countries which have not yet signed or ratified the CTBT to do so as soon as possible.

The diplomat's statement also welcomed ratification of the protocol on negative assurances to the treaty on the zone free of nuclear weapons in Central Asia (the Semipalatinsk Treaty) by France, UK, Russia, and China and urged the U.S. government to complete the process of its ratification as soon as possible.

Development of peaceful nuclear energy is an inalienable right of each of the NPT member countries and to this end, Kazakhstan is working closely with the International

Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Kazakhstan is nearing completion of a joint project with the IAEA to host the bank of low-enriched uranium under the agency's auspices.

The 2015 NPT review conference is being held April 27-May 22 at the United Nations (UN). According to the UN website, the NPT is "a landmark international treaty whose objective is to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons and weapons technology, to promote cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and to further the goal of achieving nuclear disarmament and general and complete disarmament." So far, the NPT represents the only binding commitment in a multilateral treaty to the goal of disarmament by the nuclear-weapon states.

Conferences to review the operation of the treaty have been held at five-year intervals since the accord went into effect in 1970. Each conference has sought to find agreement on a final declaration that would assess the implementation of the treaty's provisions and make recommendations on measures to further strengthen it, with anti-nuclear activists and a number of states, including Kazakhstan, urging more progress in the practical implementation of the treaty by all of its signatories.

One Victory Campaign Commemorates 70th Anniversary of WWII Allied Victory

By Malika Orzagaliyeva

ASTANA – The United States embassy in Kazakhstan has launched a series of programmes under the title One Victory, to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the Allied Victory in World War II.

The official website of the U.S. embassy in Kazakhstan reported that the mission has been organising cultural events to commemorate WWII and honour the generation of Kazakhs and Americans whose sacrifices and struggles made victory possible, as well as support local organisations in recording and preserving veterans' stories for future generations.

Numerous activities supported by the U.S. mission have already been held in Kazakhstan.

A photo exhibition took place featuring photos of the fighting on the front lines, the achievements of women during the war, life on the Kazakh and U.S. home fronts and cooperation between the United States and the Soviet Union, including the Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic (SSR). The exhibition features Kazakh and U.S. heroes, untold stories and a declassified map displaying the routes used by Allied Forces to transport supplies through the Kazakh SSR to the Soviet Union and China. The photo exhibition was scheduled to and will remain open in Almaty and Astana in May and then continue on to other cities throughout Kazakhstan.

As part of the Living Histories project, in February the Council of WWII Veterans met via Skype with representatives of the U.S.-based organisation Veterans of Foreign Wars to discuss international best practices in honouring and preserving the memories of veterans worldwide. Also, throughout March and April, the Council of WWII Veterans and Access Microscholarship English Language Programmes each organised student volunteers to document the memories and experiences of veterans and share them with their schools.

In partnership with local cinemas throughout April, the U.S. Embassy featured films documenting life during WWII free of charge.

In order to highlight songs popular in both the U.S. and the Kazakh SSR during WWII, on April 20-28, the 1940's jazz group the Ari Roland Quartet visited Al-

maty, Astana and other selected Kazakh cities to perform for veterans and the general public.

The Heritage Association of Afghan Veterans is producing a documentary film featuring WWII veterans recounting their part in the victory and will broadcast the programme throughout Kazakhstan.

It is planned that eminent historian Dr. Timothy Naftali will deliver lectures on cooperation between the Allied Forces during WWII in Astana and Almaty in May. Dr. Naftali has a Ph.D. from Harvard University and is the former director of the Richard M. Nixon Presidential Library.

Also, the U.S. mission has an active social media campaign. Since February it has regularly posted photos, infographics, and other information about World War II on the Embassy and its Almaty Consulate Facebook pages, Twitter feeds, and Instagram accounts.

As the Embassy's Facebook page reiterated, the United States provided vital lend-lease supplies to the Soviet Union. The Kazakh SSR was a key partner in this effort and an important transit corridor during World War II.

Before World War II, it seemed unlikely that the United States would help the communist country, which was led by Joseph Stalin. However, in 1940, President Franklin Roosevelt decided to improve relations with the USSR because of his strong belief that Hitler's Germany was the biggest threat to world peace, the Share America web site read.

During World War II, all the republics of the former Soviet Union suffered catastrophic casualties. Official figures say that 26.6 million Soviet citizens died, including 8.7 million military personnel, the largest loss of life among the allies.

According to Share America, although the U.S. was still formally neutral when the 1941 Lend-Lease Act was approved, the law allowed it to become what Roosevelt called the "arsenal of democracy" by sending military supplies to those fighting Nazi Germany. The Soviet Union became the second-largest recipient of U.S. aid; the British Commonwealth received the most, acquiring \$11.3 billion worth of munitions and other materials, including industrial equipment, raw materials, clothing and food.

The Lend-Lease Act was the principal means for providing U.S. military aid to foreign nations during World War II. The act authorised the president to

transfer arms or any other defence materials for which Congress appropriated money to "the government of any country whose defence the President deems vital to

the defence of the United States." Britain, the Soviet Union, China, Brazil, and many other countries received weapons under this law, www.history.com reported.

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ECONOMY

WEDNESDAY, MAY 6, 2015

World Bank Project Brings Stable Supply of Electricity to Almaty

By Michelle Witte

ASTANA – April 30th was the closing day of a five-year, \$200.9 million World Bank-supported project to bring much-needed electricity to Kazakhstan's largest city, Almaty.

The Alma Electricity Transmission project financed the construction of a 321.7-kilometre overhead transmission line, the World Bank website reports. The line carries

power from the Almaty region's Balkhash thermal power plant to Almaty city's grid, and has allowed the power of the electricity supply to be doubled from 1,000 to 2,000 mega-volt amperes (MVA). The new line also connects Almaty city with Alma substation, which was modernised and had its capacity increased through the project, and the YuKGRES substation, linking their power supplies to consumers.

The installation of the line involved the construction of 889

towers and the placement of 3,743 tonnes of cable. A 344 km fibre optic cable to be used in the region's telecommunications systems was also deployed.

Almaty is one of Kazakhstan's most energy deficient regions, the World Bank reports, and produces less than half of what the region needs. The population, however, continues to grow steadily, and the city's transit, tourism, and other sectors are also increasing in size and scope. Its new metro system, one of the youngest in the world, relies on a steady supply of electricity, the World Bank notes. Industry, construction and increasing household consumption had taxed the city's grid. In 2009, the World Bank reports, there were 29 blackouts totalling 111 hours. In 2014, with the project nearing completion, there were two, totalling just over an hour. (The actual result exceeds the project's stated target, which World Bank documents show to be 10 outages for a total of 40 hours without power.)

The Kazakh government contributed \$122.9 million to the project; the World Bank provided a \$78 million loan.



UNIDO, Eurasian Economic Commission Advance Industrial Development Programme

Staff Report

A joint programme on innovative development, technology transfer, capacity building support for business infrastructure, industrial parks and clusters as well as trade capacity and export support between the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO) and Eurasian Economic Commission is under development now.

Member of the board in charge of industry and agriculture at the Eurasian Economic Commission (EEC) Sergey Sidorsky, who participated in the International Conference on Sustainable Industrial Development in European and Central Asian Countries with Middle-Income noted that the main task in the industrial sphere for Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) members

is the transition to a new technology sector with high labour productivity. The solution to this key problem requires a specific approach to minimise expenditures and maximise the effect of such a transition. There are many examples where countries have solved problems concerning forced introduction of new technologies, efficient energy use, optimisation of cooperation chains and expansion into new foreign markets in the framework of various types of partnerships.

"In order to develop industrial complexes of the member states of the EAEU, we should use the knowledge and best practices of leading international specialised institutions for economic and industrial development. This approach allows us to achieve the effect of integration into the global production cycle and participation in global production

chains. In this area, UNIDO offers needed knowledge, resources and experience. Moreover, it is an effective platform for the exchange of ideas concerning industrial development," said Sidorsky.

The conference was organised by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Belarus and UNIDO, as part of the UN Development Programme. The event was aimed at promoting the growth of mutual trade, initiation of partnerships with middle-income countries in the field of industrial innovation and the creation of a platform for the joint development of innovative small- and medium-sized enterprises with the involvement of experts from UNIDO, the UN and other international institutions. Representatives of about 20 countries and heads of international organisations attended the conference.

TCC, Nazarbayev University Launch New Commercialisation Collaboration

By Michelle Witte

ASTANA – Nazarbayev University (NU) and the Technology Commercialisation Centre (TCC) in Astana are beginning a new form of collaboration that will see students from NU's master of business administration programme working, hands on, with projects funded through the TCC's ongoing grants programme.

The new collaboration fits within TCC's overall theme of connecting business to academia, TCC Lead Researcher Erik Azulay said in an interview with this newspaper on April 24. "[The business students] get to use the skills they've been taught in a real life situation, with real companies – and more importantly, these companies are small companies, so if they do a business analysis and they give some advice ... there's a very good chance that advice will be acted on ... they'll have a chance to have a real impact. That was attractive to them." For TCC's projects, the chance to get in-depth business analyses was very appealing. "It was a win-win, basically," he said.

The collaboration is part of the practicum portion of NU's full-time MBA programme, Assistant Dean of Marketing at NU Richard Castleberry said in an April 14 interview. The practicum, which allows students to choose from three possible hands-on work programmes, of which TCC's projects make up one, is one of the ways NU's MBA programme hopes to differentiate itself from others. "[I]n some cases, depending on the project, depending on what they're doing, [the students] could hypothetically be located within a functioning company, looking at documents, doing a lot of the ground work." The joint work will launch in the next week or so, and final reports and results will be generated by this fall.

Five teams of three to five students will be working on TCC-funded projects, Azulay explained. They will create business plans, decide whether and how projects should expand or scale-up their businesses, find end users and decide on real market and spin-off potential. The MBA

students, who chose from seven projects pitched by TCC, settled upon a five projects: a project producing a new type of coke briquette, a project to detect counterfeit goods with bar code scanning technology, a project developing new generation batteries based on water, a cloud-based project on sharing documentation that requires seals and signatures and a project that has created a new type of power control switches. The TCC offers two types of grants – proof of concept and industrial prototype – for projects at different stages of development, and both are represented in the MBA students' choices.

While the main point of the cooperation is to provide immediate benefits to the students and the entrepreneurs, it could also pay off down the line, Azulay pointed out. Something that appealed to the MBA students, he reported, is that if the projects go well, more opportunities to work together may come up. "These small companies are run by scientists who are trying to be entrepreneurs, so if [their projects] turn out really, really well ... there's a chance that they'll going to need business people to run the business." Of course, the programme comes with no promises, but the introductions and relationships built there could end up lasting, he said.

"A lot of our projects are going forward and going to be successful businesses as they are now," Azulay said, "but for the next level of scaling up and attracting investors, outside investors to get even bigger – that's where you need some more formal documentation. You need a business plan, you need a profit-loss forecast, you need some financial timelines for the next three years, those kinds of things, which we haven't done, and the teams haven't done. And maybe the teams even can't do them, but that would be perfect for an MBA to do, right?"

The TCC was created by Kazakhstan's Ministry of Education and Science to help scientists and innovators bring their ideas to market. Its grant programme is funded in part by the World Bank.

ECONOMY NEWS IN BRIEF

The process of Kazakhstan joining the World Trade Organisation (WTO) will be completed in a few months, said Director of the WTO office of accession Chiedu Osakwe in a May 3 statement. "Despite the uncertain global economic situation, the future of Kazakhstan is very bright, because President Nursultan Nazarbayev, as a strategic reformer, set a high standard level of internal modernisation and integration into the global economy," he stressed. He also said that he followed the presidential elections in Kazakhstan with excitement and heard Nazarbayev's first performance immediately after the election. "I congratulate the people of Kazakhstan and the President on a well-deserved victory! This election result is for the benefit for the people and for its President – for the implementation of its plans to support the existing stability in the country and the process of integration into the global economy. We expect that in a few weeks, negotiations on Kazakhstan joining the WTO will be completed and in a few months all work on this process will be finished and Kazakhstan will become a full member of our organisation. It will be a well-deserved result of the work of the government and of reformist Nazarbayev," said Osakwe.

"As part of the second wave of privatisation, the largest number of objects was realised in the services sector," said Deputy Finance Minister Ruslan Dalenov at an April 30 briefing in the Central Communications Service (CCS). "The service sector leads in the number of objects." According to Dalenov, the amount of proceeds from the privatisation funds was 43 billion tenge (US\$231.6 million), 25 billion tenge (US\$134.6 million) of which was bailed out due to the implementation of industrial projects. "The bulk of the proceeds from the privatisation of the assets entered in the holdings mostly belonging to Samruk Kazyna," he stressed. Dalenov said the most expensive object was KEGOC; its shares were sold for 13.1 billion tenge (US\$70.5 million) as part of the People's IPO programme. This was followed by the five companies sold off by Kazakhstan Temir Zholy, including Temir Zhol Energo, Kamkor Locomotive and Temir Zhol Zhondeu Transport Service Centre. The highest purchasing activity was observed in the Almaty and the Ak-tobe regions. According to Dalenov, 122 objects are now on sale.

"Within the long-term financing of the processing industry, seven second-tier banks approved 11 projects worth 10.6 billion tenge (US\$57.1 million) due to the second tranche of the National Fund of Kazakhstan," the Development Bank of Kazakhstan (DBK) reported on April 30. According to the DBK, two projects – production of beverages in the Almaty region and production of food in the Kyzylorda region – have already been financed. Approximately \$155 billion tenge (US\$8.1 million) in funds were allocated for refinancing; thus, 3 percent of the 50 billion tenge (US\$269.3 million) allocated has already been used. According to the statement, the DBK has been using funds of the second tranche since March for financing projects in the mining industry within Nurly Zhol, the new economic policy. In accordance with the approved conditions, financing of new projects should not exceed 50 percent of the second tranche, refinancing of early issued credits, 25 percent, and refilling current assets, 25 percent. The credit conditions approved by the government for loans are as follows. The nominal rate of return should be no more than 6 percent per year. The loan term is ten years for new projects and refinancing of investment loans, five years for refilling working capital and refinancing loans. The loan currency is tenge, with the financing limit per loan from 200 million (US\$1.1 million) to 5 billion tenge (US\$26.9 million). The term of spending credit resources will be 18 months on credit issued for investment purposes, six months for refilling working assets and refinancing early-issue DBK loans. The DBK, created in 2001 is now part of the Baiterek National Managing Holding and is the national institute for development of the modernisation and non-recourse and infrastructure sector of Kazakhstan.

Shymkent to Get New Airport Terminal

By Aina Zhetpisbayeva

A new international terminal will be built at Shymkent Airport, it was announced at a meeting of the management of the national railway company Kazakhstan Temir Zholy and the akimat of South Kazakhstan Oblast.

The memorandum of bilateral cooperation on the project was signed by Director General of the Airport Management Group

Claude Badan and Deputy Governor of South Kazakhstan Saparbek Tuyakbayev. The Airport Management Group is the management company of the six public airports of Kazakhstan.

The concept for the new terminal was presented at the signing ceremony. According to the concept, the project will be implemented to 2030 in two phases. The first phase of construction will be completed in 2020. The total area of the terminal will be 34,000 square metres.

It is the first time this type of airport development concept will be used in Kazakhstan. Freight and passenger terminals will be integrated with the railway, bus stations and transport-logistics centre that is now being built.

The Airport Management Group has conducted an evaluation of the safety, security and infrastructure facilities of the airport. Specialists at the company developed recommendations to improve the situation and comply with international standards.

In many European countries, multimodal transport hubs, including airports, are normal. Not far from the airport there are bus and train stations and even ports. At present, the Airport Management Group is developing feasibility studies and preliminary data. The new terminal will be built on the north or south of the airport, where new bus and railway stations will also be located. At present, the capacity of Shymkent airport is 200,000 passengers a year. Ac-

ording to preliminary calculations, this figure will increase to 2.5 million.

In addition, 1,000 new jobs will be created. Shymkent is the third most populous city in Kazakhstan and South Kazakhstan is the country's most populated region. As noted by meeting attendees, the construction of the airport should serve to increase in passenger and cargo transit through the region, which will provide economic growth.



Construction of the new international terminal is underway at Shymkent airport. Photo credit: Khusan Azizov

BUSINESS

WEDNESDAY, MAY 6, 2015

BUSINESS NEWS IN BRIEF

Kazakhstan intends to significantly reduce its carbon footprint, Minister of Energy Vladimir Shkolnik said at an April 30 meeting titled "Improving the legislative acts in the sphere of green economy: waste management and emission control." Kazakhstan's index on carbon dioxide emission per capita is above the world level and requires a search for effective ways on emissions reduction. According to the minister, Kazakhstan is one of the active participants of international negotiating processes and fulfils duties under the convention and agreement on changing climate and reducing carbon footprint. As a result, in 2014 the country implemented the first national plan on greenhouse gas emissions and changes were made to current legislative acts.

Beginning in May, the Kazakh Ministry of Finance will set quotas for individuals to import goods from Russia. The ministry specified that the quotas are applied to 16 categories of goods. Goods of the same name (even clothes of the same size and style) will have duty-free import on two garments, two pairs of shoes, one fur and/or leather product, three perfumes or cosmetics, five jewellerys, two mobile phones and/or laptops, one bike or carriage and 10 kilogrammes of food. The Kazakh state revenue committee believes that the order of movement of goods for personal use should be regulated in national legislation. The country would follow with such a position in deliberations with the Eurasian Economic Commission (EEC). The EEC regulations were just discussed regarding the import of goods for personal use in the new customs code of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU). The question is the criteria by which imported refers to goods for personal use and quantitative quotas for certain items. The position of Russian, Belarusian and Kazakh customs services was united: there is need for quotas. Belarus and Kazakhstan have already introduced them at home. In the three countries, unified restrictions now operate only by cost and weight (but are quantitative for alcohol and tobacco). Air travellers can import products duty-free and without bills for 10,000 euro and the rest for 1,500 euro; by weight, not more than 50 kilogrammes. These rules are established by the agreement of Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan, but the customs of each country may determine what is considered as personal, i.e. not for sale.

The Astana Financial Centre, to be created based on the infrastructure of EXPO 2017, will be given specific status, head of state Nursultan Nazarbayev announced at the April 29 inauguration ceremony. "Based on the high technology infrastructure of EXPO 2017, the financial centre called Astana will be created," Nazarbayev stressed. According to the President, cardinal structural reforms will be carried out as part of the industrialisation process to ensure economic growth. "The health and education sphere will meet standards of member states of the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). Our country will become a transparent and logistics centre of Eurasia," the President highlighted. "Our community comprises many independent cultures and becomes stronger and more unified. Today, all of us have the common values of Mangilik Yel (Kazakh for Eternal Nation) – civil society, strong work ethic, honesty, science and education, tolerance, honesty and patriotism," noted the head of state.

The Ministry for Investment and Development reported April 30 that number of Kazakh companies get discounts on rail freight. At the end of 2014, discounts for transportation of goods were provided for SSGPO, Aluminium of Kazakhstan, Arcelor Mittal Temirtau, Orken, Taraz Metallurgical Plant, KazAzot, Kazphosphate and Kazzinc. In 2015, reduced rates will be provided to the following enterprises: KSP Steel, Aluminium of Kazakhstan, SSGPO, Arcelor Mittal Temirtau, KazAzot and Bapy Mining. According to the ministry, applications for discounts from other companies are under consideration.

Nazarbayev University Innovation Cluster Shows Positive Results, Says Vice President

By Talgat Issenov

Professor Kanat Baigarin, vice-president of Nazarbayev University (NU), is also director general of Nazarbayev University Research and Innovation System (NURIS). In an interview with The Astana Times, Baigarin spoke about the development of the NU innovative cluster, the most advanced centre in the country designed to solve the task set by Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev.



Kanat Baigarin

What is NURIS and how does it structure its work?

With the creation of NU, a series of research centres was organised two years ago by combining the facilities into an innovative cluster.

Overseas individuals and companies feel the benefits of investment in science and they are not afraid of the risks. The Kazakh attitude toward science remains at the same level and an attempt to change the situation will fail as long as the mentality of the scientists does not change.

NURIS became the first centre which conducts research and runs the selection of promising projects in terms of the possibility of commercialisation. We started from scratch: set the task of the development of the technological process from the fast passage of scientific development to the stage of commercialisation and introduction. From approximately 200 NU research projects for subsequent commercialisation, 30 projects have applied for funding, 16 of which were later selected. These 16 works were sent abroad for an independent assessment. As a result of examination, seven projects of economic prospects have been approved for funding. These projects are in the areas of IT, renewable energy and technology

transfer and are currently being implemented in the newly-opened NU Technopark.

In the Technopark laboratories, Kazakhstan scientists work on the creation of environmentally-friendly batteries and in areas of engineering, biology, etc.

When will the NU-innovative products come to market?

It's already happening. For example, energy efficiency projects are used by some domestic enterprises. Also, we have developed a technology that allows reuse of the substance that remains after gold leaching (usually, the substance is discarded).

In the future, NURIS intends to attract scientists from different countries as it is accepted abroad. Foreign organisations engaged in scientific research compete with each other to see who will "steal" a talented scientist. If out of 100 projects one will be truly be a breakthrough, all costs will be repaid many times over.

The NASA-based Singularity University operates in the California Silicon Valley. It is the centre which selects "the best of the best" on a competitive basis from all over the world. They should be on the Singularity University campus constantly for ten weeks, where they study and work for 16-

18 hours a day. In 2014, our young NU scientist Damel Mektepbayeva won the competition. As part of the international team of four people, she has become one of the founders of Hoop diagnostic ring, which is now being introduced for use in various medical centres. The invention entered the five best in the world at the international competition of startups.

This year we will hold the second competition to send our scientist to Singularity University.

One of the distinguishing features of NU is the involvement of the teaching staff in research. Foreign NU professors also work on the projects for Kazakhstan.

Don't other leading universities in the country have such an approach to innovation?

Of course, they have their own talents, but we were the first who approached this issue systematically. We also have a special office of commercialisation which evaluates projects from the material point of view. We want to introduce such a practice everywhere in the country.

Has NURIS achieved a complete understanding with the government in terms of funding?

Of course; we would not have evolved without support. With regard to Kazakhstan, major innovative research is only possible with the direct involvement of the state.

There is such a definition as academic freedom. However, national necessity exists with it. At NU, we try to find the right balance between these two principles. We have academic freedom, but we also have tasks from the state. The very creation of our innovation cluster is a direct government order.

The next step is creating conditions for the emergence of research centres such as ours. Work in this

direction is already underway; the Ministry of Education and Science announced plans to open ten leading research institutes in the country.

Does NURIS receive sufficient funding from the state?

Over the next five years, Kazakhstan plans to increase funding for science tenfold. As far as I know, science now gets 0.2 percent of the GDP. When it reaches 3 percent, it will be enough. Not only NU, but the whole science of Kazakhstan should receive good material support.

Only 15 scientists worked in the research centres of our university at the time of creation. Now the number is 200. We offer an opportunity to work both in the scientific processes and with students.

Does NURIS research fall under the State Programme of Accelerated Industrial and Innovative Development?

Of course; in particular, energy-saving projects. Due to the small population in Kazakhstan, the market for high-tech products is very small. We also need to focus on foreign markets. Membership in the [Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) should positively affect us in terms of promotion of innovative technologies.

With which foreign universities and research centres do NU research centres collaborate?

There are several, in particular, the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory (CA) and the Argonne National Laboratory (Chicago). Through them we have access to their partners. Collaboration with the Berkeley centre in the IT field will bear fruit in the near future.

Returning to the Kazakhstan scientists of NURIS, do you face bureaucratic obstacles while attracting young talent?

We do not limit ourselves to the NU staff; a few people came to our cluster from the outside. We are open to all and if the project is interesting, we will not hinder it. We attract scientists from the regions. Of course we have certain requirements, such as a candidate's knowledge of English. But if the work is interesting from a commercial point of view, generally it has no barriers.

How are things for your scientists with material support and social issues?

If professors from abroad come, everything is on the level. Our compatriots, who have already worked in foreign scientific centres, find NU attractive.

The material side of things is very important, but a scientist obsessed only with it is not a scientist. He should primarily assess the scientific prospects for implementing ideas. NU provides this opportunity.

We have almost nothing to complain about, except for one thing – the Kazakhstan-adopted system of procurement, particularly state procurement, which is absolutely not suited for modern science. Scientists in Europe and the U.S. get reagents in a week and the equipment is purchased within a period of one to six months, depending on its type. We wait for the same reagents for three months, equipment – for one year, at best.

First, existing orders negatively influence our competitiveness. And secondly, push off the people we would like to bring to our studies.

The current public procurement law needs to be changed drastically, at least in terms of science.

We do not need to catch up with Western science and innovation processes; the time for that has passed. But we are able to make breakthrough projects that will work in the future.

Kazakh, Turkish Business People Cut Deals at Istanbul Building Materials Expo

By Ksenia Voronina

Kazakh and Turkish businessmen signed agreements at the recent 38th International Exhibition of Building Materials YAPI-TURKEYBUILD, where Kazakhstan was the chief guest, according to the press service of the Kazakh embassy in Turkey.

Involving 1,300 manufacturers of building materials from 42 countries, it is the largest exhibition of its kind in the region. Ambassador of Kazakhstan to Turkey Zhanseit Tuymebayev

spoke at the opening ceremony. He noted the important role of Turkish construction companies operating in the Kazakh market. Noting the favourable investment climate and government support for foreign investors in the framework of the Nury Zhol economic programme, he highlighted that the country adopted amendments to the Law on Foreign Investors in 2014. The diplomat called on Turkish businessmen to invest in the creation of factories producing building materials in Kazakhstan.

Kazakh and Turkish business-

men discussed promising areas of cooperation in the construction and production of construction materials during the exhibition. Both sides entered into mutually beneficial agreements and contracts and exchanged experience in the construction industry.

The Kazakh delegation included Deputy Chairman of the Committee of Construction, Production of Building Materials and Housing Abilman Dosanov, Deputy Chairman of Union of Builders of Kazakhstan Omari Harbediya as well as representatives of major Kazakh construction companies.



Seventeen Projects to Be Launched at Aktau Seaport

By Olga Zolotykh

AKTAU – Plans are underway to launch 17 projects on the territory of the Aktau Seaport Special Economic Zone (SEZ) in the next two years.

The SEZ, established by a presidential decree, has been operating since Jan. 1, 2003. The territory was initially only 227.1 hectares, most of which was occupied by the port expansion project to the north, and at first only three projects were implemented: Arcelor Mittal, Cappell and a fibre glass pipe plant. As a result of successful development of the allocated land and investors' interest, the SEZ has been expanded to 2,000 hectares. Seven separate plots of land in the industrial zone were allocated for SEZ purposes.

Engineering infrastructure subzone No. 3, which is the most compact on the territory, was built from 2009-2012 at a cost of 3.3 billion tenge (US\$17.8 million). All networks, roads and railways were finished. The development of sub-zone No. 1 was launched in November 2012 and construction is nearing completion.

"Since the establishment of the Aktau Seaport SEZ, the total investment of the companies that are currently operating, under construction and will be introduced until 2028 is about 30 billion tenge (US\$161.8 million). Production volume as of Jan. 1 amounted to 223 billion tenge (US\$1.2 billion), including preferences and benefits that we provide to the participants; it does not include social taxes and emissions for the environment. Since 2007, the enterprises of the SEZ paid more than 19 billion tenge (US\$102.5 million) in taxes," said SEZ director Amirbek Tulegenov.

Today, the SEZ has 33 registered participants, nine projects implemented, including factories for the production of marine steel constructions, oil pipes, Fibreglass and

insulated pipes, offshore modular containers and road building materials, and about 1,000 jobs have been created.

This year, six projects worth 8 billion tenge (US\$43.1 million) will be launched: Dostyk Polymer, DSK-Aktau, Azersun Centre of Production and Logistics, Pietro Fiorintini Kazakhstan, DSK Karaoykuryly and Cha-Kur Medical Farm. The main launch of the enterprises is planned for October-November and 11 more projects are expected.

Plans are also in the works for the launch of Cha-Kur, which will produce medical infusion solutions. Construction and implementation were delayed numerous times, as the project ran into legislative difficulties since it was begun in 2008. When changes were made in the tax law and chemistry was separated from pharmacology, the plant under construction could not rely on SEZ preferences since it fell beyond its major activities. At the end of 2012, it became possible to include these activities in SEZ production. Problems then started with the workers migrating from China, who had to mount equipment and train staff.

"Installation will take about three months; commissioning, 45 days. Training of staff will take two months, so overall up to seven months are needed. It is necessary that experts from China work here all the time, but problems started in 2013. They come on a visitor visa and two months are not enough. We need two more visits. Why they do not get a work permit? The problem is that there are narrowly-focused specialists in China. A specialist, for example, assembles only one detail for many years and he is the one in the company. The diploma confirmation is required for the entrance permit, but their diplomas do not meet our standards. That's why their specialists do not get permission," said Tulegenov.

EDITORIALS

WEDNESDAY, MAY 6, 2015

Proud Day for Kazakhstan and a New Step Forward for Our Nation

Today is a proud day for Kazakhstan. In the midst of uncertain times for the country, the region and the world economy, the people of Kazakhstan have again demonstrated their unity and the strength of our government. More importantly, the people of Kazakhstan have exercised their democratic right peacefully.

There may be some who criticise our elections. While it is always wise to listen to constructive criticism from friends, we must remember how far we have come as a nation. Today we can be proud that the elections were open, transparent and fair.

Elections in Kazakhstan require enormous logistics. More than nine million of our citizens voted all around our vast country in 9,741 voting stations. Despite all the difficulties, the April 26 election was essential.

As we have seen many times, challenging times require bold decisions. As we move ahead, it is likely more hard choices will have to be made to both guide Kazakhstan successfully through the trials and keep the country on course to reach its long-term goal of joining the ranks of the top 30 global economies by 2050. Against this background, it is easy to see why the call to bring forward the scheduled presidential election from 2016 to this year has received such widespread support.

The call, originally made by the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan which represents the interests of the country's ethnic groups, received backing from both chambers of Parliament and many other groups. The Constitutional Council then confirmed it.

It is clear why an early election was in the national interest. It will give the President and the new Government that he will appoint a fresh and clear mandate as the country grapples with the complex challenges we now face. Now the campaign is over, we can enjoy complete focus from the Government on guiding the country through these short-term dangers.

We can trust that the right long-term decisions will continue to be made for Kazakhstan's future.

The first exit polls showed that the incumbent President Nursultan Nazarbayev recorded another massive victory, gaining 97.5 percent of the popular vote (according to the Institute of Democracy), which has also seen an unprecedented turnout of 95.11 percent.

President Nazarbayev has always been the clear favourite to win another term. His popularity, as demonstrated not just by election results but also by independent polls, remains very high across the country. Kazakh citizens rightly value his success not only in delivering economic growth and rising living standards but also in helping create a stable and successful country where peoples of so many different backgrounds live in an often-troubled part of the world.

President Nazarbayev is the right man at the right time. The dramatic fall in the global price of oil – with the expected reduction in revenues – is affecting all oil-producing countries. The world economy has still not recovered from the great financial crisis. The Euro-zone, Kazakhstan's biggest trading partner, is still in trouble, too.

Confidence in the global economy has also been hit by an increase in geo-political threats and tensions. We have seen a breakdown in relations between East and West. The crisis in Ukraine has seen economic sanctions imposed which have a damaging knock-on impact. Russia's currency has fallen sharply in value and its economy has been hit.

So at a time when the global prospects are so uncertain and Kazakhstan faces many short-term challenges, the country decided President Nazarbayev's experience and leadership remain vital to its future. It was the people of Kazakhstan who showed up in record numbers to make that call. They made the right one.

Kazakhstan and China: Close Neighbours that Build Mutually Beneficial Ties

Kazakhstan's ties with China have been growing exponentially ever since the two countries formed diplomatic relations in 1992. Today, bilateral relations between the two neighbours are flourishing. Whether in trade, commerce or diplomacy, Kazakhstan and China are key strategic partners.

The foundation of the relationship remains its economic benefits. As both countries have enjoyed recent high growth, so economic ties between Kazakhstan and China have intensified. Chinese foreign direct investment (FDI) in Kazakhstan is one example. The value of Chinese FDI in Kazakhstan today is now more than \$17 billion, placing it in the top sources of FDI in Kazakhstan.

Energy is also a key area for cooperation. China's growing economy requires raw resources to feed demand and Kazakhstan's vast reserves of these materials makes it a valuable trade partner. China has invested heavily in building pipelines and in buying stakes in existing and new fields in Kazakhstan. For example, in 2014 KazMunayGas and the China National Petroleum Corporation signed an agreement to construct a \$150 million plant to manufacture oil and gas pipes near Almaty. Looking ahead, Kazakhstan will launch more than 20 joint projects with Chinese companies, many of them focusing on the energy sector. Kazakhstan should welcome this investment and China's commitment. It will provide new revenues and bring in new partners for our energy industry to add to those from Russia, Europe, the U.S. and India.

Another area of growth has been infrastructure and capital projects. Just earlier this year, the two countries signed 33 deals worth \$23 billion. This is on top of a \$100 million project to construct a joint, full-service logistics terminal project in the Chinese city of Lianyungang that was launched during President Nursultan Nazarbayev's visit to China in 2014. One area where infrastructure cooperation has really been thriving is Khorgos – a free economic

zone on the Chinese-Kazakh border that enables citizens of the two countries to trade and enjoy local entertainment.

Only last year Kazakhstan's national railway company Kazakhstan Temir Zholy began the construction of a dry port in this zone. Kazakhstan's government has also made plans to invest \$477 million in joint projects with China in the region. The importance of Khorgos to Kazakhstan should not be understated. It already acts as a strong driver of economic growth in the Almaty Oblast and Kazakhstan as a whole and will spur economic growth across the whole of Eurasia. As President Nazarbayev made clear during the presidential election campaign, industrialisation and economic growth based on diversification will be among the main pillars of Kazakhstan's plan to tackle today's economic challenges. Khorgos and other infrastructure projects with China will play a vital role in achieving this objective.

But cooperation with China is not just about trade and investment. It is about shared values, reflected in the two countries' foreign policy. At a time when regional instability and the rise of extremist views in the Middle East is causing mass uncertainty and panic, collaboration through the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) is more important than ever. China, like Kazakhstan, has also been impacted by the so-called Islamic State, albeit in indirect ways. That is why Kazakhstan and China must work together to fight terrorism and protect the region against the spread of this abhorrent ideology.

Bilateral relations between Kazakhstan and China are already at an all-time high. Nevertheless, Kazakhstan is keen to develop these ties even further. The official visit of President Xi Jinping to Kazakhstan on May 7 could open a new phase of cooperation between the two countries and lead to furthering ties in economy, trade and commerce, as well as foreign affairs. Working together will help both countries achieve their domestic and international ambitions.

Government Innovation Expert Says E-Government Advancing

By Gulyaim Tulesheva

Improving public services online in Kazakhstan and making sure that they are freely accessible has become one of the most important strategic objectives set by the country's President, Nursultan Nazarbayev. Senate deputy, member of the Committee on Economic Policy, Innovation and Entrepreneurship Development, Ashat Kuzekov answered our questions on how these tasks are carried out by the legislature and described the benefits of "Mobile Government" programmes.

The range of public services offered is becoming increasingly broad. Therefore, the number of regulations, which reinforce legislation on providing this service, are increasing. Not so long ago, you were considering another bill on e-government services. Could you elaborate what it provides that is new?

The bill on optimising and automating social and labour public services was an additional step forward in relations between the state and society. Now, through the "electronic government," citizens are able to submit the necessary documents for their basic pension payments and state social benefits by age, social payments for loss of work and childcare. The government's integrated information system will reduce the number of required documents and deadlines for public services. For example, in the future, to formalise the basic pension, only one document will be needed, the identity card, instead of the five currently needed. The waiting period between submission and receiving the service will be reduced from one week to one hour.

How well is the electronic government taking off?

In general, this programme was implemented in stages. Today, we can talk about the successful completion of the most complex, informational, interactive and transactional tasks with electronic document management systems and databases. We have also overcome a fourth step, the transformation.

As an example, we can provide birth certificates, registration benefits for childcare and registering the baby for kindergarten. Now, we can talk about a new stage of development, the tran-

sition to mobile government, which will further simplify the interaction between the citizen and the state. Mobile phones can be used to send messages, get information about taxes, fines and other state affairs. One feature of this phase is the electronic signature and its incorporation into a SIM card.

It sounds good, although the security issues surrounding a database filled with personal data are real, especially those regarding the electronic signature.

The mobile government is based off of the already established concept of the electronic government. The digital signature will be required to receive services. I believe that in general, electronic data and in particular, a digital signature is very securely protected. It is recommended by experts that the electronic signature is updated every year in order to thwart hackers. The longer the period of the signature's validity, the greater the risk is.

In your opinion, how effective is e-government. Are concerns over its costs justified?

The UN e-government rating index illustrates the effectiveness and the fact that we are consistently bettering the relationship between the state and citizen. For example, Kazakhstan was ranked 38 in 2012's ranking. By 2014, we rose by 10 points and reached the 28th place. Last year, we adopted a law creating a joint UN-Kazakhstan trust fund for technical cooperation, as part of which Astana hosted the third global forum on e-government from Oct. 6-8, 2014.

The previous two were held in South Korea, and led to the development of an e-government. Advances in information technology and e-government platforms allow our country to carry out such a large and reputable event. By the time of its opening ceremony, we had already provided 700 services, including licensing. Issuing licenses is a very important aspect of e-government and has proved its effectiveness both in terms of attracting investment and the fight against corruption because it eliminates contact between officials and entrepreneurs. Today, 86 types of licenses and 435 permits are automated. More than 5,000 people visit the e-licensing page daily.

Shavkat, My Friend

By Ilyas Omarov

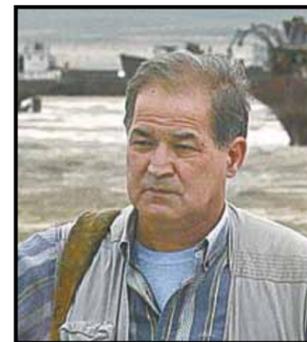
On April 30, Shavkat Rahmatullaev would have turned 66 years old. Three weeks before his birthday, a terrible disease took his life. Many, including his relatives, found out about his fatal illness only after his death. He didn't want his illness to bring anyone any unnecessary discomfort, this was his nature.

Journalists in our country knew him as a long-time camera operator and Thomson Reuters director and producer.

A native of Samarkand, Rahmatullaev went to Moscow in search of professional success and professional success in Moscow he found. He received a degree in teaching from the Institute for Advanced Training of Television and Radio Staff run by Gosteleradio (the Soviet Union's state television and radio broadcaster). He began his media career in 1985 and worked as a director and cameraman on a number of television projects in Moscow.

Since 1994, his name has been inextricably linked with Central Asia, where he worked as a Reuters representative, covering the most important events in the region.

The world usually learned about the most important events in our country through Rahmatullaev's camera. The high profile state visits, the presentation of the new capital, Astana, the Congresses of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions, Pope John Paul II's visit to Astana, the summits of the



Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building in Asia and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation among other newsworthy events were brought to the public eye by him. He also covered broadcasts about Kazakh traditions, like equestrian sports, eagle hunting and the velvet antler industry in the Altai. This is only a short list of what the world learned about our country from Shavkat's videos that were broadcasted by BBC, CNN, and Euronews, amongst other similar agencies. More than once did Shavkat make short films for Reuters' programme Lifestyle and features about the problems plaguing the Aral Sea.

He also covered Baikonur events regularly; he did not miss any rocket launch or landing.

He knew everyone at and everything about Baikonur. When the world's leading TV channels got a video of a

How has the attitude of state authorities towards the process of automation changed? Are people used to working in amore old fashioned manner.

Of course, times have changed. Like any other new innovation, automation, including the electronic signature, initially encountered some resistance and misunderstanding. Earlier, in order to receive public services, citizens had to bypass many cabinets and figuratively bow to officials. They often acted as they pleased and were slow in registering and finalising documents. Fortunately, these days and these ways are largely things of the past and we can confidently say that e-government works and the number of users rises every year.

The Internet is not yet in every village, particularly in remote areas and not all people do know how to use it.

Today, half of the rural population has internet access. Not everyone is able to connect because of financial status. Access centres in rural areas are seen as a solution to this problem. Perhaps they can be hosted at schools or local government offices, or at Kazpost offices. In cities, internet cafes can render these services. This is necessary, because without growth in the number of users, it is impossible to achieve the desired effect of a new public services system. In this regard, the Bridging the Digital Divide Programme helped increase the level of computer literacy. Awareness about opportunities, and most importantly, the convenience of a "virtual government" play a crucial role.

After the adoption of the relevant rules, how are you planning to manage their implementation?

We maintain close relationship with maslikhat (local council) deputies and with people who elected us to the Senate. Moreover, I want to note that at such meetings, a strong correlation between development in information technologies and society's mood. Last year, my colleagues and I visited an e-government service centre in Astana and we were pleased by the level of service and lack of queues. This is an indication that the laws of the electronic document and informatisation work effectively. Great convenience is created in the Centres of providing public services for car owners.

Baikonur rocket launch, it was usually thanks to Rahmatullaev.

According to his colleagues, he could easily predict the rocket's flight path before the launch, which is important in getting a good camera angle.

His best product was a video of a rocket launch showing four orange flames, the so-called King's Cross.

Experienced international journalists, especially those at a Baikonur launch for the first time, could not contain their admiration for what they witnessed, as well as for Rahmatullaev's predictions.

A father of two daughters, Shavkat always dreamed about having a son. According to his colleagues, one day, together with his colleagues, he had to craft a story about an orphanage. Before entering the facility, he met a boy who ran to him shouting "You are my father!" Right there and then, one more child came into Rahmatullaev's family. Surely, he had booked his place in paradise with that encounter if he had not already before.

Shavkat invited us to try his delicious Samarkand pilaf, which he prepared himself. Once, he half-jokingly said that he wanted to find his eternal peace in the steppes of Kazakhstan, where he spent a lot of time observing rocket launches.

As if he felt destiny gave him not enough time.

I will remember him this way forever.

The author was the Kazakh Foreign Ministry's Press Secretary from 2004 to 2013.

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OPINIONS

WEDNESDAY, MAY 6, 2015

Kazakh, British Cooperation Priorities Have Expanded with Recent Election, Says Kazakh Ambassador

By Gulbarshyn Sabayeva

In an interview with this newspaper, Kazakhstan's Ambassador to the United Kingdom Erzhan Kazykhanov spoke about the opportunities in bilateral relations following the presidential election in Kazakhstan, as well as about the relations with the European Union.

On Feb. 15, you presented your credentials to Queen Elizabeth II, thus, officially assuming the office of Ambassador of the Republic of Kazakhstan to the United Kingdom. How would you describe the current state of Kazakh-British relations?

Kazakhstan and the United Kingdom are strategic partners. This is no surprise, given the importance of the two countries: Kazakhstan as a leading country in Central Asia and Britain being one of the most powerful forces in the European Union.

Both countries have shown good economic growth in recent years and have carried out effective socio-economic policies. This has worked to strengthen the relationship between our two states and our shared understanding on important international issues.

The leaders of our countries have regular meetings, both during official visits and on the sidelines of international forums. For example, Prime Minister Cameron and President Nazarbayev met in October last year in Milan at the 10th Asia-Europe Summit. And at the end of April, Prime Minister Cameron was one of the first leaders to congratulate our head of state on his victory in the presidential election.

Cooperation between Kazakhstan and the United Kingdom contributes to the strengthening and expansion of our institutional ties. Last year, for example, the Intergovernmental commission on trade, economic and investment cooperation opened and the Kazakh-British Business Council was established. Existing structures such as the Kazakh-British Trade and Industry Council, the British-Kazakh Society and the British-



Erzhan Kazykhanov

Kazakh Bar Association also play a significant role in strengthening bilateral relations.

Business and financial links between Kazakhstan and the United Kingdom are flourishing. I am pleased to note that Britain is one of the three largest investors in Kazakhstan. In the last 10 years, the U.K. has invested more than \$10 billion in Kazakhstan.

In 2012, Britain designated Kazakhstan one of 14 priority countries in the development of trade relations and appointed a special trade envoy to our country. Kazakhstan included Britain on its list of six priority countries for attracting investments and opened up a visa-free travel scheme for U.K. citizens.

Today, our cooperation priorities are being expanded in light of the new economic initiatives proposed by President Nazarbayev in his inaugural speech.

A key part of the President's strategy is increasing cooperation with states with advanced economies, including the U.K. In practice, this means making every effort to attract the best British technology we can. By attracting investments, we help the economy, hence deepening relations between the U.K. and Kazakhstan.

The U.K. is a global financial and economic centre. In your opinion, what are the prospects for cooperation between Kazakhstan and the United Kingdom in this area?

Britain's role as a global financial and economic centre is very important to us. The U.K.'s robust financial market, its maturity and openness make it a highly desira-

ble location for international business.

As you would expect, this has attracted Kazakhstan's attention. We are actively working to develop the domestic financial system and transform Almaty into a regional financial hub. We are particularly interested in the history of the City of London's financial sector and how it developed its unique status in the world of finance and its related legislation. We are looking for ways to support international businesses in Kazakhstan.

President Nazarbayev has also spoken about establishing a financial centre in Astana with a special status aimed at developing the financial services sector and attracting foreign investments.

Another area for prospective cooperation is the development of Islamic finance in Kazakhstan. Britain is a world leader in this field and we intend to use its experience and knowledge in developing infrastructure to support Islamic finance in our own country.

While the financial sector is of course very important, we are also interested in cooperating with the United Kingdom in other areas. Closer ties regarding technology and innovation will help us meet the goals and objectives of the Kazakhstan 2050 Strategy and the Nurly Zhol economic programme.

We are working to shift the focus of cooperation between Kazakhstan and the United Kingdom away from the extractive sector towards industrial production, engineering, the high-tech sector and the expansion of the green economy.

This is already producing positive results. Last year, a permanent subgroup on mining was created, consisting of 70 British and Kazakh companies working together on joint technology projects. Thanks to their work, more than 30 joint projects have been implemented and another 60 are under consideration.

In November last year, the eighth Kazakh-British Forum on Logistics took place in one of the U.K.'s most historic industrial centres, Manchester. During the

forum, joint ventures for the production of oil and gas and other process equipment were discussed.

More recently, during Kazakh Prime Minister Karim Massimov's visit to London, two important bilateral economic institutions, the British Chamber of Commerce in Astana and the Business Council between the Samruk Kazyna Sovereign Wealth Fund and the U.K. Agency for Trade and Investment began cooperation. Furthermore, the Union of Machinists of Ka-

our young people to choose the U.K. for study.

Currently, more than 3,500 Kazakh students are enrolled in academic programmes in the U.K.; about 800 of them are on Bolashak scholarships. We are also working to ensure that our students gain valuable work experience in British companies, including those that specialise in trade with Kazakhstan. This will allow them not only to obtain theoretical knowledge, but also practical skills and

ers in the European Union. In this context, what are the general prospects for cooperation between our country and the European Union?

Cooperation between Astana and Brussels has always been one of Kazakhstan's most important foreign policy priorities.

The EU remains Kazakhstan's largest trading and investment partner, despite our expanding links with other regions around the world. EU-Kazakhstan trade accounts for almost half of Kazakhstan's foreign trade and 50 percent of our foreign direct investment. Kazakhstan is the EU's largest trade partner in Central Asia.

About 6,000 companies are operating in our country with European investments. Among them are global leaders such as Siemens, EADS, Eurocopter, Talgo, Areva, British Gas, Total, Eni and Shell. Almost all of them are members of an important institution, the Foreign Investors Council under the President of Kazakhstan.

Kazakhstan and the EU cooperate within a strong institutional framework. Regular meetings between the Cooperation Committee of Kazakhstan and EU are held. There are also subcommittee groups on justice and security, as well as trade, investment, energy and transport.

Just as with Britain, we are interested in exploring deeper cooperation with EU member states in areas such as technology. This will allow us to quicken the pace of Kazakhstan's economic modernisation. We are actively developing a range of programmes with France, Germany, Italy and Spain and looking forward to expanding innovation and technological relations with other European countries.

Cooperation will receive a major boost following the signing of the Expanded Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between Kazakhstan and the EU. This agreement, which has already been initiated, has the potential to give strong impetus to the expansion of political and economic relations and to ensuring long-term Kazakh-EU cooperation.

KAZYKHANOV: We are actively working to develop the domestic financial system and transform Almaty into a regional financial hub. We are particularly interested in the history of the City of London's financial sector and how it developed its unique status in the world of finance and its related legislation. We are looking for ways to support international businesses in Kazakhstan.

zakhstan and the British Association of Manufacturing Technologies agreed on a plan for joint cooperation.

The upcoming exhibition EXPO 2017 in Astana will provide a great opportunity to increase the scope of cooperation. Given the large innovation and industrial potential of the U.K., we hope to agree on major new deals on the use of innovative green energy technologies.

Many Kazakh students study at universities in the U.K. How do our countries cooperate when it comes to education?

First and foremost, one of the key priorities of our cooperation is to equip Kazakh students with the skills needed to embark upon successful careers.

This is not surprising, because primarily, British universities are recognised as world leaders in technology and engineering, as well as finance, law and IT.

Second, the British education system specialises in developing skills that are relevant to the 21st century and the current labor market. It therefore makes sense for

experience that can later be used to benefit our country.

Education for Kazakh students in Britain is not the only area of cooperation; we are also inviting British teachers to live and work in Kazakhstan. One successful project is the ongoing collaboration between Nazarbayev University and universities in the U.K. including Cambridge, Oxford and the London School of Economics.

We believe that it is the right time to open departments of the U.K.'s leading universities in Kazakhstan, making it possible for students to earn double diplomas.

Cooperation and partnership between Kazakhstan and the U.K. is becoming increasingly focused on science and research, a trend we hope to see develop further in the future.

The Newton-Al-Farabi partnership programme is designed to promote research in areas such as energy, health, agriculture and ecology and is an important step in this direction.

As you mentioned, the United Kingdom is one of the key play-

Recent Election an Achievement in Cohesion, Civic Spirit, Chair of Public Commission Believes

By Yulia Mager

Kazakhstan's presidential election was monitored by observers from foreign countries, international organisations and representatives of foreign media. Kazakh civil society and the National Public Commission for the Control of the Election (ROKKV) of the President of Kazakhstan, closely observed the electoral campaign in all its stages. Nurlan Yerimbetov, chairman of ROKKV discussed how this work was carried out and what conclusions domestic observers have drawn on the election.

How do you assess the elections?

The first thing to note is that the turnout was unusually high. Our international colleagues also said it was unprecedented; it is a Kazakhstan record. ...

In our work and in the work of [central and local] election commissions, local authorities, various nongovernmental organisations (NGOs), the emphasis was on ensuring maximum turnout; we explained that everyone's voice is important. It is gratifying that the message was received by the people of Kazakhstan and we saw the highest activity – people came to the polling stations before they were opened and there were long queues. The flow of citizens wishing to vote did not stop until closing time. People came to the stations as if on holiday in families, they took children with them. ... Such a high turnout attests to the strength of Kazakhstan's identity, civic responsibility



Nurlan Yerimbetov

ity and care about the future. Many foreign observers, with whom I met very often in the last few days, said they had never seen such a turnout. ... Of course, this testifies that the work was well done by the organisers of the election. ... It was nice to see on April 26 that this colossal work led to equally impressive results.

The National Public Commission began its work on March 5. What were the functions of the commission?

The National Public Commission for the entire electoral period [of this election] was monitoring the implementation of the election legislation of the country, the pre-election headquarters of candidates, election commissions and the media. Members of the commission were working to ensure equal conditions for all candidates participating in the electoral process, to help avoid so called black PR to create open public dialogue platforms for building close cooperation with the government, the media, political parties and international missions.

What we emphasised in the course of monitoring was legitimacy, openness and transparency.

Of course, we worked with our observers, so they clearly know their rights and responsibilities in order to understand what needs attention in their work. We provided them with all reports about the conduct of the last election, so that they could study them. So that observers could effectively and competently work in the field, we made special information booklets, where we did not include complex extracts from laws, but concisely presented information as an infographic, in brief comments and guidance. The website www.bakylau.kz was created, which also had information on the activities of the commission.

YERIMBETOV: As for the equal conditions for all participants in elections – they were created starting from the nomination of the candidates. The same trend continued during the campaign period, when the three candidates were identified.

In order to expand social control and legitimate and transparent elections, commission branches were set up across the country and an extensive network of observers from among citizens was organised. I'd like to emphasise that in this election, on election day, we provided full coverage of observers at absolutely all polling stations across the country. (Previously we were able to provide coverage at 50–70 percent).

Traditionally, observers make some formal conclusions or statements after an election campaign ...

Yes, indeed, upon completion of our observations a report will be drawn up, where the members of the National Public Commission will give their assessment of the electoral campaign, but now I can say that no one has any doubts about the fairness of the elections – in their results, in how voting took place or the election campaign.

As for the equal conditions for all participants in elections – they were created starting from the nomination of the candidates. The same trend continued during the campaign period, when the three candidates were identified. I met with their staffs and

country were covered by about 200 foreign journalists from 37 countries. This testifies to the great interest of the international community in what is happening in our process. ... I would say that we can be proud of the recent election in Kazakhstan for sure.

Members of the National Public Commission held a lot of meetings with foreign observers. What are their impressions?

We are always open to cooperation with foreign observers. It's pretty useful and interesting to look at our country and processes occurring in it from the outside.

Personally, I have met with representatives of the observation mission of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), observers from the U.S., Canada, Europe and Asia. We held informal conversations, we talked not only about elections, but about Kazakhstan in general, the people of our country, and so on.

During these meetings, I was waiting for some critical remarks, but I did not hear specific comments from observers on any stages of the campaign. On the contrary, everyone noted the openness of the electoral campaign, the high level of organisation, the increased activity of our civil society.

The observers, travelling around our country in the cities and villages, vividly discussed the development of the country. Many of those

who were in Kazakhstan for the last presidential election were surprised and amazed at the progress we managed to make in such a short period of time.

Over 9,700 polling stations were open around Kazakhstan. How many participants are in the commission?

We managed to bring to this work about 10,000 people. We recruited people from the activists of the Civil Alliance of Kazakhstan, which unites about 500 NGOs across the country.

It is particularly gratifying that a lot of young people were among those willing to join the commission. We actually paid special attention to attracting young Kazakhs. They, more than anyone else, could bring to their peers the importance of voting. So, the participation of youth in such processes is a measure of how civic engagement has increased, how a proper understanding is really important.

This is your second presidential election campaign. Tell me, what is the unique to this election?

For all of us, this election was eloquent proof of cohesion in our country. It is no coincidence that the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan proposed the initiative. This brought a special spirit of harmony and unity to the campaign.

The election fulfilled its consolidating function: people really rallied together to determine the fate of their country and to choose their leader.

EURASIA&WORLD

WEDNESDAY, MAY 6, 2015

Kazakhstan's Pavilion Opens Successfully at EXPO Milano 2015

By Malika Orazgaliyeva

Milan will be a global showcase for the next six months following the May 1 opening of EXPO Milano 2015. The universal exposition, running through Oct. 31, will allow more than 140 participating countries to show the best of their technology that offers a concrete answer to a vital need: being able to guarantee healthy, safe and sufficient food for everyone while respecting the planet and its equilibrium. In addition to the exhibitor nations, EXPO Milano also involves international organisations and expects to welcome more than 20 million visitors to its 1.1 million square metres of exhibition area.

EXPO Milano examines human history through the lens of two aspects of food production: traditional cultural values and the use of new technologies. These two features do not stand apart, but are very much interconnected. Besides being an opportunity for industry players to meet, the event is part of a cultural journey that aims to highlight the changes currently faced by the entire world population.

The Italian government allocated more than 13 billion euros from its budget for expo preparation. The gates were opened two hours before the official start of the fair to let in hundreds of people who began queuing outside the site early in the morning.



The Kazakh pavilion occupies 2,000 square metres and demonstrates the country's agricultural diversity. The most popular part of the display is a pool with sturgeon specially bred in Kazakhstan.

The Kazakh pavilion, which occupies 2,000 square metres, demonstrates the country's agricultural diversity by greeting guests with kumys (fermented mare's milk). The most popular part of the display is a pool with sturgeon specially bred in Kazakhstan. Endangered species

of fish, the problem of the Aral Sea and solutions to these issues are also presented. Using a brief tour, pavilion organisers managed to show the weak points of the country's agricultural sector as well as highlights

One more important task of the pa-

vilion is to present Kazakhstan as the host of EXPO 2017. Considering the difficulties that Milan faced while preparing EXPO 2015, Kazakhstan will take this experience into account in arranging for its exhibit in Astana and hold it at the highest level, said First Deputy Minister of Foreign

Affairs and the national EXPO commissioner Rapol Zhoshybayev.

"The construction of the pavilion took almost one and a half years, but we are glad, I think, that the Kazakh pavilion is one of the best in this exhibition. We used the latest technologies, which helped us to tell the whole history of Kazakhstan through its agricultural characteristics," said pavilion executive director Robert Mueller.

"Kazakhstan's pavilion at the exhibition EXPO2015 did not disappoint. From the outside it looks very futuristic. Inside, it is also advanced. Those sand shows about the history of Kazakhstan, the best samples presented of wheat and apples, interactive story of the Aral Sea and 4D show about contemporary Kazakhstan. New technologies are applied everywhere," former Vice-Minister of Agriculture Marat Tolibayev who was presented at the launch of the exhibition commented on his Facebook page.

"Young boys and girls—volunteers who welcomed visitors in several languages deserve special attention. Their faces were shining. In general, I want to thank everyone who represents Kazakhstan at the EXPO 2015 exhibition in Milan," he added.

The decision about EXPO 2017 was made Nov. 22, 2012, when the 156 member nations of the International Exhibitions Bureau (BIE) met in Paris and decided by an

overwhelming majority vote of 103 countries that the event would be held in Astana.

EXPO 2017's Future Energy theme will promote efforts to find sustainable energy solutions to meet growing global demand. Kazakhstan's choice of the topic reflects the recognition by the country's leaders and policymakers that even its vast reserves of natural energy resources are ultimately finite and that eventually the country, and the rest of the world, will have to make the transition to alternative energy sources and greener economies.

EXPO 2017 will last three months, include representatives from approximately 100 countries and is expected to draw three to five million visitors, which would make it the largest international gathering of its kind Central Asia has seen.

"Traditionally, EXPO exhibitions have been held in Northeast Asia, Europe and North America," said BIE Secretary General Vicente Gonzalez Loscertales, as reported by Edgekz.com.

"Holding an exhibition in the new (Central Asian) region, which is the bridge between East and West, in a young country which has developed very good relations with European and Middle Eastern countries and former Soviet republics, as well as with all countries of the Central Asian region, is an additional advantage which also strengthens the position of Astana," he added.

Kazakhstan Allocates 1 Million Euros for Chernobyl Shelter

By Malika Rustem

ASTANA –The sum of Kazakhstan's allocation for the Shelter project at the former Chernobyl nuclear power station will be one million euros, according to a Kazakh Foreign Ministry's press release. The Central Asian nation's Minister of Economic Integration Zhanar Aitzhanova made the announcement following President Nursultan Nazarbayev's commitment from 2011, when she spoke at the International Support for Ukraine Conference on April 28.

Kazakhstan is also preparing a new package of humanitarian aid for the Ukraine, she added, in addition to the earlier delivery of more than \$400,000 worth of food and goods for the needs of people hit by the military conflict in the country's east.

The high-ranking representatives of international community, including [United Nations, Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, and European Union] institutions and member states, and G7 countries, as well as of international organisations, the global investment and business community, and civil society discussed the status of re-

forms in Ukraine and the country's programme of stimulating socioeconomic development in the conflict-hit country, according to the forum's communiqué.

Among other messages to the international community that came through the forum, the Ukraine's government speakers reported on efforts seeking to "strengthen good governance and combat corruption, and prepare the state sector for privatisation ... economic deregulation and the implementation of EU technical standards ... energy independence through the diversification of energy supplies and increased energy efficiency ... [and] reforming the system of coordination and absorption of external technical and financial assistance," as well as the issues related to humanitarian consequences of the conflict in East Ukraine. Official Kyiv's goal was to demonstrate that "it has a unified political will for necessary reforms and is showing this resolve on a daily and measurable basis," according to Ukrainian government speakers.

Aitzhanova, who represented the Kazakh government, highlighted that bilateral relations of Kazakhstan and Ukraine are mutually respectful and benevolent.

"Taking into account the current difficult situation in Ukraine, Kazakhstan took the decision to deliver humanitarian aid and held these promises," she said.

The minister reminded that in January in Severodonetsk, the Ukrainian side received humanitarian food assistance from Kazakhstan, amounting to approximately 70 million tenge (US\$400,000). In addition, Kazakhstan has directed financial resources amounting to \$30,000 through the International Committee of the Red Cross for humanitarian needs of the south-eastern region of Ukraine.

"At the moment we are forming a new package of humanitarian aid," Aitzhanova said.

However, the most expensive part of Astana's assistance concerns the issue of nuclear security, where Kazakhstan too, similar to Ukraine being hit by the catastrophe at the Chernobyl nuclear plant in April 1986, has known tragic consequences of radiation for the environment, health and welfare of citizens through its experience of being the location of the infamous Semipalatinsk nuclear test site.

"The government of Kazakhstan made a decision on financial support

of the Chernobyl Fund Shelter and the allocation of one million euros as a contribution to the completion of international projects at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant," Aitzhanova is quoted to have said.

The minister emphasised the leading role in strengthening and developing the partnership between Kazakhstan and Ukraine that meetings and negotiations between presidents Nursultan Nazarbayev and Petr Poroshenko have played, which contributed to the strengthening of political and economic cooperation between the countries. As a result of the latest visit of President Nazarbayev to Kyiv in December 2014,

the head of state put forward a task to intensify trade and economic cooperation with the Ukrainian side.

"That is why today we are going to focus on implementation of projects in the framework of the joint Kazakh-Ukrainian Intergovernmental Commission on Economic Cooperation. The meeting is expected to discuss the Kazakhstan-Ukraine draft action plan for 2015-2016 years (Road Map-5), which will reflect the main areas of cooperation between Kazakhstan and Ukraine: energy, agriculture, transport, science, education and others," the minister continued.

As Ukrainian mass media re-

ported earlier for the construction of the new safe confinement shelter over the destroyed fourth power unit of Chernobyl nuclear power plant alone 500 million euro needs to be attracted. The European Commission has previously expressed its willingness to allocate 70 million euro for this purpose.

In early April, Chernobyl officially moved to the stage of decommissioning. It is expected that the Ukrainian government will allocate about \$30 million in 2015 for this purposes. The process of final closure and conservation of the Chernobyl nuclear power plant is expected to last until 2028.

Israel, EAEU Edge Closer to Free Trade Agreement

By Michelle Witte

ASTANA – The Joint Study Group of Israel and the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) has concluded its study on the feasibility of establishing a free trade zone between the new economic union and Israel, Novosti-Kazakhstan reported on April 17. The group will give its recommendations over the summer, after which formal negotiations could launch.

"Economically, Israel sees it as a positive opportunity, for our economy and for the global liberal economy," Deputy Chief of Mission at the Embassy of Israel in Kazakhstan Emil Ben Naftaly told The Astana Times on April 28. "We are reviewing the conditions of course, to see if they [share] the same idea as we have but yes, we would look at it as a positive."

President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev confirmed in a speech on April 27 that more than 40 countries had expressed an interest in setting up free trade agreements with the EAEU. The union is already in the final stretch of signing its first such agreement with a country with a large economy, Vietnam, and is expected to sign the

final documents in May, Eurasian Economic Commission Trade Minister Andrey Slepnev announced in March.

The Joint Study Group's recommendations must be submitted first to the Council of the EAEU, which includes the deputy prime ministers of participating countries. If the council approves of the plan, initiating negotiations on the free trade agreement would be arranged among the presidents of the countries involved, Novosti-Kazakhstan reported on April 17.

Russia is already an important trading partner of Israel's, Ben Naftaly said and of course the possibility of the EAEU affecting their current trade is one reason for considering a free trade agreement. "This is one of the reasons we would like to be part of it, to still be competitive in the market. But it's also an opportunity, because it means products we export to Russia could also be exported to [other EAEU countries]," he said.

Director of Trade Policy Department of the Eurasian Economic Commission Andrei Tochin suggested in the RIA Novosti report that Israel's biggest interest was not even the development of trade in goods, but rather developing re-

lations in investment and technology. "Since the economy is all interconnected, opening up the market entails greater investor interest and the interest of those who may come with certain technologies," he said.

Since the EAEU was launched, there has been the idea of creating a free trade agreement with Israel, Ben Naftaly noted. He also said his country isn't interested in engaging in speculation about the organisation's possible political evolution.

"We separate those two things: our economic targets and policy and our political policy," he said. Other countries are asking questions about the EAEU's agenda, its possible political goals, where it might be heading, what it aspires to be. "We don't deal with this. We look at it as an opportunity. President Nazarbayev, when he started this organization, stressed the economic opportunities and we are with him in this point of view. So we don't want to go into the future political sphere of what will happen." Globally, he believes, economic unions have helped countries economically, Ben Naftaly said. "So if this area can also have a good economic customs union and if we can be part of it, of course we support it."

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Nation & Capital

WEDNESDAY, MAY 6, 2015

CULTURE
Unique Exhibition Showcases
Works of Central Asian Artists

B3

SOCIETY
Two New Subway Stations
Open in Almaty

B5

SPORTS
Kairat Almaty Wins Its Second
UEFA Futsal Cup

B7

International Nuclear Disarmament Bike Tour Takes Message to United Nations Headquarters



Over 5,000 activists against nuclear weapons gathered in Manhattan on April 24 and pledged their support for The ATOM Project.

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

NEW YORK – On April 24, a few days before the month-long Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty

Review Conference began here, Bike Away the Atomic Bomb riders completed their ride from Washington, D.C. to New York City, arriving in front of the United Nations headquarters.

The organisers of the bike ride sought to attract attention to the tragic consequences of nuclear weapons testing and urge the international community to move more resolutely



Honorary Ambassador of The ATOM Project Karipbek Kuyukov (c) addresses the rally in Manhattan on April 24.

towards abolishing nuclear weapons.

The ride was put together with the support of The ATOM Project by Bike for Peace, a Norwegian non-governmental

organisation, and Mayors for Peace, which brings together around 7,000 international mayors in support of global nuclear disarmament efforts. It took place just as another campaign

was gaining momentum, Global Wave 2015, which saw activists and leaders around the world wave a symbolic goodbye to nuclear weapons.

Continued on Page B2

Annual Marathon Becoming Major Sport, Charitable Event for Almaty

By Aiman Turebekova

The International Almaty Marathon was held on April 26, the same day as the country's presidential election.

The fourth charity marathon, "The Courage to be First," attracted more than 15,000 participants from 40 countries. The marathon has seen its numbers increase every year, from 3,000 when it was launched to 10,000 last year.

"Every year the marathon brings together more and more participants. The most important thing is that Almaty citizens are attached to a healthy lifestyle," said Akhmetzhan Yessimov, akim (mayor) of Almaty, speaking at the opening ceremony. The mayor also commented on the sport infrastructure the city has commissioned for sporting events and noted that the city's chances of hosting the 2022 Winter Olympics were good.

The first Almaty marathon was organised on May 27, 2012. At the end of 2013, the Almaty Marathon was included among the Association of International Marathons and Distance Races (AIMS), which also includes the Boston Marathon, the Amsterdam Marathon, the New York City Marathon and others.

From the beginning, supporting national charitable projects was among the key purposes of the Almaty Marathon. In addition to popularising a healthy lifestyle and running, the marathon also encourages social responsibility and gives participants a chance to contribute to good causes. Everyone aged 10 years and over can take part in the marathon after paying an entry fee. All money raised by the marathon will be used for charity.

In 2012, Almaty Marathon funds were sent to support a programme for the rehabilitation of children with

ICP (infantile cerebral paralysis). In 2013, the money went to the Ardi Rehabilitation Centre for the construction of a mini-water zone adapted for children with ICP. This project will help improve the children's physical and psychological health significantly. In 2014, the funds helped equip the Department of Oncology Research of the Institute of Paediatrics and Paediatric Surgery of Almaty. This year, the funds raised from the marathon will go to the construction of a modern stadium for a boarding school for children with severe speech disorders.

In this year's marathon, 28-year-old Andrey Leimenov among men (2 hours, 35 minutes, 51 seconds) and 23-year-old Gulzhanat Zhakypbek among women (2:52:18) showed the best results.

In addition to the marathon, races of other distances were also held, including a 21-kilometre run, a 10k and 3k run for teenagers. The oldest runners were Larissa Veselova, 78, and Torekhan Fayylzhanov, 76. Kazakhstan's Minister of Finance Bulat Zhamishev won among runners aged 55-59 with a time of 4 hours 3 minutes and 54 seconds.



Georgians Live the Kazakh Culture by Choice, says Georgian Community Leader

By Dmitry Lee

As opposed to most nationalities that were deported to Kazakhstan against their will, Georgians have been settling in the Kazakh steppes voluntarily and, according to Zurab Bobokhidze, the chairman of the Georgian cultural centre in Atyrau, they maintain a slow migrating process to this day. The 66-year-old entrepreneur, who owns a meat processing factory and car service station in the city, shared his opinion in an exclusive interview with The Astana Times.

When and how did Georgians ar-

rive in Kazakhstan? Tell us about their history.

As opposed to other nationalities, Georgians were not exiled or deported to Kazakhstan. I myself enrolled into an institute in Kazakhstan in the 1970s; I graduated and got married and stayed here. Basically, Georgians came to Kazakhstan of their own will. Fortunately, unlike Chechens, Armenians or Koreans, for instance, who were deported against their will, Georgians moved to Kazakhstan whenever they wished to work, to study, etc. Some stayed, some returned to Georgia. I have been living here for almost 50 years. There

were no mass resettlements, which is a good thing, I think.

How many Georgians are there in the country today and in what region are they mostly residing?

At the moment, there are about 2,200 Georgians in the country; most of them are in the Almaty region and the city itself.

What are Georgians in Kazakhstan mostly famous for; what walks of life are they engaged in?

Georgians are mostly engaged in entrepreneurship, in services like restaurants, car repair centres, food production, etc. I myself have a mini

workshop that processes meat in Atyrau.

How many cultural centres are there in the country and where are they located? In what activities are they engaged?

There are eight Georgian cultural centres in the country. We have a Sunday language school and a dancing troupe called Iveria. We receive huge moral support from the government of Kazakhstan; no one feels neglected or discriminated against. On top of that, the Georgian Embassy in Kazakhstan helps with the study manuals and books.

Continued on Page B2

UNDP, Government to Build Wildlife Management Capacity, Hunting Tourism

By Michelle Witte

ASTANA – Huge, sparsely populated, with sprawling wilderness areas, Kazakhstan seems brimming with potential as a hunting destination, especially given its own hunting traditions (and the population's abiding love of meat). However, wildlife management and the hunting industry have so far failed to develop. A joint project launched by Kazakhstan and the UN Development Programme (UNDP) aims to change that.

The Wildlife Project (officially entitled "Improving national policy on natural resources management, monitoring, conservation and sustainable use in the context of Kazakhstan's transition to the green economy") is financed by the government and the UN Development Programme. Kazakhstan

has contributed \$406,418 to the project, the UNDP \$124,000.

It aims to improve policies and legislation on wildlife management in Kazakhstan, based on targets from the country's Green Economy Strategy, a UNDP report on the project stated. The project also trains personnel from pilot hunting farms to plan and make decisions that honour conservation and principles of sustainability.

According to the UNDP report, more than 13 million hunters spend over \$20 billion per year on the activity in the U.S., while in Canada, 1.2 million hunters bring \$720 million to the budget and the hunting sector, while in Kazakhstan the total number of hunters is barely 130,000 people. There are more than 119.8 million hectares of potential hunting land in the country, most of it barely managed.

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SUMMER STUDY + ACTIVITIES CAMPS → AMSTERDAM, MALTA & BOSTON AGE:5-19; JUNE 8-SEPTEMBER 5, VISA-SUPPORT → TOPCLASSTUTORS.ORG → SMART CAMPS

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- May 10 at 7 p.m. May Night Tlep, Orchestra
- May 13 at 7 p.m. Traviata, Opera
- May 16 at 7 p.m. Spartacus, Opera

KOKTAL 13

- May 10 at 12 p.m. 45 metre Fly Rope Jumping
- #### KAZAKH NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF ARTS
- May 15 at 3 p.m. Piano Concert
- #### SEASONS OF YEAR PARK
- May 17 at 3 p.m. Free exchange of Photographs

NATION&CAPITAL
PEOPLE

WEDNESDAY, MAY 6, 2015

Int'l Nuclear Disarmament Bike Tour Takes Message to UN Headquarters



Activists of The ATOM Project, Mayors for Peace and Bike for Peace are about to start the race from the U.S. Congress in Washington.

Continued from Page B1

Following their departure from Washington, D.C. on April 21, the group arrived in Wilmington, DE, where they met with Wilmington Mayor Dennis P. Williams and members of Wilmington Friends Meeting. Riders also spoke in Wilmington schools and at a stadium in front of 2,000 students.

"I am very honoured to have met you and to have had the opportunity to speak with you guys about nuclear weapons and your effort to abolish them," Shaheed Purnell, a senior student from Urban Promise Academy in Wilmington, told the riders. "I will forever remember your efforts and remember your presence here in the United States, which is greatly needed. I will continue to spread the word about the terror of nuclear weapons and would love to do something about this issue and later

be a part of your organisation to help abolish them."

Tore Nærland, co-founder of Bike for Peace, and Thore Vestby, mayor of Frogn, Norway, who is also vice president of Mayors for Peace and a member of Parliamentarians for Nuclear Nonproliferation and Disarmament (PNND), Frank Tomlinson, vice president of Bike for Peace; Svein Arne Jerstad, mayor of Kvinesdal, Norway; and Ann Suellentrop, an American anti-nuclear activist from Kansas, rode from Washington through Baltimore, Maryland, Wilmington, Delaware, and Princeton, New Jersey and arrived to New York on April 24. They were joined along the way by Kazakh Olympic gold medalist Vladimir Smirnov, members of the Potomac Pedallers Touring Club, Princeton Free Riders club and other anti-nuclear weapons activists. The ATOM Project Honorary

Ambassador Karipbek Kuyukov, an artist and nuclear testing survivor joined and supported the group along all the way, although, having been born armless, he could not ride a bike. The ATOM Project, which stands for "Abolish Testing. Our Mission" is a global awareness campaign that seeks to galvanise public opinion against nuclear weapons as the critical step towards the abolishment of these weapons. People around the world can sign The ATOM Project's online petition to global leaders to ensure the early entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT).

Following the riders' arrival in New York, the permanent mission of Kazakhstan to the United Nations held an exhibition of Kuyukov's art and a gathering in honour of the group.

"I want to use my art to fight against nuclear weapons in the world. Kazakhstan is a good

example to explain this to other countries. I am proud of my homeland, which was the first state to give up nuclear weapons," Kuyukov said at the event. "It will take a long time and I think I won't see it in my lifetime, but it's my real dream and I'm doing a lot of things to achieve it."

"We have made a great journey from Washington, D.C. to New York City, engaging with many people along the way. I hope the message we are trying to convey to world leaders is being heard: we demand a world without nuclear weapons. I hope to be the last born with the after-effects of nuclear testing," Kuyukov added.

United Nations members, foreign delegations and U.S. experts attended the event.

"We are honoured to be part of a truly international campaign against the use of nuclear weapons. Arts, sport and diplomacy



The Bike Away the Atomic Bomb race is off to its final destination, New York City.

are all here on the eve of the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons," Kazakh Deputy Foreign Minister Yerzhan Ashykbayev said in his remarks welcoming the guests.

"Mayors for Peace numbers at around 7,000 mayors around the world. Together we represent one billion people, connecting 110 capitals. As vice president, I had the honour to sign Astana into the list as well," Thore Vestby said.

"Look at Kazakhstan! It is very important to get the message out at all levels of society!" Tore Nærland, co-founder of Bike for Peace noted in his interview for this story. "It was especially good to talk to schoolchildren and teach them about the tragedy of nuclear radiation. When we were starting in the 1980s, there were 80,000 nuclear weapons around the world. Now there are 17,000, but that is still 17,000 too many! We need to rid the world of them for good!"

He was supported in his comments by Svein Arne Jerstad, mayor of Kvinesdal, Norway who said, "The deterrence effect of the weapons is self-contradictory, nobody would ever use nuclear weapons. Therefore, they are useless. And if they're useless, let's get rid of them!"

In her turn, Ann Suellentrop, member of Physicians for Social Responsibility, said, "We view nuclear weapons as a public health issue. These trips are a great way to raise awareness and inform the larger society. Where I'm from in Kansas city there is a plant that produces up to 80 per-

cent of the materials needed to build a nuclear weapon."

Approximately 160,000 people from across the globe have signed The ATOM Project's (Abolish Testing. Our Mission) online petition. The petition is an opportunity to tell world leaders the people demand a nuclear-weapons-free world. The petition was launched by Kazakhstan on Aug. 29, 2012, at the International Day against Nuclear Tests.

Bike Away the Atomic Bomb is a continuation of last year's bike ride, held by Mayors for Peace, which crossed the world in 72 days and included meetings with world leaders, anti-nuclear activists, as well as Pope Francis and Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon.

On April 25, the riders of the group joined the massive rally in Manhattan of the Global Wave campaign. Their speeches and nuclear disarmament calls drew cheers and applause from thousands of supporters.

An exhibition of the artwork of nuclear weapons testing survivor and The ATOM Project Honorary Ambassador Karipbek Kuyukov was held in conjunction with the Bike Away the Atomic Bomb tour.

Participants in the Bike Away the Atomic Bomb Washington, D.C. to New York ride beginning their journey near Washington's Capitol Building.

Karipbek Kuyukov is greeted by Mayor of Wilmington, Delaware, Dennis P. Williams during the Bike Away the Atomic Bomb tour.

Kuyukov addresses thousands of activists of the Global Wave rally in Manhattan on April 25, drawing enthusiastic support.

Kazakh Poet Nominated for Poet of Year in Russia

By Dmitry Lee

Ust-Kamenogorsk, East Kazakhstan region resident Olga Rastorguyeva was nominated for Poet of the Year by the Russian Writers Union, reported YK-news.kz. She was considered for the Debut of the Year award and has been allowed to publish her poems for free in the Moscow almanac. In total, 800,000 poems submitted their works for consideration to the juried contest.

"It was an honour to see such people as Mark Rozovsky, Lev Prygunov and Stanislav Govorukhin," Rastorguyeva told YK-news.kz. "They say my poems go well with music. Some time ago, Integral ensemble performed two of my songs. Recently, I sent my poems to Na-Na, Dominic Joker and female singers Jasmin and Ani Lorak. I believe I will hear one of my poems performed by one of the pop stars."

The Poet of the Year award ceremony took place in the big conference hall of Moscow's government building. Among the other nominations were humour, children's literature and lyrics.

The Russian Writers Union is an all-Russian professional public organisation, a creative union open to representatives of all genres and styles.

According to the union's web site, rossp.ru, its goals are participation in the contemporary literary processes; protection of professional rights and interests of contemporary Russian authors;



Olga Rastorguyeva

support for poets, writers, playwrights, essayists, literary critics and translators – all those who are involved in the literary process and strive to maintain and develop the best traditions of Russian literature.

It also works to assist members of the union in the preparation and publication of works – both individual author's books and collective publications in magazines, collections, anthologies and other publications; promote their advancement in the book market and the Internet; financing the publication of au-

thor's books and literary collections, pamphlets, almanacs and other publications with the help of grants from the grant committee.

The union also supports the authors in the creation and promotion of their own media space for the implementation of comprehensive activities, goals and objectives; holding recitals, seminars, webinars, roundtables, conferences and workshops which provide an opportunity to exchange experiences and allow authors to be directly involved in significant cultural events.

Georgians Live the Kazakh Culture by Choice, Says Georgian Community Leader

Continued from Page B1

I really like the way the politics are handled in the country, the role of the Assembly of People of Kazakhstan (APK) and the treatment of the people of Kazakhstan. I don't feel prejudice. My wife is Russian and I am Georgian; we could have travelled to either Russia or Georgia and yet we live in Kazakhstan and we enjoy our life here. When you feel appreciated and respected, why not enjoy your life?

As a businessman of a different ethnic group, is it difficult to do business in this country?

Kazakhstan has changed in the past 15-20 years. I have had so many checkups it was hard to work, but recently I haven't felt pressured any longer. I used to write complaints back in the day for unauthorised checkups. These days I am receiving a subsidy within the Business Road Map 2020 from the Damu Fund and I am not alone. If you want to do business in this country there are no problems. I am thankful to our government.

What can you say about the re-elected President? How do you think his new term will affect the APK and peoples in Kazakhstan?

I went to the inauguration of the President on April 29 in Astana and I can tell that I very much respect our President, who talked from his heart. He meant every word he said. During the 22nd Congress of the Assembly of People of Kazakhstan on April 23, the President announced a



judicial reform and I fully support his initiative. Whether we like it or not, if we want to live better and if we don't want corruption, nepotism and prejudice to devour our country, we need this reform. The court needs to carry out independent verdicts. If some government official can influence the decision in court, then it's outrageous.

What do you think the future holds for Georgians in Kazakhstan?

I can point out our President's miscalculation: Back in 1997, he said that by 2030 we would have completed several state programmes and then I thought to myself, I will probably not witness these changes by then. But to everybody's surprise, the President made the plan in 15 years and

finished the programmes ahead of time. Now the president has a new programme, Kazakhstan 2050 Strategy, so we could enter the top 30 countries in the world. One of the key successes our President has is the APK and its structure. It was very wise to appoint himself the chairman; there is no other institution that the President himself oversees and governs. It's very important and many foreigners are surprised that so many nationalities live peacefully under one roof. Georgians in Kazakhstan are happy and they often migrate to Kazakhstan. Those who work and want to make a living, they succeed. Those who want to criticise, they also succeed at that. We don't feel persecuted or prejudiced against here, so we will prosper and be well off in this country.

CULTURE

WEDNESDAY, MAY 6, 2015

New Fall-Winter Collections Presented during Kazakhstan Fashion Week

By Lyazzat Shatayeva

ASTANA – Plenty of ready-to-wear designer apparel for autumn-winter 2015/16 was seen on the catwalk at Kazakhstan Fashion Week (KFW). Shows were held in Almaty on April 15-17 and Astana on April 24-25.

Kazakhstan Fashion Week, traditionally organised by the Four Seasons Group, continues to bring fresh and bold fashion ideas to otherwise reserved Astana. “We are excited and thrilled to be back in Astana. It is very important that our efforts and the designers’ work are appreciated and well received,” said KFW Public Relations Manager Botagoz Aldongarova at a press conference on April 24. “I believe that in the past 10 years, Kazakhstan Fashion Week has proven its credibility. It is truly a major cultural event. Fashion represents the cultural development of a people. Thus, this event is important not only for those in the industry, but for everyone,” Aldongarova said, urging media representatives, fashion and art connoisseurs and the business community to support young designers.

The 11th Kazakhstan Fashion Week featured collections from some of the most acclaimed domestic designers and a few brand new names. Clear lines, monochrome colours and androgynous styles will still be cutting edge



this coming fall; however, soft femininity and traditional Asian motives will remain present in the fashion choices of many Kazakh women. Leather outerwear is typically prominent. However, at this show, leather was complimented by velvet, chiffon and silk dresses in neutral and natural colours. These common features unified the collections of the twelve designers who showcased their clothing lines in Astana last week.

One of, if not the most well-known Kazakh designer, Kuralai

Nurkadilova, opened the first day of the Astana shows with a collection titled, Through the Thorns to the Stars. Unlike the usual flamboyant styles and rampant colours associated with her designs, this year’s collection consisted of flowy chiffon dresses in pastel colours, such as soft grey, beige and white. Dresses were contrasted with well-fitted beige leather vests with cut-out Kazakh ethnic designs. Bare-footed models walked on their tip-toes and covered their faces with their hands to shield

themselves against the faux wind; subtle and serene indie music amplified the effect of the eclectic collection, setting a dramatic tone for the rest of the evening.

“My collection often expresses my feelings and manifests my thoughts. There have been times in my life when I was drawn to brighter colours and convivial images. This year’s collection is different, yet it still reflects what I’m personally going through,” Nurkadilova said before the show, confessing that she feels nervous

every time she presents a new collection.

Kamila Kurbani is another increasingly famous young couturier, whose dynamic yet concise collection earned the unequivocal sympathy of the audience. The collection featured a core print of colourful natural landscapes augmented by puffy white clouds. For her new apparel, the young designer used atlas fabrics with paintings of the Kazakh steppes. Simple elegant dresses, voluminous coats and down jackets served as canvases depicting the clear blue sky, fields of yellow rye, green meadows, reddish-brown hills and snowy mountain tops.

Designer Alex Chzhen remained true to his edgy, cool and slightly offbeat style. His signature shirt dresses practically floated down the runway and came in fresh sunny prints and natural light fabrics. The collection also featured a structured women’s caftans of neutral colours with enlarged pockets and beaded ribbon-like ensigns. The designer’s loose garments paired with white sneakers, aviator sunglasses and white beanies were the epitome of urban chic.

This season, Kazakhstan Fashion Week allowed for new talent to rise. Above all, the Samidel Fashion House got a pleasant surprise and was a discovery for many fashion lovers of the Kazakh capital. Promising designer Dinara Abdullina presented her new fall-winter

collection Ethno Hypnosis and left the audience wanting more.

Abdullina seems to know what every woman wants to be: refined, modestly chic, unique and comfortable in her skin without looking like she has just stepped off the runway. A mix of textures brought some edge to the designs; authenticity was achieved through attention to detail; muted colours saved the garments from being too glamorous and cloying.

The designer seemed to have met all cultural expectations as to how a progressive Kazakh woman should be dressed in the cool September weather. The lineup was in black, oxblood, terracotta, cream and white. The striking point of departure was the contrast of defined lines and romantic fluidity. Leather leggings, cashmere wrap tops and jackets and dreamy organza sheer dresses topped with woolen vests in geometric designs offered an array of daytime looks. Ornamented organza was used to create simple A-style nightgowns adorned by statement pieces, such as structured ornamented vests, belts and shoulder accessories. The central piece, a beautiful creme-coloured wedding dress, closed the showcase in a rather theatrical manner with a reenactment of betashar, a Kazakh traditional ceremony for the opening of the bride’s face.

Besides the ethnic motives, military themes were dominant among the up-and-coming designers. Coats, men’s leather jumpsuits and pleated loose pants in khaki and black represented a rigorous masculine precision that persisted throughout Ainur Turysbek’s collection. The designer’s quest for uniformity felt straightforward and was loaded with military boots, zippers, and cargo pockets but did not sacrifice femininity.

Unique Exhibition Showcases Works of Central Asian Artists

By Ruyiya Ospanova

SINGAPORE – “New Silk Roads: Painting Beyond Borders,” the first exhibition of Central Asian artists, was showcased April 21 in Icon Gallery here. The event was organised by ENE Central Asian Arts with the support of the Kazakh Embassy in Singapore and Lassale Singapore University of Art.

The exhibition showed 37 works, including those of artists from Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. Paintings and abstract compositions by Central Asian artists generated great interest among the many visitors.

Kazakhstan demonstrated paintings of the Amulet series by the nation’s renowned artist Leyla Mahat. In her works, Mahat tells about the role of amulets in the daily life of nomads, which were used not only as decoration but also as charms from the evil eye.

Amulet paintings recreate ancient jewellery uncovered in archaeological excavations and re-



constructed by Kazakh scientists and her images relive the work of archaeologist Zeinolla Samashev.

Artist, archaeologist and artisan are all connected through the materiality of the gold ornaments and their contemporary artistic representations, as well as by the land once inhabited by the ancient peoples which now forms their burial place and the physical basis

of the modern state. The choice of depicting jewellery, the wearing of which was an aristocratic prerogative, is also suggestive of the lineage which the artist claims as validation for the modern state. The appeals to the forces of history and heredity are perhaps nowhere better illustrated than in “Amulet and Colour” (2014), where their potency seems to glow red-hot, their

vividness embodying itself in the profuse viscosity of paint, tactile and Medusa-like in its writhing.

According to the organisers, such exhibitions in general allow representatives of Central Asian countries not only to learn more about the historical values of each other, but in particular help to strengthen ties between Kazakhstan and Singapore.

“The purpose of the exhibition, as is evident from its name, is expanding the role of the New Silk Road. That is, we intend not only to acquaint visitors with the works of artists of Central Asia, but also further strengthen the ties between the countries in the field of fine arts,” said Sally Clarke, founder of ENE Central Asian Arts.

“The Central Asian artists featured in the exhibition ‘New Silk Roads: Painting Beyond Borders’ mostly work in the conventional media of oil or acrylic on canvas as well as sometimes in combination with other media. The images they create with them are about going beyond – crossing borders – in various ways. They may go beyond the mundane and prosaic, beyond type, beyond realism, form and recognition, beyond the literal, beyond the temporal, beyond the self and life itself and beyond expectation,” said the organiser.

Kazakh Film Stars, Orphans Dub Avengers in Kazakh

By Kseniya Voronina

The premiere of the blockbuster film “The Avengers: Age of Ultron,” or “Kek Alushylar: Altron Dauri” in Kazakh, took place in Kazakhstan, where prominent Kazakhstan actors and orphans dubbed the movie.

Kazakh became the 20th major language into which this instalment of the famous Hollywood franchise has been translated.

Makspal Issabekova voiced Black Widow, played by Scarlett Johansson, Zhasulan Baisalbekov voiced Ultron, played by James Spader, Beibut Kamanarovich voiced Thor played by Chris Hemsworth, Yerzhan Zharylkassynov voiced Iron Man, who is depicted by Robert Downey Jr. and Yergali Tyulebayev is the voice of Captain America played by Chris Evans. Bakhytzhhan Zharmukhambetov read Hawkeye’s lines, who is played by Jeremy Renner and Samat Kordabayev voiced for the Hulk played by Mark Ruffalo.

“My first experience with dubbing took place in 2012 for the cartoon ‘Batyl Zhurek’ (Kazakh for Braveheart). The main character spoke using my voice. Since then, the idea of dubbing my favourite films into Kazakh has never left me. Now finally, my dream has come true. My favourite actress, Scarlett Johansson, spoke with my voice in the new, well-known and highly anticipated Marvel blockbuster,” Issabekova said.

Orphans from Orphanage No. 1 in Baganashil in the Almaty region also helped dub the movie. One participant, Samat Andreyev, said that the experience was something that he will always remember.

“I am very pleased that my voice was selected for one of the characters. I have previously participated in the dubbing of ‘Maleficent’ and ‘Monsters Univer-

sity.’ It is a new and interesting experience for me,” he said.

Well-known Kazakhstan journalist Lyailya Sultanqyzy was among the first spectators.

Kazakh became the 20th major language into which this instalment of the famous Hollywood franchise has been translated.

“I’m glad that now every citizen of Kazakhstan can enjoy world premieres in Kazakh. This will help the state language gain prestige, as well as promote the Kazakh language amongst the younger generation. Every family should attend movies in Kazakh. Being a mother of two children, I am very passionate about teaching national traditions and culture to the younger generations. The premiere of ‘The Avengers: Age of Ultron’ in Kazakh has been long-awaited by my children,” Sultanqyzy said.

The dubbing of Hollywood movies started as part of a project titled Zhastar – Otanga! and is aimed at promoting the state language amongst young people. The main criterion in choosing a film is its ability to foster unity, harmony, justice, solidarity, kindness, friendship and unity in the face of danger in the country’s youth.

Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev expressed hope that this initiative will continue and will be one of the most important tools in developing the Kazakh language.

The first blockbuster dubbed into the Kazakh language was the cartoon “Kolikter-2,” which is Kazakh for Cars 2.

Astana Opera’s Lead Soloist Performs in Brazil

By Kseniya Voronina

The Astana Opera’s lead soloist, Medet Chotabaev, successfully concluded a series of performances at the Brazilian Theatro Municipal (Sao Paulo) in Giuseppe Verdi’s Otello, the Astana Opera’s press-service reported.

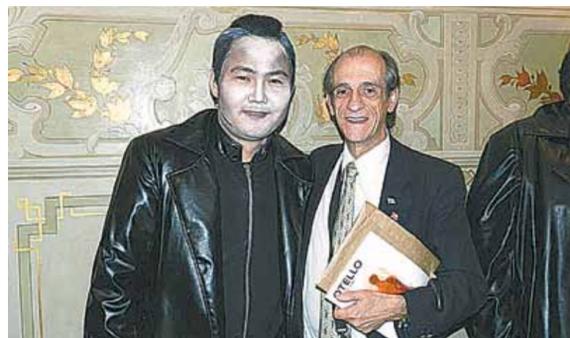
“It was my first time playing in one of the most beautiful theatres in Brazil. The venue marvellously expresses the spirit and tradition of the best temples of Melpomene. I was lucky enough to sing with Avgust Amonov, the tenor of the Mariinsky Theatre, who happens to be from Almaty. The first lineup of the title roles included globally acclaimed tenor Gregory Kunde, who gave me several master classes. I showed him an aria from Rudolph’s opera La Boheme, he praised my level of Italian and gave me some pointers,” Chotabaev said.

Astana’s lead soloist noted the

quality of performances given at the theatre. It seemed to Chotabaev as if one premiere after another of the greatest domestic and international playwrights and composers came to life. “An interesting fact is that they do not have a permanent opera company, the staff consists of only the choir and orchestra. Opera soloists are invited from theatres all around the world,” the lead singer said.

The singer performed as Cassio on March 14, 17, 21 and 22. The famous John Neshling stood behind the conductor’s stand on all four days. The director of the opera was the celebrated Giancarlo del Monaco, who also directed Abai at the Astana Opera in September.

The Brazilian public affectionately welcomed Kazakhstan’s artist and gave him warm applause and flowers. After the performance, members of the audience waited for singer to pay him compliments and ask for autographs.



Medet Chotabaev (l) performed as Cassio on March 14, 17, 21 and 22 in Sao Paulo, Brazil.

The next performances by Chotabaev at the Theatro Municipal of Sao Paulo will be on May 31 and June 4 and 7. The singer will perform in Eugene Onegin, starring as Lensky.

It was European opera agent Stephanie Gamba who invited the artist and gave him notice of his brilliant performance at the prestigious Marcello Giordani competition in 2013, at which Chotabaev took third place.

It should be noted that the stage of the old Theatro Municipal of Sao Paulo has hosted such celebrities as Enrico Caruso, Beniamino Gigli, Mario Del Monaco, Maria Callas, Renata Tebaldi, Arturo Toscanini, Camargo Guarnieri, Heitor Villa-Lobos, Pietro Mascagni, Anna Pavlova, Arthur Rubinstein, Duke Ellington, Ella Fitzgerald, Isadora Duncan, Margot Fonteyn and many others.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 6, 2015

Great Patriotic War Victory Parade to Be Largest in Country's History



By Julia Rutz

The May 7 parade dedicated to the 70th anniversary of victory in the Great Patriotic War is expected to be the largest event among all previously conducted in Kazakhstan. More than 5,000 people, 220 military vehicles and 85 aircraft will participate

in the procession, reported tengrinews.kz.

The parade will be divided into two parts. The first portion will include historic scenes and present 36 types of retro military equipment that were used during the war in 1941-45. The final section will feature samples of weapons and military equipment which stand in service in the modern Kazakh

Army. The procession will include 24 parade sections, each with 154 soldiers, and among them two will be female sections.

According to Minister of Health and Social Development Tamara Duyssenova, the National Bank of Kazakhstan has already issued 207,923 jubilee medals for veterans. About 5.8 million tenge (US\$31,235) was allocated from the national budget to provide financial assistance for veterans, disabled soldiers and workers of the home front during the military-years.

"As per the report issued on April 1, 82 war participants have received new apartments and a housing renovation for 13,000 veterans has been organised. They also received residential telephone lines, and 176,000 veterans have been provided with medicines for the total sum of 72.4 million tenge (US\$389,903)," said Duyssenova.

In addition, war participants have also been granted a discount for train travel and sanatorium treatment. Deputy Prime Minister Berdybek Saparbayev stressed

that tasks such as taking care of veterans and improving the quality of their lives are among the main priorities of the state social policy.

"Today, the social protection-policy for senior citizens is implemented at both the national and regional levels. Every year, we increase the amount of pensions and other social payments. The task for government agencies is to accurately implement social policies in the frame of the state," said Saparbayev.

A photo exhibition featuring never-before-seen pictures from the Kazakhstan National Archives and the U.S. National Archives will be presented by the U.S. embassy in Kazakhstan. The exhibition will feature Kazakh and U.S. heroes, as well as untold stories and a map of routes used by Allied Forces to transport supplies through the Kazakh SSR to the Soviet Union and China. The opening ceremony will kick off in the Kasteev National Museum of Arts in Almaty and the exhibit is also expected to be presented in Astana and other Kazakh cities.

Astana Mayor Wants Taxi Drivers at Airport to Speak Three Languages

Staff report

ASTANA – Akim (Mayor) of Astana Adilbek Dzhaksybekov recently instructed taxi drivers officially serving Astana International Airport to be taught Kazakh and English, reported the official website of the akim.

The city head gave the assignment during a meeting on the activities and development of the airport.

"The staff of the official airport taxi, which is Zhebe taxi company, should speak three languages as befitting the level of the capital... It is also necessary to consider the possibility of teaching English to bus conductors who work on routes in the direction of the airport," said the mayor.

Dzhaksybekov also noted that the requirements of official taxi companies and bus fleets No. 1 and No. 3, whose transport carries passengers to the international airport, should be the same. He also recalled the observations on the sanitary condition of the buses and illegal taxi drivers at the airport have not yet been eliminated.

"These so-called private cabs that meet their clients in the main hall and aggressively impose their services continue to give a negative impression to arriving passengers. The department of internal affairs on transport must insure that comprehensive measures are taken against any illegal taxi drivers," instructed the mayor.

Questions about the quality of services were also raised. According to the mayor about 30 small and medium businesses at the airport have services that are not always perfect.

"The airport administration must work out the issues to make all their service in the same style. This means uniform clothes, dishes, price tags and other elements of service. It is clear that every company wants to promote its own brand, but they need to understand where they operate. When any situation arises, all claims are brought against the airport administration and not the private traders," stressed the head of the capital.

The akim also noted that a major focus of the Nurly Zhol new economic policy is the development of transport and logistics infrastructure, where the development of airports receives special attention.

The main hubs for domestic and international air traffic today are Astana and Almaty. The share of the capital's airport, which holds second place in the aviation market of the country, accounts for 12 percent of all shipment flights, 24 percent of outgoing passengers and 6 percent of processed cargo, mail and baggage.

"Insufficient capacity restricts the Astana airport operations and airlines from fully satisfying the needs of air travellers. In the future, this could have a negative impact on passenger traffic. In order to address these issues, work on the expansion of the airport terminal and the reconstruction of the runway and the platform began in February 2015 and is planned to be completed in March 2017," said the mayor.

Finally, Dzhaksybekov called on all relevant government entities to solve the problems and shortcomings together and in an expeditious manner.

Mini MBA Programme for Entrepreneurs Launches in Mangistau

By Kseniya Voronina

The Mangystau Business Executive Programme aimed at local businessmen and heads of regional companies was launched in the Mangystau region, according to the Mangystau Online press service.

This is a joint project of the regional akim (governor's office) and National Chamber of Entrepreneurs of Mangystau that gathered 30 regional company leaders who have more than 7,000 employees. The courses are lead by well-known consultants from leading companies from Kazakhstan and abroad.

"During six months, 30 Mangis-

tau company executives from different industries will be studying the operational and strategic management, basics for good negotiations, kaizen, which is a system of continuous improvement in quality, technology, company culture, productivity and leadership based on Japanese practice, HR management and marketing. The training consists of 12 modules, which will be taught three days per week with the use of case methods and business simulation," reported the press service.

According to programme attendee Azamat Nurliev, who is the head of the industrial and domestic waste processing company Eco Operating, Ltd., he is expecting to expand the knowledge in human

resource management and financial control processes.

"A law on radical measures to improve the business environment in the country came into force on Jan. 1. Its purpose is to create conditions for local entrepreneurship development, build a partnership between state and business and create a favourable business climate. We run the mini-MBA programme in the framework of instructions, made by President Nursultan Nazarbayev in order to establish strong regional companies and successful entrepreneurs," explained Mangystau oblast Akim (Governor) Alik Aidarbayev.

According to him, local authorities have already completed a two-

year MBA training programme in the public sector, as well as health professionals, who attended the Management in Health Care courses.

"All our initiatives for management training conducted for professionals of different levels are aimed at regional development strategy realisation, which was approved by the head of state during his working visit to the Mangystau region in October 2014," added Aidarbayev.

Upon completion of the training course, the trainees will attain the comprehensive management skills necessary for successful management of a company, its personnel, business processes and project financing.

Technology Commercialisation Centre Lands First Three Deals Sooner Than Expected

By Michelle Witte

ASTANA – Three projects supported by the Technology Commercialisation Centre (TCC) in Astana have already signed commercial contracts in what TCC representatives call the project's first real deals, which they say are coming in ahead of schedule.

The three projects' deals are "signed, done and in the bank," said TCC Lead Expert Erik Azulay in an interview with this newspaper on April 24. "The projects are meant to go anywhere from six months to a year and a half, depending on the funding and stage of development, so we didn't really expect to see the concrete, specific market results until fall or the end of the year. Fortunately, we've been surprised in a good way," he said. Thanks to the work of TCC's managers on finding industrial partners and customers, Azulay said, some projects are already entering the market. The TCC is a jointly funded effort by the government of Kazakhstan and the World Bank to support commercialisation of innovative technologies in Kazakhstan.

An improved type of furnace for heating interiors, a new type of polymer used for flushing oil wells and an additive for plasticising concrete are the TCC-supported innovations that have now had commercial success. Two of the three deals also involve licensing agreements, which Azulay pointed out is actually a significant contribution to Kazakhstan's overall



licensing landscape. Licensing allows a customer to secure access to a new technology at little or no cost upfront, but rather agreeing to share a portion of future revenues with the inventor.

Over the past decade, Kazakhstan has only averaged 10 – 15 licensing deals a year (not including trademarks) which is quite low, he said. (As a contrast, he offered Stanford University, which alone concludes 90 licensing agreements a year). "We've got three to four licensing deals in the pipeline right now, so the TCC programme alone would basically increase [licensing] in the whole country of Kazakhstan by about 25 percent, and we are expecting more deals by the time we finish... In that sense, the effect of this project has been

very large for Kazakhstan, even though some of the deals are relatively small in immediate dollar amounts."

To have Kazakh companies and innovators realize that licensing intellectual property is a practical and profitable way of bringing a technology to the market is a very important step for the country and will raise its visibility in the international arena.

Adina Mamarayeva is TCC's manager on the long burning solid fuel furnace project, which only won a TCC grant in December 2014. The improved boilers can run longer on fuel and create lower levels of emissions than the standard boilers in use in Kazakhstan. The project had won a grant from the Damu Fund in 2012 to

create a small prototype, but had since stalled. With TCC, the idea was to start producing market ready units for sale and to scale up the production, Mamarayeva said. The project's first deal was signed in February, a 10 million tenge (US\$53,817) deal to supply furnaces to a town in North Kazakhstan, near Petropavlovsk. The first furnaces have already been installed, she reported, with positive results.

"They actually were installed in a school... they had problems with heat and one part of the school was very cold, and North Kazakhstan has very tough winters," Mamarayeva said. They are already preparing contracts with more towns in North Kazakhstan Oblast, mostly for schools, hospi-

tals and social organisations, she said, and they plan to sign these deals in the end of the summer.

"So the deals for us are important, but there's a social impact as well – these are schools and hospitals where people are in need; they need to be in normal, warm rooms," she said.

A project managed by Abylai Akhymbekov, which created a new type of polymer that is more effective at flushing old oil wells in high-saline, high temperature environments, has signed a \$100,000 contract for field testing, plus a licensing deal with the oil services company Vostokneftegas-2050 LLP for future use of the technology.

The new type of polymer helps flush more oil out of nearly exhausted wells. "After the first two rounds of field trials, after 15 months of experimenting and working on the project using this polymer, they got about 11,000 tonnes more [oil] out of the well, which is worth about \$5 million," Akhymbekov pointed out. This project had also been funded previously, but was floundering. TCC saw the potential, Azulay said, and "[The project] went from a scientific research and development project that had potential to an actual deal, with real commercial success."

The third project, a new formula for plasticising concrete, has signed a licensing agreement with a civil engineering project near Almaty. The engineering project itself has not launched yet, Azulay

reported, but the deal is already in place. The new product, he said, uses local ingredients to create stronger, more flexible concrete; "world-class results," he said. It will replace imported plasticisers. The inventor will receive a portion of the revenue from every contract of concrete produced using his additive.

Azulay credits TCC's accelerated success to the work of the project managers, who, he said, work through questions on patents and intellectual property, negotiate deals, manage the personalities involved, help write contracts.

"Basically everything from A to Z," he said. "And that's what we expect our managers to do: to help these scientists who would be lost in these business details without having support."

"I think our scientists are very surprised at the deals as well," said Mamarayeva, "because I think they have been working with science and scientific grants their whole lives and then after 30 years, you suddenly have to do business and find someone who is really interested in your product!"

What they are doing is really new, she said. "This year, we are starting to receive calls and emails from people in the private sector saying 'Hey, we heard about this project,' and some people, some businessmen... said this is the first time that we've seen scientists doing something relevant for industry, something that could be applied in industry now, rather than in 50 years."

SOCIETY

WEDNESDAY, MAY 6, 2015

National Forest Planting Day Celebrates United Nations Anniversary, Supports EXPO 2017



By Michelle Witte

ASTANA – To celebrate the 70th anniversary of the United Nations this year, the Coalition for a Green Economy and the Development of G-Global, the Astana EXPO 2017 company, the United Nations office in Kazakhstan, the Nazarbayev Intellectual Schools (NIS) and the Sustainable Development Land Foundation came together to organise a tree-planting event coinciding with Kazakhstan's National Forest Planting Day on April 28.

This spring planting day was dedicated to supporting the upcoming international exposition,

EXPO 2017, in Astana, as well as the work of the UN.

One thousand tree seedlings were planted on the grounds of Nazarbayev Intellectual School, the UN Development Programme office in Astana reported. The young trees were planted in an area now called Alley EXPO 2017. The site consists of seven alleys of trees: UN Alley, Kazakh Parliament Alley, Alley of the Astana EXPO 2017 Company, Alley of Nongovernmental Organisations, Youth Alley and Alley of Nazarbayev Intellectual Schools.

"Today, we plant Alley EXPO 2017 and I think it is a great con-

tribution to the greening of our city. You know that one of our sub-themes of the exhibition is the reduction of carbon dioxide emissions. I congratulate all of you, I think today we make a great contribution to the expo," First Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Rapol Zhoshybayev, who is the EXPO 2017 commissioner, said, according to the report from Strategy2050.kz.

"We'll be planting 70 trees for 70 years of the United Nations..." UN Resident Coordinator Stephen Tull said at the event, according to a UNDP report. "Let me just talk a little bit about what 2015 is bringing for the world.

World leaders have called for a very ambitious, long-term agenda for sustainable development so that our development around the world is promoting social, economic and environment development jointly. And in September there will be a summit of world leaders at the United Nations where we'll all initiate the Sustainable Development Goals. This will be the theme that we'll be convening various meetings on throughout the United Nations anniversary year. And here in Kazakhstan we are very happy that the government and people of Kazakhstan are firmly behind the sustainable development agenda for the future," he said.

National Forest Planting Days occur in the spring and fall every year with the participation of regional authorities, businesses and volunteers. The days were launched in order to involve citizens in the environmental movement and promote a national sense of responsibility and respect for the environment and for green spaces. Trees have been planted around cities and national parks across the country over the last few years of the initiative.

The planting at the Astana NIS was attended by representatives of diplomatic missions, members of Parliament, representatives of state bodies, culture and sport figures, representatives of nongovernmental organisations, youth leaders, and teachers and students from the school.

E-Tickets for Almaty Transportation to Launch in 2015

By Kseniya Voronina

Transport Holding Almaty recently unveiled two projects to introduce electronic tickets for public transportation and improve the central supervisory service. The projects seek to increase passenger safety and improve the efficiency of ticket sales.

Electronic tickets for public transport is an effective tool and has been successfully realised in big cities.

It has been emphasised that electronic tickets for public transport is an effective tool and has been successfully realised in big cities. The system is expected to increase the profit from selling tickets, as it excludes the possibility to organise a black market. The project will cover the whole public transportation system, including buses, metro, trams and trolley buses.

"Since introducing reforms for public transport of the city requires huge financial resources, we have attracted investors to call the project into life. To date, the amount of private investment

totals about \$12 million. I set the task for the transport holding to introduce the electronic tickets system by the end of this year," said Almaty Akim (Mayor) Akhmetzhan Yessimov.

It was noted that local entrepreneurs have been attracted to finance the project. The introduction of the central supervisory service also provides good perspectives for local transport. It was established in order to monitor transportation processes in the city in real time. After analysing the operation of every unit of public transport, the system will propose more optimised routes. In this regard, public transport will be equipped with mobile GPS trackers, which will transmit the data to the central service. However, GPS trackers will also perform the function of an on-board computer with which the driver can receive information on previous and subsequent transports and communicate with the dispatcher.

"All these projects are aimed at the improvement of the quality of passenger services, as well as to gradually solve problems presented in this area. The development of public transport is a priority task for us, which is focused on the possibility of establishing a modern transportation system, expanding the budget and improving the ecology of the city," concluded Yessimov.

Young Kazakhs Among Nation's Most Creative Inventors

By Julia Rutz

Kazakhstan patents about 8,000 inventions each year from creators of all ages, according to the National Institute of Intellectual Property of Kazakhstan. And some of those inventions come from young people. The Shapagat National Invention Contest even includes a "Best School-Aged Boy Inventor" category.

Among those emerging creators is young Pavlodar resident Nazifa Baktybaeva who has invented a complex research model to study Venus. She has made calculations about the weight of the construction and found the proper materials to ensure the protection of the research complex in Venus' atmosphere. Information that can be attained with the help of this invention will be of great scientific importance to the space industry. The young scientist was invited to visit NASA and has been granted a scholarship to study in the U.S.

Closer to home, Duisen Murzagaliyev of Atyrau has invented a mechanism to detect oil deposits. His idea makes the drilling process easier.

A pneumatic catapult, which is now successfully operating in airplane laboratories around the country, was built in 2013. The unit was invented by Kiril Ivanov from Usti-Kamenogorsk, who was only 16 years old at the time. This device is used to test new wing types and forms, as well as to help teach the basics of aerodynamics.

Madina Madiyeva came up with an idea to predict the risk of negative genetic effects from exposure to low doses of radiation amongst the offspring of exposed individuals. The invention can be used to identify possible consequences for the children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren of those people who suffered because of the nuclear testing at Semipalatinsk.

"The health effects of nuclear tests for people who lived and continue to live in this area is a

strong concern today. Everyone is well aware of the harmful effects of radiation exposure on the human body; moreover, ionising radiation causes genetic defects that can be transmitted to future generations. A method of predicting the genetic consequences of the population of the Semipalatinsk region will help professionals identify groups at high risk, which would allow for proper diagnosis and treatment," Madiyeva explained in an interview with Vlast.kz.

Another interesting invention was created by Dauren Ankauov, who suggested that art work can be long lasting and eco-friendly. His patented "decorative composition and method of production" involves the use of natural materials to create works of art. For example, he suggests using animal hair and a special adhesive to fasten materials to the canvas. It is expected that this can reduce material costs and make the art less prone to damage over time.

Advisory Body Addresses Freedom of Religion, Accepts Recommendations from Civil Society

By Aiman Turebekova

ASTANA – The right to non-discrimination was the theme of the regular meeting of the Platform for Dialogue on the Human Dimension, a consultative advisory body, held on April 29 at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and chaired by ambassador-at-large Usen Suleimen.

According to a Foreign Ministry press release, meeting participants discussed protecting the human rights and freedoms of citizens irrespective of their racial, ethnic or social origins or their religion and beliefs, as guaranteed by the Constitution of Kazakhstan. They also discussed international acts ratified by the country, and the law "On religious activity and religious associations."

Representative of the Prosecutor General's Office of Kazakhstan Azamat Sargazin noted that the citizens of Kazakhstan are guaranteed the right to freedom of assembly by the constitution. "Over the past three years there were 749 different protest rallies in Kazakhstan, which were attended by about 190,000 people," he said, "and 58.2 percent of them were held spontaneously, without the prior permission of authorities." Moreover, Sargazin contended that the legal regulation of assembly in Kazakhstan is consistent with international law, in particular the standards of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the practice of countries in which the existing system of democracy is recognised as developed.

Today, there has been notable progress in the creation of public associations, Sargazin said. For example, there are more than 27,000 registered nonprofit organisations. It was also emphasised that in order to liberalise procedures for establishing political parties in 2009, taking into account the recommenda-

tions of the OSCE, amendments to national legislation were made and implemented. "These amendments extended the term of state registration from two to four months and reduced the numbers of supporters needed to register a political party, which are required to register a party, from 50,000 to 40,000 individuals," commented Sargazin.

Regarding the principle of equality of religious organisations, the state allows religious organisations to act in accordance with their religious rules and regulations, participants said. "Today, in Kazakhstan, more than 3,500 religious entities representing 18 denominations are registered and coexist peacefully. All of them are free [to practice their] religion, gather to worship, distribute religious literature and create charitable organisations," said Chairman of the Committee for Religious Affairs of the Ministry of Culture and Sports Galym Shoikin.

The participants also discussed the report of Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief Heiner Bielefeldt, in which the main findings on the results of a visit of Kazakhstan from March 25 to February 4, 2014, were presented. The special rapporteur emphasised in his report that freedom of religion and belief is not simply the result of an effective policy to ensure diversity and has the status of a universal right of all people.

Representatives of the non-governmental sector raised a range of issues relating to the current system of registration of religious organisations, control of the inflow of religious literature and the statutory documents for registering religious groups. "The right to freedom of religion or belief is a fundamental human right. However, to spread this faith, to involve other people in it, may be appropriate only after an organisation is registered," responded Shoikin.

Some members of the platform

on behalf of civil society called on the Committee on Religious Affairs to continue working to improve legislation in the sphere of religion, including its alignment with international standards.

The final chord of the meeting was the presentation by the director of the Kostanai branch of Kazakhstan's International Bureau for Human Rights and Rule of Law, Anastasia Miller, on Kazakhstan's first experiences in implementing decisions of international human rights bodies.

Representatives of the non-governmental sector raised a range of issues relating to the current system of registration of religious organisations, control of the inflow of religious literature and the statutory documents for registering religious groups.

The Platform for Dialogue on the Human Dimension, hosted by the Kazakh Foreign Ministry, has served since 2013 as the format for regular interaction between government agencies tasked with protecting human rights and civil society organisations involved in the same issue.

Following the work of the dialogue platform in 2013, 157 recommendations were devised, and another 109 recommendations in 2014, most related to the progress of democratic institutions, strengthening the rule of law and protecting human rights.

Two New Subway Stations Open in Almaty

By Michelle Witte

ASTANA – Two new subway stations opened in Almaty on April 18, and President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev was among the first to take a ride.

The new Moscow and Sairan stations, which are consecutive and today are the end of the metro's red line, will connect the city centre with residential neighbourhoods. The new stations have extended the subway's length to 11 kilometres. Almaty's subway is used by more than 24,000 people daily, and more than 6.5 million people used the system last year, earning the city more than 1 billion tenge (US\$5.38 million), the Kazakh TV reported, citing

transport workers. The new stations are expected to double passenger flow.

The Moscow station, 11 metres below Almaty's famous Abai Avenue, between Otegen Batyr Street and Altynsarin Avenue, is predominantly red and has photos of Red Square and the Kremlin. Moscow's metro system has an Alma-Ata station.

As part of the official opening ceremony of the stations, Nazarbayev and Akim (Mayor) of Almaty Akhmetzhan Yessimov rode from one new station to the other, getting off at Moscow Station to meet subway construction workers. During the ceremony, Nazarbayev commented on the subway's significance for Almaty, saying it is important for alleviat-

ing traffic and improving the environment in the growing city.

"Almaty is the only city in Kazakhstan that has a metro," the President said at the opening. "Thanks to its construction, 1,350 new jobs opened. In the first place, going by metro saves time; secondly, it improves the ecology of the city, whose population is now 1.5 million."

He also commented that, had Almaty remained Kazakhstan's capital, it would be overcrowded with cars and too polluted.

The Astana Akimat press office reports that the city's metro will continue to be extended along Abai Avenue, with the Saryarka and Dostyk stations scheduled to be the next to open. Almaty's subway opened on December 1, 2011 with seven stations.

NATION&CAPITAL
TOURISM

WEDNESDAY, MAY 6, 2015

UNDP, Government Work to Build Wildlife Management Capacity, Hunting Tourism



Continued from Page B1

Kazakhstan's approach to wildlife management is somewhat different to most other countries, says Kent Jingfors, a Canadian wildlife management expert who visited the project in January of this year as an advisor.

"In most countries, wildlife is considered public property and the state takes responsibility (control) of the monitoring, protection and use of wildlife resources," Jingfors told The Astana Times on April 30. "In Kazakhstan, the state has delegated responsibility for the monitoring and protection of wildlife in almost half the country to privately operated Hunting Concessions (HCs) that, in return, are given the exclusive right to provide services for hunters." The government still sets annual quotas for the HCs and collects fees and taxes from them, he said.

Given that federal and local agencies lack the resources to monitor and protect wildlife in the huge country, delegating the costs of hiring rangers, conducting wildlife surveys and developing hunting infrastructure, to name a few, would seem to make sense, he explained. Kazakhstan's government does monitor and protect a few rare species and a few protected areas, he commented, though poaching remains a serious problem. However, Jingfors says, very few of Kazakhstan's more than 680 HCs are economically viable now.

The UNDP project report notes a range of outstanding issues hindering the development of wildlife management capacities. "For instance, the current system of using hunting resources does not fully take into account the current requirements related to wildlife protection, restoration and use because of gaps in legal and economic mechanisms in the current context of wildlife management. Private hunting farms are found to be unprofitable, without any return on investments," the report said.

Therefore, attracting resources to the hunting sector is crucial. "To implement [the project's] reforms it is necessary to attract a flow of capital to the hunting sector. An important element of reforms will be amendments and addenda to legislation that would significantly simplify doing business and encourage entrepreneurs to protect and rehabilitate wildlife," Project Manager Talgat Kerteshev said, according to the UNDP.

With low population densities, large areas with the potential to be wildlife habitats, a diversity of landscapes, large seasonal fluctuations and considerable local knowledge of traditional hunting and wildlife in rural areas, wildlife management and hunting tourism could develop well here, Jingfors said.

Hunting tourism – defined as international hunters seeking trophy animals – is high value and low impact when managed

properly, Jingfors said, and can have considerable conservation value. "Once local communities recognise the potential value of a trophy animal, they tend to be more interested in the protection of wildlife and wildlife habitat to make sure future hunting opportunities are secured. The HCs are largely locally based, using local rangers and local services, so I believe the benefits from hunting are largely 'local.' Since mostly older, trophy-sized individuals are removed, there is usually limited impact on the local wildlife populations (particularly if poaching is eliminated)."

Kazakhstan's potential for hunting tourism is enhanced by the presence of some species that are attractive to international hunters, he said, in particular maral, ibex and roe deer, Jingfors said.

"An international hunter paying good money expects a good hunt that is well organised, with minimal disruptions and rich on cultural experiences. Hunting success is important but not necessarily a pre-requisite as long as the experience was 'good.' Kazakhstan is definitely attractive from a cultural experience point of view; however, the number of trophy species is currently limited," Jingfors said.

And in addition to international hunters, he also thinks there's a domestic urban population that could be drawn to new hunting opportunities.

Jingfors made 20 recommendations on governance, monitoring, hunting management and enforcement, hunting tourism and enhancing the economic viability of HCs on his trip. These start with recognising wildlife and biodiversity as an important national asset and an integral part of the country's Green Development Strategy. This will require revising the government's biodiversity strategy and action plan and adopting legislation that prioritises hunting and wildlife production over other land activities in some cases.

To support Kazakhstan's HCs, he suggested simplifying some of their management requirements, including eliminating unnecessary and impractical accounting of game species and changing the way quotas are set. HCs should be given incentives for protecting their wildlife, perhaps by returning fees taken from poachers to the HCs (rather than to the government) to further develop their rangers, Jingfors suggested. The government should also look for ways to reduce HCs' costs, perhaps by reducing taxes and fees and by promoting tourism.

Rangers should also be included in regional government inspection programmes, to create connections between enforcement bodies. Administrative procedures regarding firearms import permits, trophy export permits and other hunting regulations should be streamlined to encourage tourists. And, finally, Jingfors



thinks Kazakhstan should launch an experimental trophy hunting programme on argali, a trophy

prized by international hunters, "to demonstrate the conservation benefits of a limited and well-

regulated hunt of a rare species. Legal hunting of argali has been suspended since 2002, yet poach-

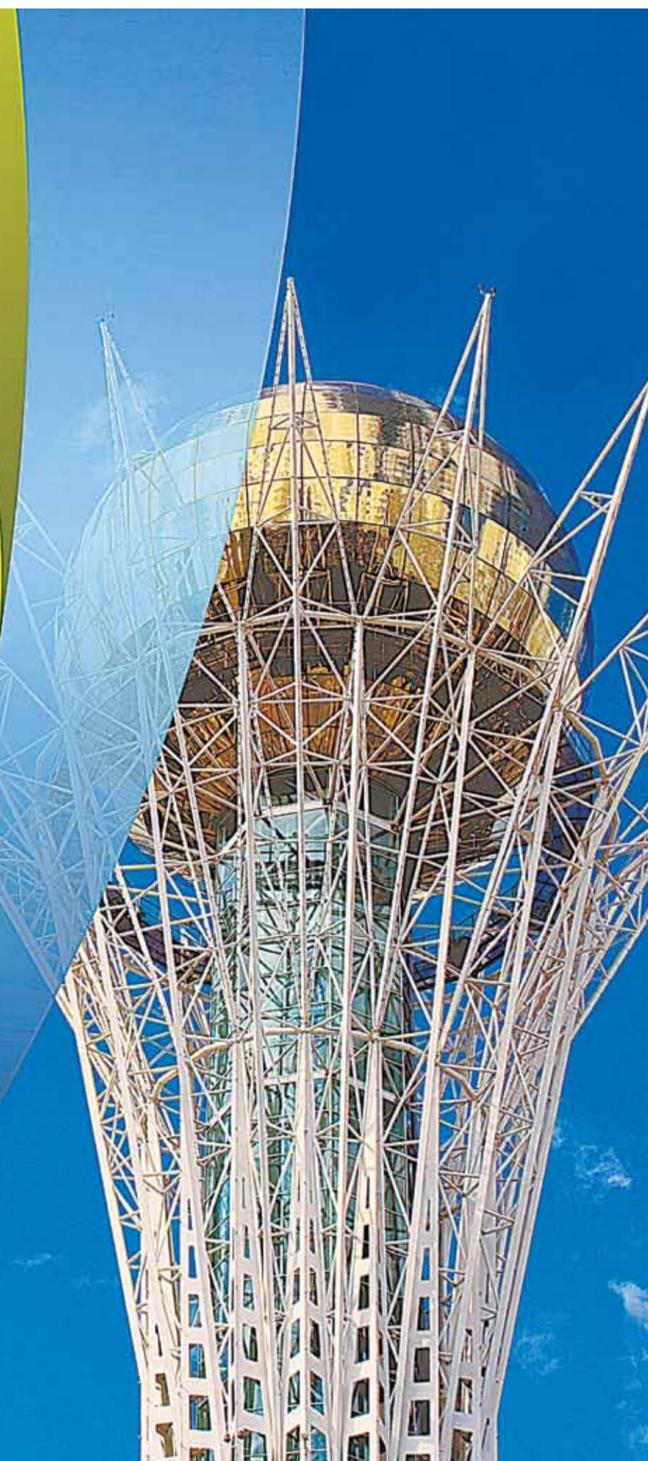
ing continues, with no benefits to conservation whatsoever," he pointed out.

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WEDNESDAY, MAY 6, 2015

Kairat Almaty Wins Its Second UEFA Futsal Cup



By Ilyas Omarov

Almaty Akim (Mayor) Akhmetzhan Yessimov met May 4 with the Kairat Almaty club to mark their second Futsal UEFA Cup win. The club claimed the cup, one of Europe's most prestigious tournaments in Futsal, after

winning the final 3:2 against FC Barcelona on April 26 in Lisbon, Portugal.

"I observed the entire game on TV and it was very tense. We should thank our goalkeeper [Leonardo de Melo Vieira Leite] Higuaita who defended the net courageously. All the players demonstrated colourful play. And it must

be always a special feeling – to win against Barcelona," said Yessimov.

Thanking the mayor for the visit, Higuaita informed him that he has adopted Kazakh citizenship and had been cleared to play for the Kazakhstan national team. "It is a great honour to be treated like his," he said.

The football players presented the mayor with the original UEFA Cup that they brought from Lisbon.

This is Kairat's second success in the sport's most prestigious club tournament in Europe, following a similar success two years ago in Tbilisi, Georgia.

Astana Team's Nibali to Skip Giro d'Italia to Prepare for Tour de France



By Dmitry Lee

Astana Pro Team top cyclist Vincenzo Nibali will skip this season's first Grand Tour Giro d'Italia race on May 9 to focus on preparing for the Tour de France, which begins July 4.

Nibali is focused on winning this year's Tour de France and repeating his success from the previous year. Nibali became the sixth man in history and the first Italian since 1998 to win all three of cycling's major tours when he secured a victory in last year's Tour de France.

Nibali wore the overall leader's yellow jersey for all but two stages of the race after his first day. He also won four of the race's 21 total stages, the most for a tour winner since the U.S.'s Lance Armstrong won five in 2004.

The full list of the UCI Pro-Team Astana for the Giro d'Italia race is as follows: Andrey Zeits of Kazakhstan, Fabio Aru, Italy, Diego Rosa, Italy, Paolo Tiralongo, Italy, Tanel Kangert, Estonia, Mikel Landa, Spain, Dario Cataldo, Italy, David Malacarne, Italy and Leon Luis Sanchez, Spain.



Team Kazakhstan Returns to World Hockey's Elite Division

By Ilyas Omarov

ASTANA – Team Kazakhstan followed up its confident start at the Ice Hockey World Championships, which saw them cruise past their Ukrainian and Hungarian rivals, with a crushing defeat of Japan, a hard-fought match against Poland – and a ticket to the World Championships.

The beginning of the championship ignited solid optimism among Kazakh fans, but knowing the unpredictable nature of sport, pundits tried to remain

cautious about a return to the elite division. However, with the third resounding win in Division I, Group A – a decisive 7:2 victory over Japan – a return the upper echelons seemed within reach.

The fourth game, against the tournament's hosts, Poland, turned out to be most competitive and nerve-wracking. In the first period, neither side managed a goal. In the second period, Roman Savchenko opened the score for Kazakhstan, then Bartlomiej Pociecha equalised for the Poles. In the third period, Roman Starchenko brought

Kazakhstan to the lead again before Marcin Kolusz gave hope once again to the local crowd. However, it was Starchenko who had the last word and delivered both the hard-won 3:2 victory and a guaranteed ticket to next year's World Championships in Russia.

The fifth and final game, against Italy, was then a mere formality. The Kazakhs did well anyway, winning 3:0.

Kazakhstan's national team won all five games in Krakow, scoring 23 and letting in only six goals. The second ticket to Russia 2016 was won by Hungary.

American Boxing Commentator Wants to See Golovkin–Mayweather Fight

By Dmitry Lee

Former American boxing trainer and outspoken TV commentator Teddy Atlas wants to see Kazakh undefeated World Boxing Association (WBA) and International Boxing Organisation (IBO) middle weight titleholder Gennady Golovkin (32-0, 29 KOs) in the ring with Floyd Mayweather Jr. (48-0), who beat Manny Pacquiao (57-6-2) May 2 in Las Vegas.

After the "Fight of the Century" as many referred to the Mayweather – Pacquiao match, Mayweather announced that his contracted fight in September may be the last in his career and at this point no names have been proposed to face him.

Atlas has been straight to the point and quite outspoken about the question and Pacquiao's loss to Mayweather.

"Nobody wants to see this fight

again. There's no reason for it, it'll hurt the business," silive.com cited Atlas. "And I don't want to see Amir Khan. He doesn't excite me."

Atlas said he would be excited to see Mayweather step up a class in weight category and face off against Kazakh champion Golovkin in the middle weight division.

"Why I put Sugar Ray Leonard in the mix of all-time greats was that he stepped up in weight class. He took risks and beat guys like Marvin Hagler. He took risks and he performed. That's why his legacy endures. If Floyd cares about such things, he'll fight Golovkin – but I don't think he cares. Golovkin is a seek-and-destroy guy. He's aggressive and physical and knows what he's doing. Now, that is a fight I would buy a ticket for," Atlas said about Golovkin.



Gennady Golovkin

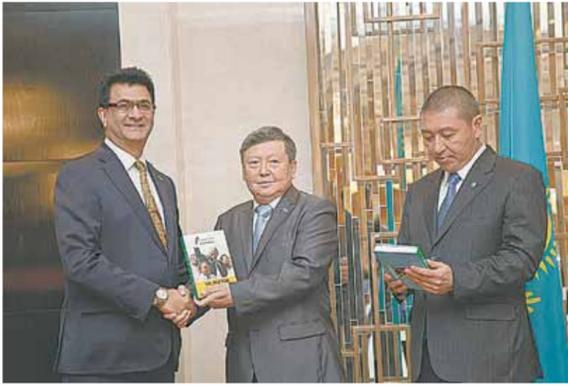


Floyd Mayweather Jr.

CAPITAL

WEDNESDAY, MAY 6, 2015

South African Embassy Celebrates Freedom Day in Astana



Writer, essayist Bakhithozha Rustemov (c) presented the first two copies of Nelson Mandela's quotations book in Kazakh to Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Askar Mussinov (r) and Ambassador of South Africa to Kazakhstan Shirish Soni (l).

By Michelle Witte

ASTANA – The Embassy of South Africa in Astana celebrated its country's Freedom Day on April 27 with a reception in the Astana Marriott Hotel attended by members of the diplomatic corps in the city and representatives of Kazakhstan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Freedom Day marks South Africa's first open, democratic elections as well as the end of apartheid rule.

"This day symbolises the South African people's efforts in their struggle toward freedom and liberty under the leadership of Nelson Mandela," Deputy Minister

of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan Askar Mussinov said in his address to the reception. "It celebrates freedom and commemorates the first post-apartheid elections held on that day in 1994. ... We must always remember and pay tribute to the 'long walk to freedom' by the great leader and teacher, Nelson Mandela. His lifelong struggle with racism, poverty, and injustice transformed him into an international icon for human dignity and freedom, for peace and reconciliation. Nelson Mandela left to us eternal values and a legacy as a teacher of freedom and peace, justice and tolerance."

Mussinov went on to comment

on South Africa's development since then, and the expanding bilateral cooperation between the two countries. He also said Kazakhstan looked forward to the visit of President of South Africa Jacob Zuma to Astana later this year.

Ambassador of South Africa to Kazakhstan Shirish Soni noted that this year marks another, older milestone in South Africa's history. "This year marks 60 years since a historic moment in our history, when South Africans adopted the Freedom Charter, a vision for a united, non-racial, non-sexist and democratic South Africa, in 1955, in Kliptown," he said. "The 3,000 delegates who gathered at Kliptown on June 25 and 26, 1955, were workers, peasants, women, youths and students of all races and colours. They declared that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, black and white, and that no government can justly claim authority unless it is based on the will of all the people."

Relations between South Africa and Kazakhstan are also passing a milestone, Soni said: Last year, Kazakhstan opened an embassy in South Africa. "Kazakhstan has also increased its focus on the African continent and opened a mission in Ethiopia with observer status to the African Union," the ambassador said. "During 2015 we are planning various high level visits of government officials and business persons to foster the

relationships between South Africa and Kazakhstan further. Both countries will focus on promoting stronger economic cooperation in the areas of joint investments, industry and trade."

Soni also congratulated President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev on his recent re-election as president and commented that in his opinion, Nazarbayev followed in the footsteps of Man-

dela. "I invite all of us gathered here today to nominate HE President Nursultan Nazarbayev to receive the United Nations Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela Prize," he said.



Having performed national dances, an African dancing troupe sang songs in Afrikaans, English, Russian and Kazakh.

Haileybury Astana Students, Teachers Make Charitable Trip to Nepal

By Claire McCarthy

ASTANA – A small group of staff and pupils from the British school Haileybury Astana left Astana International Airport April 16 to make the 2,855-km, 30-hour journey to Kathmandu, Nepal.

Irish native Aideen Robbins, the school's head of math, explained the reason for the trip. "Nepal is an amazing country and somewhere that I wanted to share with my pupils. It is culturally and geographically very different from Kazakhstan and I knew it would be an invaluable experience for them." The purpose of the trip was to visit The Umbrella Foundation's children's homes in Kathmandu and also spend two days in the village of Sukute in Sindhupalchok to set up and paint a new library in the local school.

Despite the fact the all-female trio of pupils are reasonably well-travelled, they all admitted to having to do background reading on the country before the trip. Aiganim Nurakhanova, 14, Sharon Ng, 13, and Akkerbez Mussaibekova, 13, decided to take this trip for one main reason. "I really wanted to help Umbrella," said Nurakhanova, a year nine pupil, though she added that Nepal was not a place her family would ever have considered visiting together. Mussaibekova, a year eight pupil, described her desire to help other children in the world and admitted that she had Googled information about the country prior to the visit.

Despite there being an easy connection from Astana via Sharjah and a visa which could be purchased at the airport, the journey was not as smooth as the group had hoped it would be. Russian

teacher Anuar Sharipov described the journey. "It was quite exhausting... We flew to Sharjah and spent seven hours in the airport, then we were supposed to land in Kathmandu at 9:30 a.m. But our flight from Sharjah was delayed for one hour. We had no clue what was going to happen next. We were flying in circles for one hour above Kathmandu's airport because it was very cloudy. Then the airport was closed and we had to fly to Lucknow in India. Sitting for three hours on a plane wasn't good at all. For obvious reasons they didn't let us out. But the worst thing was that (Air Arabia) the airline didn't provide any water or food. Eventually we flew back to Kathmandu when the airport was opened again and landed at 3 p.m. But I must admit that the kids were great and fine; they didn't complain at all about that."

Robbins has worked closely with the charity for a number of years, having travelled to Nepal as a volunteer with them nine years ago. In 2012, she spent four months volunteering with the Irish-registered charity in one of their children's homes in Nepal's capital. She returned for five months in 2013 and spent most of the time working in rural village schools. This is where The Umbrella Foundation has reunited and reintegrated children back into their communities. The charity, formed with the aim of "protecting Nepal's children," is an international, non-profit organisation which attempts to improve the lives of children and their families who are affected by trafficking, poverty and war.

Robbins further described their work. "The charity was established in 2005 in response to the grow-

ing number of illegal 'orphanages' neglecting children's most basic rights – food, education, safe shelter, healthcare and love. They are a family-first charity which rescues vulnerable children and reintegrates them with their families and rural communities. When this is not possible, they support them in homes until such time as they can stand on their own two feet. It really is a very special organisation. The children in their care are now healthy, happy and well-adjusted. They have been given a new lease on life. It is run like one big family."

"To date they have rescued 388 children; of this number, 74 are currently living in their childcare homes, 172 are reintegrated into their local communities, the remaining number are going through or have already completed the rehabilitation programme," said Robbins.

In addition to the charity work, the pupils were able to enjoy the fascinating culture of the country. They visited all the famous historical sites in Kathmandu, such as Monkey Temple and Boudhanath, the village of Gumab and walked miles taking in the sights of the city.

The main focus of the visit, however, was the charity work and the group visited three houses (Manaslu and Annapurna for boys and Gaurishankar for girls) where the children all live as if they were one big family. The charity also built a proper library in the Sukute school, two hours from Kathmandu.

The local pupils were fascinated to meet children from Kazakhstan and eager to find out as much as they could about the country. The group was greeted with singing

and dancing and the girls were presented with flowers. "The children of each house greeted us warmly, despite only knowing that we had come from Kazakhstan," Ng said. Sadly, the poverty and chaos shocked the group. Nurakhanova noted that life in Nepal is very different from hers in Astana. "These people don't have much, but value what they have." The pupils all agreed the experience was a fantastic opportunity and that they would continue to support the charity and one day hopefully return.

The group departed Nepal on Wednesday and that Saturday, Kathmandu and its surrounding areas were hit by an earthquake

measuring 7.9 in magnitude, killing thousands and leaving many more homeless.

Sharipov expressed his relief at departing before the tragedy and added "obviously, all my thoughts now are with the wonderful Nepali people and children. I now look at the photos and see the places where we went, only to know they are only ruins."

Thankfully, some of the people they befriended in Nepal are safe; though since the earthquake they have been sleeping outside in makeshift tents, as the buildings around them have crumbled to the ground.

They have not yet heard if the

school and community that they visited in Sukute are safe or not. There is no electricity and phone lines are down. This has made it impossible for The Umbrella Foundation to make contact with so many of the reintegrated children and check on their safety.

Robbins further explained the present situation: "The next few months are going to be extremely difficult. The Umbrella Foundation has enough food and water for the children for the next few days, but the future is extremely uncertain. They have set up an earthquake appeal and any donations, however small, go a long way to help the situation."

