



## Nazarbayev Attends SCO, BRICS Summits in Ufa, Russia



President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev (C) with the presidents of the member and observer states of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation in Ufa, Russia.

By Malika Orazgaliyeva

Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev travelled to Ufa, Russia on July 9-10 to take part in the fifteenth summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation and the seventh summit of BRICS, which groups Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa.

The gathering was attended by the leaders of the SCO member states (China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan), observer states (Mongolia, India, Iran, Pakistan and Afghanistan) as well as Belarus as a partner for dialogue and Turkmenistan as a guest state. Representatives of the United Nations, the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA), the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) also took part.

During the summit, participants exchanged views on topical issues of international and regional security and reviewed priorities and ways to expand SCO activities in the political and economic fields, in addition to issues connected with expanding cooperation with observers and dialogue partners.

Kazakhstan supports India's and Pakistan's accession to the SCO, Nazarbayev said at the SCO enlarged meeting.

"Since the first days of its operation, the SCO has positioned itself

as a balanced and multilateral structure. In this regard, we support the intention of India and Pakistan to join the organisation. This will be very beneficial for the organisation," he added.

Nazarbayev stressed that the signing of the SCO strategy to 2025 is a clear indication of the organisation's progress.

"The document is intended to become the foundation of the Shanghai process in the next 10 years. In light of the latest world events and processes, the SCO must remain the guarantor of stability, security and prosperity in the region," he said.

Nazarbayev also noted that the growing number of victims of terrorism demonstrates a real threat to prosperity, regional peace and security.

"The SCO must contribute to the dialogue between the international community members who are ready to fight against violent extremism. It would be correct to put this issue on the agenda of the UN Assembly in order to create a unified global network to combat terrorism. I hope that the adoption of the SCO programme on combating terrorism, extremism and separatism, as well as the convention on the fight against terrorism, will become a starting point of our common matter," said the Kazakh President.

Nazarbayev suggested boosting the process of integration of the SCO space into the international transport and logistics system in

order to discover the economic potential of the organisation's member states.

In his words, the implementation of Nuryly Zhol, the new Kazakh economic programme, and the Chinese Silk Road Economic Belt initiative, as well as favourable conditions created in the framework of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), fully coincide with the goals of the SCO.

The Ufa SCO declaration, in addition to a number of other documents aimed at strengthening international cooperation in various fields, was signed following the meeting.

The day before the session, Nazarbayev participated as a guest at the BRICS summit. He stressed that the impact of the global crisis and ongoing issues threatening economic development make interstate dialogue particularly important.

"The unique formula of the Eurasian Economic Union, the SCO and BRICS serves as a symbol of the unity and solidarity of the largest part of the world population in the way of cooperation for the sake of security and prosperity. I am confident that the complementary potential and capabilities of the three international platforms can play a positive role in resolving global issues," he said.

The close dialogue between the EAEU and SCO creates favourable conditions for the beginning of wide transcontinental cooperation. The connection of the EAEU-SCO horizontal

transport artery and BRICS vertical transport artery can provide explosive trade growth, Nazarbayev added.

During the visit to Ufa, the Kazakh President was awarded by Russia's President Vladimir Putin the Order of Alexander Nevsky for his contribution to the development of multifaceted Kazakh-Russian cooperation, as well as his active contribution to the promotion of bilateral collaboration in integration processes.

Nazarbayev also held a number of bilateral meetings with the presidents of Afghanistan Ashraf Ghani, China - Xi Jinping, Uzbekistan - Islam Karimov, the Republic of South Africa - Jacob Zuma, Brazil - Dilma Rousseff and Mongolia - Tsakhiagiin Elbegdorj.

According to its official web site, the SCO was founded in Shanghai on June 15, 2001, by six countries - China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Belarus, Turkey and Sri Lanka have the status of partners in dialogue. The SCO member states cover an area of more than 30 million square kilometres, or about three fifths of Eurasia, with a population of 1.45 billion, about a quarter of the world's total. Its working languages are Chinese and Russian.

The SCO summit is the highest decision-making body of the organisation. It meets once a year to make determinations and give instructions on all important issues of SCO activity.

## Indian PM Visits Kazakhstan, Meets President Nazarbayev, Addresses NU Graduates

By Malika Rustem

ASTANA - On July 7-8, Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi visited Kazakhstan, meeting the leadership of the country, delivering an address at Nazarbayev University, attending a business forum with leading CEOs from both sides and inaugurating the India-Kazakhstan Centre of Excellence in Information and Communication Technology at the Eurasian National University in Astana over his working visit.

On the first day of the visit, a number of bilateral agreements in energy and defence were signed between the two nations. According to Kazakhstan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the signing of those agreements was discussed

earlier in Delhi at the 12th session of the Kazakh-Indian Commission on Trade, Economic, Scientific, Technical, Industrial and Cultural Cooperation on June 16-17. The commission also reviewed cooperation in energy, the peaceful use of nuclear energy, trade, investment, industrial development, transportation, civil aviation, culture, sports, tourism, health care, pharmaceuticals, agriculture, education, science, mining, textile production and trade, banking and the military and technical spheres.

In his speech at Nazarbayev University, Modi congratulated the first graduates of the university and emphasised the importance of education in the nation's progress and leadership in many spheres.

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## Bolashak's Next Five-Year Mission Supports Domestic Development Plans

By Michelle Witte

ASTANA - The end of the Bolashak Presidential Scholarship's five-year plan has coincided with Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev's election campaign call for a development push based on his proposed five institutional reforms, giving the scholarship programme the chance to create a plan based on the new needs of the developing nation.

"What is good about this programme is that it is not static," said President of the Bolashak Centre for International Programmes Gani Nygmetov in an interview with this newspaper on July 3. "It evolves, it changes, taking into account the reality, the needs of the country. Now, we are on the threshold of a new five-year plan and our idea is to help our President implement these reforms through the people we train - through the

civil servants we train, through the doctors we train, through the engineers we train, through the managers we train."

The programme's next five-year mission is to train professionals to help implement the Plan of the Nation, the 100 concrete steps designed to help Kazakhstan implement the President's five reforms, many of which relate to creating a better, more modern state apparatus and a diversified economy.

Many of the 100 steps require special skills, Nygmetov said. For example, a proposed international financial centre in Astana will need lawyers trained in English law. Civil servants, accountants, judges, teachers and teacher-trainers also need to be trained to implement language learning, auditing, judicial system and other reforms, Nygmetov said.

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## Book Chronicling Kazakh President's Efforts to Help Bring Peace in Ukraine Released

By Malika Orazgaliyeva

ASTANA - "The Peacemaker," a new book dedicated to the activities of Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev to help advance the peaceful settlement of the Ukrainian crisis, was presented July 2 at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The book covers the events from Maidan to the Feb. 11 meeting in Minsk of the leaders of Norman Four that resulted in the so-called Minsk-2 agreements that put a tentative end to major hostilities in the south-eastern part of Ukraine.

The work was written by Nurlan Onzhanov, a prominent Kazakh diplomat who now serves as assistant to the President. He accompanied Nazarbayev in numerous negotiations with foreign colleagues on complex issues such as the conflict in southeast Ukraine. It contains facts, materials and excerpts of dialogue between the Kazakh President and the leaders of France, Germany, Russia, the U.S., Italy, Switzerland, Belarus and Ukraine.

"The Peacemaker" is a book that tells about the recent events. Of course, everyone is concerned about the situation in Ukraine. Everyone is concerned about the

prospects of this crisis [worsening] and recognises that this is not a matter of just an internal situation; this crisis has a regional and global scale. It affected international law and relations between many countries. For that matter, the fresh look by the person who was witnessing very intensive efforts of the President to bring peace and stability is very valuable," said Foreign Minister Erlan Idrissov in his opening remarks.

He added that from the beginning of the crisis, Nazarbayev noted that it was observed in Kazakhstan with great pain, because the nation has a long-standing history and tradition of living in peace with its brotherly nations, Russia and Ukraine.

"We know that the situation is very complex, but our President's efforts always were guided by a long-term desire to ensure peace and prosperity for Ukraine and other countries," said Idrissov.

In his own remarks, Onzhanov indicated his writing could offer insight into the situation.

"I sincerely hope that the facts and details listed in the book will contribute to a rethinking of what happened. It is necessary to finally stop the bloodshed and begin re-

building the Ukrainian regions," he said.

The book received positive reviews from Maulan Ashimbayev, chairman of the Kazakh Parliament's Mazhilis Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Security.

"I enjoyed reading this book; in my view, it is very interesting work," he said.

Ashimbayev added the book provides facts not previously reflected in the media. He indicated that the current need to restart relations between the West and Russia is obvious. Nazarbayev's efforts made a great contribution to the decisions of the parties' positions at the beginning of the negotiation process, he said.

"The first thing I noticed is that the book gives a detailed analysis of the Ukrainian crisis. The author literally reproduces the dramatic chain of events and describes the atmosphere behind the scenes," Erlan Karin, director of the Kazakhstan Institute of Strategic Studies under the President, said in his own remarks at the event.

In his view, it was an excellent idea to write a book about the Ukrainian crisis despite the difficulty, as the situation has not yet been settled.

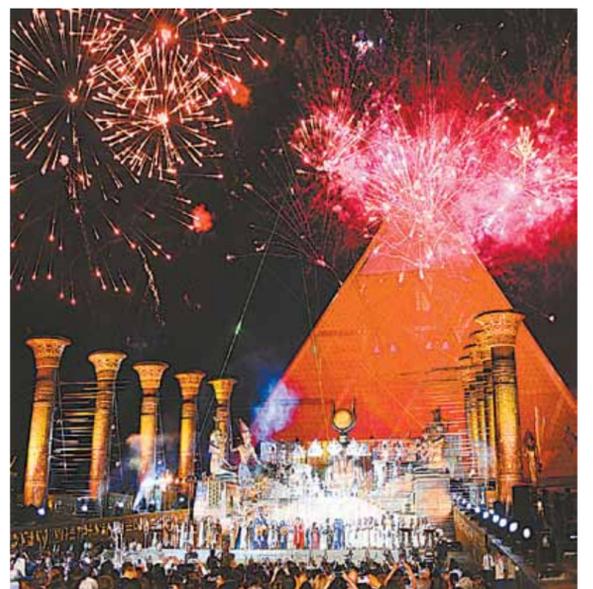
"Peacemaking for our President is the core of his approach, the foundation of the entire diplomacy, as well as the entire domestic and foreign policy. During the past 20 years, he has firmly and consistently pursued a policy of peace and stability in the country," Karin stressed.

"The author depicts the most important pages of [recent] history. There is no doubt that the author of this book is close to the President of Kazakhstan, which is very important. The position of President Nazarbayev is clear and transparent. Belarus will continue all possible efforts to restore the situation [in Ukraine] at all levels," Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Belarus to Kazakhstan Anatoly Nichkasov said in his remarks at the event.

He expressed his respect for the Kazakh President for the peace-making processes and announced that by the decree of Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko, Nazarbayev was awarded the Order of Friendship of Belarus.

The event was attended by Kazakh government officials, diplomatic corps accredited in the country and media representatives.

## Astana Day Marked with Fireworks, Performances



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# NATION

WEDNESDAY, JULY 15, 2015

## Almaty Listed among World's Top 350 Cities for Purchasing Power

By Michelle Witte

ASTANA – Almaty has entered the top 350 cities in the world in terms of purchasing power and is first among large cities in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), according to the Economist Intelligence Unit, which publishes annual rankings. The Central Communications Service (CCS) announced the results on June 21.

With 79.31 points, the former capital of Kazakhstan and the country's largest city is ahead of Moscow, St. Petersburg, Kiev and Minsk in the CIS, and ahead of Istanbul, Bangkok, Athens, Naples and Rio de Janeiro, the CCS reports.

Purchasing power is described

as the financial ability to buy goods and services, and the value of a currency expressed in the amount of goods or services it can pay for.

The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) is the research and analysis organisation of The Economist Group, the sister company of The Economist Magazine. The EIU publishes a variety of global economic, political and social rankings each year, including the purchasing power index.

Other 2015 rankings have also been published recently. The Numbeo website has issued purchasing power rankings that also place Almaty ahead of Bangkok, St. Petersburg, Riga, Rio de Janeiro and other cities in terms of purchasing power, and ahead of global desti-

nations Bangkok, St. Petersburg, Moscow, Shanghai, Beijing and Rome, among others, in terms of quality of life. Numbeo's particular quality of life calculator weights pollution and safety heavily, according to the website.

Numbeo also ranked Kazakhstan's local purchasing power overall above Russia, Georgia, Uzbekistan and Ukraine in the region. Local purchasing power shows relative purchasing power in buying goods and services in a given area for the average wage in that area, according to the websites, meaning citizens of Kazakhstan can buy more goods and services in New York City, the standard, than can those on average salaries in the other countries it outranks.



Mercer, a global consulting company covering talent, health, retirement and investments, released its annual expatriate cost of living rankings on June 17, and ranked Almaty 94 (tied with Luxembourg) out of 211 cities in terms of the cost of living for expats. Almaty has grown somewhat more expensive, rising from 111th place in 2014. Luanda, Angola was

ranked the most expensive city for expats for the third year in a row.

The Mercer expatriate cost of living index analyses the costs of over 200 goods and services in more than 360 cities worldwide, according to the company's website. It uses New York as the base city and the U.S. dollar as the base currency to calculate the relative rankings.

## Bolashak's Next Five-Year Mission Supports Domestic Development Plans

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Bolashak's new five-year programme addresses these needs, he said. They want to introduce internship programmes for civil servants specific to the 100 concrete steps. Bolashak will work with civil service agencies, the Supreme Court, the Ministry of Justice, accounting committees and other bodies to define those goals, Nygymetov said.

He hopes to bring in executive education, with 15 scholarships proposed for two- or three-week training sessions for Kazakhstan's top CEOs at top business schools, including Harvard, Yale and Stanford.

He also wants to reinstate support for MBA students. MBA scholarships had been cut on the assumption that MBAs should be trained by the private sector, but Nygymetov believes the country needs more MBAs and their advanced management skills for its state companies.

The plan is to offer 10 scholarships per year to students who have been accepted to the world's top 10 business schools. Scholarship recipients will be required to work in Kazakhstan for five years after graduation, Nygymetov said.

Kazakhstan needs people who



Gani Nygymetov

understand business, especially how to develop small- and medium-sized businesses, he said. "I think the biggest thing we need to do now is to train entrepreneurs, future employers who will create jobs." He notes that industrialisation and economic growth reforms call for the value of state companies to be increased – which means smart managers will be needed.

He also hopes to send 500 teacher-trainers from Kazakhstan's universities to master's programmes to support the country's trilingual education goals and other education reforms.

This draft plan has been provisionally approved by the National Commission on Specialist Preparation Abroad and the National Commission for Modernisation, which is implementing the 100

concrete steps. Final approval is expected in August.

"We are very glad for these 100 steps; they've proved very timely," Nygymetov said. "Even this budget situation has helped us look at ourselves from a different point of view." They've cut or changed programmes that weren't working well, he said, and by cutting numbers, competitiveness and quality are increasing: the number of self-admitted students with high GPA and high language proficiency has almost doubled this year. Self-admitted students are those who have, through their own efforts,

been admitted to top international programmes and then apply to Bolashak for funding.

The Bolashak scholarship was named the world's best international scholarship programme at the 2014 Going Global International Conference. The conference liked Bolashak's openness, gender balance, work requirement system and geographic diversity, Nygymetov said. Bolashak sends students to 33 countries, he said; lately, they are seeing more Ph.D. students heading for Asian countries such as Japan and South Korea for programmes in biology and highly technical fields.

The international programme broadens the students' experiences and perspectives, he said. They return with a more open-minded, modern view of the world. Nygymetov added that the shift to a new way of thinking needs to occur gradually to avoid instability. "It's a system, right? You need to change the system gradually, working within it, trying to change what you do, trying to be the best at what you do."

He also noted that Bolashak scholars make three times the average Kazakh salary and should be grateful to the taxpayers who have invested in their education. "We have to meet [people's] expectations," Nygymetov said. "And we should not feel that we are very special. We should feel that we are like everyone else, we are just given more responsibility. That's why we need to work harder."

## Kazakh Cosmonaut to Join Next Trip to International Space Station

By Arsen Batyrbekov

ASTANA – Kazakh cosmonaut Aidyn Aimbetov will be included on an expedition to the International Space Station (ISS), announced President Nursultan Nazarbayev on July 3.

"According to an agreement between President of Kazakhstan [Nursultan Nazarbayev] and President of Russia Vladimir Putin about the participation of a Kazakhstan citizen in a flight to the International Space Station, the candidacy of Aidyn Aimbetov was confirmed," the press service of Akorda reported on July 3 following a meeting of the Security Council of Kazakhstan.

Earlier reports named Russian cosmonaut Sergey Prokopiev as his backup.

Aimbetov was named to the flight after singer Sarah Brightman backed out as a result of what was initially reported as family circumstances. It was also reported that the \$50 million price tag for the singer to take the trip posed a problem. The mission with her participation was scheduled to begin on Sept. 1 and utilise a Soyuz TMA-18M craft.

First Deputy Prime Minister of Kazakhstan Bakytzhan Sagintayev recently commented on the possibility of a Kazakh cosmonaut joining the mission, saying, "thanks to



the agreements reached between the Presidents of Kazakhstan and Russia in the near future from the Baikonur launch pad [will be flights with] the third Kazakh cosmonaut."

So far, two Kazakh cosmonauts have joined such missions. Tokhtar Aubakirov flew in October 1991 as a cosmonaut-researcher on the Soyuz TM-13 and Talgat Mussabayev, who now serves as chair of the Space Committee of the Ministry of Investment and Development flew three times: in 1994 as a flight engineer on the Mir station and in 1998 and 2001 as the commander of the ship on the Mir and ISS.

Kazakh cosmonauts Aidyn Aimbetov and Mukhtar Aimakhanov completed training in 2007 at the Russian State Gagarin Cosmonaut Training Centre and one was scheduled to fly to the ISS as part of the international crew in 2009. However, that flight was indefinitely delayed due to budget cuts, according to Interfax.

### KAZAKHSTAN

UNITED FOR GLOBAL SECURITY

THE REPUBLIC OF KAZAKHSTAN IS SEEKING A SEAT ON THE UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL AS A NON-PERMANENT MEMBER FOR 2017-2018. OUR PRIORITIES WITHIN THE UNITED NATIONS REFLECT FOUR PRIMARY ISSUES FACING THE WORLD TODAY: FOOD SECURITY, WATER SECURITY, ENERGY SECURITY AND NUCLEAR SECURITY.

IN THE 23 YEARS SINCE OUR INDEPENDENCE, KAZAKHSTAN HAS WORKED TIRELESSLY TO ADDRESS THESE ISSUES IN OUR OWN COUNTRY AND BEYOND. AMONG MANY OTHER INITIATIVES AND ACHIEVEMENTS, KAZAKHSTAN IS CURRENTLY:

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

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

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

For more information and a video on Kazakhstan's initiatives, please visit [mfa.gov.kz](http://mfa.gov.kz).

### NATIONAL NEWS IN BRIEF

Kazakhstan's newest airline, Qazaq Air, was presented on July 6 at Astana International Airport. The airline is fully owned by the Samruk Kazyna Sovereign Welfare Fund and will fly to 12 destinations within Kazakhstan. Flights will begin on Bombardier Q400 aircraft. Many of the nonstop routes the new airline will connect are currently not served by other airlines, Qazaq Air officials noted at the presentation, according to RTT News. Qazaq Air joins existing Kazakh airlines Air Astana, Air Company MEGA, Avia Jaynar, Bek Air, Berkut Air, Euro-Asia Air, Excellent Glide, Irtysh-Air, SCAT, Semeyavia, Zhetysu and Zhezkazgan Air.

The Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) supported a high-level National Preparatory Meeting to the 23rd Economic and Environmental Forum on Water Governance in Astana on July 2, which drew some 120 international participants to discuss Central Asia's challenges and opportunities in light of climate change and the threat of desertification, and to propose sustainable solutions, the OSCE reported. The Agriculture Ministry and the Ecological Forum of Kazakhstan co-organised the event, with support from the government of Switzerland. Participants included parliamentarians, government and judiciary branch officials and representatives of civil society, academia and the business and environmental communities. Experts from Europe shared their experiences in waste water treatment, efficient use of water resources and sustainable land and water management. Representatives from the UN Economic Commission for Europe, the OSCE, the World Bank, the International Foundation for the Aral Sea and the Regional Environmental Centre of Central Asia presented projects on water management in Central Asia. A set of recommendations were drafted for Parliament and other state agencies. They include proposals to ratify a number of international legal documents, to improve current national legislation, to increase the voice of water basin councils and to strengthen the safety of hydro-technical installations.

The concept for Astana's new train station has been approved, the city press office reported. The new station will be near Mynzhyl'dyk Alley, west of Khan Shatyr. Construction is to be finished before the summer of 2017, and the station is to be capable of serving 12,000 passengers a day. In addition to the train station, two new bus stations and a new airport terminal are to be built to handle the anticipated flow of visitors for EXPO 2017.

Minister of Health and Social Development Tamara Dyussenova announced that \$53.6 million will be allocated for 2015-2018 to improve the lives of the disabled in Kazakhstan at the presentation of the new draft legislation "On changes and amendments to some legislative acts on protection of rights of disabled people" in the Mazhilis (lower chamber) of Parliament in early July. The funds will be used to improve disabled access to medical and rehabilitation services, inclusive education and preventative measures, she said. Six hundred thousand Kazakh citizens have special needs, the minister said.

More than 50 Kazakh "Mobile Government" services are available online, head of the Mobile Government project of the National Information Services national company Gulmira Issabekova announced, the website of the prime minister reports. One hundred e-services will be available in 2016, she said, and so far, more than 1 million Kazakhs have accessed mobile-friendly public services. Every citizen should be able to receive government services through smartphones and tablets, she said. One of the newest innovations in Kazakhstan's e-government is "My Account," an application that announces the availability of documents online, and can register traffic violation penalties and other services.

First Deputy Prime Minister of Kazakhstan Bakytzhan Sagintayev was elected by the board of the Samruk Kazyna Sovereign Welfare Fund as the new chairman of National Atomic Company Kazatomprom. Members of the board are elected for one-year terms.

# EURASIA&WORLD

WEDNESDAY, JULY 15, 2015

## EXTERNAL NEWS IN BRIEF

Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Nepal to the United Nations Durga Prasad Bhattarai and Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Kazakhstan to the United Nations Kairat Abdrakhmanov signed a Joint Communiqué on June 30 establishing formal bilateral relations between Nepal and Kazakhstan. The ambassadors called the communiqué a milestone in the relationship between their two nations and said establishing diplomatic relations would help strengthen their cooperation within the UN and other multilateral organisations.

Kazakhstan's Special Forces have won an international competition between special purpose intelligence forces, Tengrinews reports. The Altyń Uki-2015 competition took place over five days in the Karaganda oblast and involved elite special forces groups from Belarus, China, Russia, the United States and Kazakhstan. Participants were required to use a variety of skills, including shooting on the move and from different positions, demonstrating medical training, mining and demolition, overcoming obstacles and long marches and orienteering. China's soldiers were awarded the second place Silver Cup, and also won for having the best pair of snipers.

Royal Dutch Shell organised an event about Kazakhstan, "Discover Kazakhstan," at its headquarters in The Hague, BNews reports. During the event, Vice President of Shell Sean Rooney discussed Kazakhstan's role in the company's strategy and the Embassy of Kazakhstan in the Netherlands presented a report on Kazakhstan's history and current international initiatives, including the ATOM Project and its candidacy for a nonpermanent seat on the UN Security Council for 2017-2018. A quiz on Kazakhstan was also conducted, with Shell employees performing well, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan, which helped organise the event, reported.

Kazakhstan's Parliament ratified the treaty on Kyrgyzstan's accession to the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) in a session on June 9. The parliaments of Kyrgyzstan, Armenia, Belarus and Russia had all already ratified the treaty and additional protocols to the treaty. It is expected that the presidents of the EAEU member nations will sign the treaty on Kyrgyzstan's accession by July 15.

A Kazcosmos delegation travelled to Minsk to take part in the second meeting of the Kazakh-Belarusian working group on aerospace cooperation, Kazinform reports. During meetings at the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus, the sides discussed cooperation on remote sensing, space communications, geospatial mapping and monitoring, and the development and production of unmanned space vehicles and satellites. Following the meetings, the delegations signed a protocol outlining promising areas of cooperation in aerospace.

China and Kazakhstan will work together on a project called "Trust" to develop a list of companies conducting cross-border trade that are not expected to perpetrate customs law violations, so they can benefit from expedited customs and border procedures, the Central Communications Service reports. China has presented a list of 20 companies it has found to be responsible.

India supports Kazakhstan's candidacy for a nonpermanent seat on the UN Security Council for 2017-2018, Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi told President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev during a meeting on July 8, the Central Communications Service reports. Nazarbayev reiterated his country's support for India's application to be a permanent member of the expanded UN Security Council. Both leaders affirmed their commitment to the negotiations on comprehensive reform of the council.

Ambassador of Kazakhstan to China Shakhmat Nuryshev met with Deputy Chairman of the National Development and Reform Commission, the Chairman of the National Energy Administration of China Nur Bekri to discuss Kazakhstan's Nuryly Zhol economic policy, the Central Communications Service reports. The two agreed that it would contribute to the overall New Silk Road Economic Belt envisioned by China. The sides also discussed cooperation in nuclear energy, oil, gas and coal production and the need for a new meeting of the Kazakh-Chinese Cooperation Committee and a visit by Bekri to Kazakhstan.

## Indian Prime Minister Visits Kazakhstan, Meets President Nazarbayev, Addresses NU Graduates

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"Today, Kazakhstan is a nation of global stature and respect. This is not just because Mother Nature has been generous to you with resources of every kind. It is because of your investment in education, human resources and infrastructure. These have helped increase the size of the economy four times in the last 10 years," he said.

During the business forum, Kazakhstan and India agreed on specific areas for bilateral partnership, and a road map for trade-economic and investment cooperation between the two countries was signed. Other investment opportunities in Kazakhstan were also presented to forum participants from India. Thirteen memoranda, including an agreement on economic partnership with the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce, were signed as a result of the forum.

On the second day of his visit, Modi met President Nursultan Nazarbayev to discuss the international agenda and bilateral relations. In the meeting, Nazarbayev noted the significant potential for strengthening and expanding Kazakh-Indian cooperation.

"In 1991 we declared independence. From the first day of independence, Kazakhstan was seeking to build a close and trusting relationship with India. I have high expectations for your visit, which will give a new impetus to both



Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi meets President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev on July 8 in Astana.

trade and political cooperation. Today, Kazakhstan is the largest partner of India in the region. There are also great prospects for further development of cooperation," Nazarbayev said.

Modi thanked the Kazakh President for his hospitality. He also congratulated Nazarbayev on his July 6 birthday, expressing confidence in the Kazakh President's visionary policy and the expected benefits for the nation's people.

"Trade and economic dimensions are driving forces in bilateral relations. Kazakhstan is the largest trade partner for India in Central Asia. Last year, trade turnover reached \$1.3 billion, doubling since 2013. We have gained considerable experience in the frames of our joint work, as in the field of informational technology, oil and gas, agriculture, nuclear energy and pharmaceuticals," said Nazarbayev at his joint press confer-

ence with Modi in the Akorda on July 8.

The leaders affirmed the importance of cooperation in civil nuclear energy and praised a signed long-term contract between KazAtomProm and the Department of Atomic Energy of India continuing the supply of natural uranium to India. Under the contract, Kazakhstan is to supply 5,000 tonnes of uranium to India in 2015-2019, Nazarbayev announced calling it an example of a "systemic development of cooperation in the energy sphere."

He further praised the agreement announced during the visit between Kazakhstan Temir Zholy national railway company and its Indian counterparts providing for a transportation network through the Kazakhstan-Turkmenistan-Iran railroad, reaching further to the Iranian port of Bandar Abbas giving an outlet to western Indian ports at Mandra.

"We share many interests and have similar directions in economic and political development. The positions of our countries coincide on many international issues, including regional security, communication and integration, as well as holding reforms at the United Nations. Kazakhstan is the largest economic partner of India in the region. Our relations have a great potential for further development. We intend to make every effort to ensure that economic ties will go

to a new level," said the Indian prime minister.

Nazarbayev reiterated Kazakhstan's support for India's permanent membership in an expanded UNSC and for India's candidature to a non-permanent seat on the UNSC for 2021-22. In turn, Modi reiterated support for the candidature of Kazakhstan for a non-permanent UNSC seat for 2017-18.

Prime Minister Modi arrived in Kazakhstan on July 7 after visiting Uzbekistan. On July 8, after two days in Kazakhstan's capital, Astana, Modi left for Ufa, Russia, for summits of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation and BRICS. After his visit to Russia, Modi intends to continue his diplomatic tour of Central Asia and travel to Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan.

Modi is very active on social networks, tweeting frequently despite a busy schedule. Arriving in Kazakhstan, the Indian prime minister posted a few tweets in the Kazakh language. Upon arriving in Astana airport, he wrote,

"I am happy to be in Kazakhstan. India's very valued friend in Central Asia," Modi posted in Kazakh.

The second Kazakh tweet was accompanied by a picture of Modi and his Kazakh counterpart Karim Massimov. "Thank you PM Karim Massimov for the memorable welcome," he wrote on Tuesday.

Modi has 13.5 million followers on his Twitter account.

## Calls for Broader Cooperation Define Astana Anti-Extremism Conference



Participants in the Central and South Asian Regional Conference on Countering Violent Extremism in Astana on June 29.

By Michelle Witte

ASTANA – Over two days of presentations and dialogue, participants at the Central and South Asian Regional Conference on Countering Violent Extremism called for more tools to support collaborative work to block terrorist recruitment efforts and discussed global law enforcement and other practices to identify and respond to potential threats.

The need for cooperation between governments and between governments, law enforcement bodies and communities became a theme of the June 29-30 conference in Astana. Launching the discussions, Kazakh Prime Minister Karim Massimov focused on cooperative efforts and the large role to be played by civil society actors in countering extremist violence. "We have to join our forces with all constructive forces in this world who are ready to counter violent extremism," he said. "That is why we have to boost our contacts and cooperation with law enforcement agencies all over the world."

Massimov called for an international convention defining terrorism, one of several proposals for international legislation and mechanisms to combat the spread of violent extremist thought and terrorist actions. In discussions on the role of media, a global database of extremist content online was proposed, as well as a mechanism to remove it. Regarding prevention, creating

integrated regional research and awareness networks was another proposal.

Representatives of the governments and civil societies of 18 countries in Central and South Asia, plus private sector organisations and international bodies, including the UN, the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), discussed cooperation to prevent terrorism and explored possible root causes of the phenomenon today.

In his opening remarks, U.S. Customs and Border Control Commissioner Gil Kerlikowske said security will not come from stopping security threats, but strengthening the social fabric and the relationship between governments and their populations.

"One way to meet the challenge is by empowering local communities to develop effective prevention and intervention programmes. Local communities maintain the most credible and persuasive voices to challenge that ideology," he said.

The need to safeguard human rights as a way to prevent violence was also repeated throughout the conference. In the panel "Violent extremism in Central and South Asia: threat assessment and countermeasures," Petko Draganov, special representative of the UN secretary-general and head of the

Ashgabat-based UN Regional Centre for Preventative Diplomacy for Central Asia, said, "An integral part of this whole society approach ... is the acknowledgement that preventing violent extremism and promoting human rights go hand in hand," he said. "Without meaningful recognition and implementation of core human rights, states aiming to protect their people from extremism are at risk of pushing their youth into violent predatory groups."

In further panels on countering violent extremism in media, much emphasis was placed on religious education and promoting an understanding of "traditional" Islam in order to prevent extremist thought from spreading.

Shavkat Sabirov, president of the Internet Association of Kazakhstan, called for a more specific targeting of dangerous online content, rather than the wholesale blocking of websites, and urged more attention to be paid to Kazakh-language media.

Concluding the first day of the conference, participants agreed on steps to enhance counterterrorism efforts in Central and South Asia ahead of the Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) leaders' summit set for September in New York.

The conference was organised by the governments of Kazakhstan and the United States with support from the OSCE Programme Office in Astana.

## Revised EU Strategy Increases Budget, Flexibility in Central Asia Relations, Says EU Rep

By Michelle Witte

ASTANA – The European Union's revised Strategy for Central Asia provides increased engagement with the region through more flexible cooperation formats and a budget for bilateral and regional cooperation formats of more than 1 billion euros, an increase of 56 percent, EU Special Representative for Central Asia Peter Burian said at a press conference in Astana on June 30.

"The updated EU Central Asia Strategy provides a solid ground for strengthening EU-Central Asia partnership and cooperation," he said at the briefing. "We believe that the new elements and more flexible formats for cooperation envisaged in the strategy will provide a very solid basis for increased interaction and result-oriented cooperation of the EU with countries of Central Asia also in the area of security. ... Regional security for development belongs to one of crucial focal sectors for our regional cooperation in Central Asia."

The Council of the European Union adopted conclusions on the EU Strategy for Central Asia on June 22. "The main objectives and priority areas of the 2007 EU Strategy for Central Asia remain pertinent," an EU delegation press release on Burian's visit stated.

"The council calls for strengthening trade and energy links between the EU and Central Asian countries and reinforcing cooperation on security and stability, including sustainable management of natural resources. It emphasises the fundamental importance of democratisation, respect for human rights and the rule of law, and socio-economic development, all of which are essential elements of the strategy."

Burian commented that education would also be an EU priority in the region, and that 115 million euros had been budgeted for the educational cooperation programmes in the region.



The conclusions adopted say the council "particularly welcomes the conclusion of negotiations and initialing of the Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement with Kazakhstan." It also supported Kazakhstan's accession to the World Trade Organisation.

Kazakhstan had called for a Central Asia strategy that took more into account the political and socio-economic differences between the states of the region, contributing white papers and other opinions to the review of the strategy. The conclusions adopted by the council state that "[Mo]re than in the past, the depth of relations will also depend on the ambitions and needs of individual Central Asian countries to take forward our bilateral relationships. The EU will take full account of the growing differences in socio-economic development and ambition to engage in cooperation with Europe between the five countries."

Human rights are also to be a focus, and Burian noted that the EU wants to continue cooperation on human rights, the rule of law and good governance, and to continue providing support for reforms. The council in particular called for more involvement of civil society in cooperative programmes and dialogue platforms.

While in Astana, Burian attended the Central and South Asian Regional Conference on Countering Violent Extremism, held on June 29-30 as the representative of the EU.

# ECONOMY

WEDNESDAY, JULY 15, 2015

## Energy-Saving Kazakh Startup Ranked in Top 10 at Singapore Startup Summit



By Michelle Witte

ASTANA – An innovative Kazakh startup with a product that prevents electricity from being wasted was ranked among the top 10 at this year's Echelon Asia Summit in Singapore on June 23-24.

"We were confident that we would be in the top 10," founder of the winning project, EcoSocket, Sanzhar Myrzagalym said at the event, Kazinform reports. "We already have several scheduled meetings and we were offered investments."

EcoSocket, developed in 2014 by students at the Kazakh-British Technical University Myrzagalym, Pernekhan Utemuratov, Timurlan Musayev, Kuanysh Idrissov and Arai Sultanbekova, is a device that allows users to control their household electronics remotely. An adaptor with a Wifi transmitter is connected to a home appliance, and a mobile application then allows it to be controlled from outside the home. Many appliances will continue to use energy as long as they are plugged in, some, including fully charged computers and cell phones, using significant amounts. EcoSocket, then, can save users' money and prevent energy from being wasted.

"Every day, we continue to waste a huge amount of electricity, as we are not aware of the amount we are using. Sometimes we are just too lazy to go to the next room to turn off the light," Myrzagalym told Idea-lab.kz for a profile on the project. They estimate that 5-15 percent of electricity used is actually being sucked up by appliances that are in sleep or standby modes, but still plugged in.

"With our device, you can solve the problem of excessive power consumption and save on bills," Myrzagalym said, according to Idea Lab.

EcoSocket has won several awards in Almaty, including a \$10,000 investment from Chevron through the KazINNO Energy competition and an \$8,000 investment from the government of Almaty, the e27 website reports.

Echelon Asia is billed as one of the world's largest startup forums. Held annually in Singapore, this year's event featured some 2,500 delegates, 70 speakers and 500 startups, according to organisers. EcoSocket, along with six other startups from Kazakhstan, had been chosen for the Top 100 Programme, in which the best 100 startups chosen from Australia, Bangladesh, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Japan, Kazakhstan, South Korea, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Taiwan, Thailand and Vietnam were given access to

industry experts, investors, media, and potential partners during business clinics a day before the actual summit.

And because EcoSocket won the Judges Choice Award at its qualifying round in Kazakhstan at the end of April, the project was also given a chance to pitch to a group of investors in hopes of being selected as one of the top 10, which it was.

"Kazakhstan is a pleasant surprise; they have a lot of projects for their first participation in the event," commented Luis de Oliveira, director of Startup Grind East and a speaker at the event. "I hope the delegation of Kazakhstan will grow next year," she said, as reported by Kazinform.

Myrzagalym noted that the Asian startup community was very open and ready with advice. A Kapital.kz article detailed some of the advice being offered to Kazakh innovators. Partner and founder of Golden Gate Ventures Jeffrey Payne advised Kazakh entrepreneurs to develop both domestically and globally. That means solving local problems and finding local niches, while also assessing global markets. To do this, Kazakh startups will have to start travelling, he said; to Silicon Valley, for example, or Israel. The government also must support startups, Payne said. "Firstly, [the government] must understand the difference between a startup and a traditional business. Second, investment is needed. And third, the most important step is the people," Payne said.

Manager of Strategic Partnerships at incubator JFDI Asia Alena Ahrens agrees that government policy has an important role to play in nurturing startups, Kapital reported. Singapore is developing as a centre of business because of government policies giving tax breaks to new businesses in their early years and offering grants to local businesses. He advised Kazakhstan to study Singapore's example.

Limited sales of EcoSocket will begin in August 2015, and the company has 100 pre-orders, e27.com reported in mid-May. It also has contracts with Electric Control Systems, Green Auto Service and Story Service Holding.

The three winning startups from this year's Echelon Asia event were my Realtrip from South Korea, which connects travellers with local guides or destination experts; ChaseFuture of Malaysia, a platform that connects international applicants with admissions experts for consulting services; and PawnHero from the Philippines, which connects sellers to pawn shops offering the best deals.

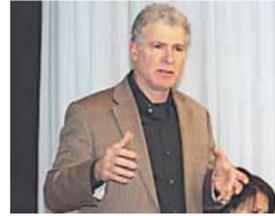
## Astana Hosts Global Conference on Ecosystem Services, Transitioning to a Green Economy

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – An international conference focused on ecosystem services and the transition to a green economy took place in Astana on June 24. This event was organised by the United Nations Development Programme, BioFin, CB2 and GIZ (German International Cooperation Company). Participants from six countries discussed the best biodiversity and ecosystem management practices, implementing ecosystem services and the evaluation of natural resources.

"Kazakhstan has been cooperating with the United Nations Development Programme, the World Bank and other international organisations since 2003 and has succeeded in several national and regional projects focused on effectively managing ecosystems and biodiversity. Laws and regulations have been improved, special protections have been expanded and new methods of managing plants, animals, forests, fish ecosystems and water resources have been created," Deputy Chair of the Forestry and Wildlife Committee of the Ministry of Agriculture of Kazakhstan Kairat Ustemirov said.

He stated that new technologies for the conservation and sustainable management of natural resources were introduced at the conference. He said, "I hope that the success seen in Vietnam, Mongolia, Russia and Turkmenistan will guide Kazakhstan's transition to establishing a green economy and the development of its eco services."



David Meyers

Senior Technical Advisor of the BioFin Global Team, which is managed by the UNDP Ecosystems and Biodiversity Programme in partnership with the European Union and the German and Swiss governments, David Meyers said "BioFin is working on biodiversity financing in 30 countries around the world. Kazakhstan is one of the first countries to join this programme. The goal of BioFin is to better understand and integrate financial and economic issues into decision making on biodiversity and planning matters. Kazakhstan's Green Economy Concept has three pillars: sustainable water usage, sustainable and high-performance agriculture and preserving and efficiently managing ecosystems."

Meyers feels that ecosystem services and natural resource management are essential to the success of the green economy in Kazakhstan, saying "knowledge of ecosystems and their economic value is essential to aligning public and private incentives and investing in nature based infrastructure is an often overlooked but economical long-term solution."

UNDP Biodiversity Project Manager Talgat Kerteshev noted

that there is no regulatory and legal framework capable of attracting major natural resource consumers to Kazakhstan's biodiversity conservation projects. He emphasised the fact that these organisations take advantage of the critical nature of certain biological and water resources and stated that it is necessary to create legal mechanism and an economic evaluation of the special protection of national territories, floristics and fisheries.

Chief Expert of the Division for the Implementation of the Green Economy at the Green Economy Department of the Ministry of Energy Gulnur Rakhimzhanova noted that Kazakhstan's transition to a green economy was enacted by a decree of the President on May 30, 2013. She restated that the green economy is one of the state's most important sustainable development tools, saying "The transition to the green economy will allow Kazakhstan to increase its GDP by 3 percent by 2050 and create more than 500,000 new jobs, creating new industries and services. It will also raise living standards in the country. This is why the transition is as relevant as ever."

The conference's purpose was to facilitate the exchange of information about evaluating natural resources and ecosystem services between representatives of the states in formulating national policy, using new approaches in ecosystem and biodiversity management, implementing payment tools for ecosystem services as an alternative in financing nature protection measures and attracting private investments.

### ECONOMY NEWS IN BRIEF

National oil and gas company KazMunayGas (KMG) plans to sell 50 percent of its shares in the consortium developing the giant Kashagan oil field, Reuters reports. KMG owns a 16.8 percent stake in the project and plans to sell the shares to Kazakhstan's Samruk Kazyna Sovereign Wealth Fund, which in turn owns KazMunayGas, for an expected \$4.7 billion and use the funds to reduce its debt. KMG's consolidated net debt was \$17.92 billion at the end of 2014, according to Reuters. Meetings on the debt and the sale will be held in London on July 27. Production at Kashagan, the largest oil field in decades, has been delayed for years but is expected to resume in early 2017.

Shares of three of Kazakhstan's national companies – energy holding Samruk-Energo, rail company Kazakhstan Temir Zholy and atomic energy company Kazatomprom – are expected to be made available to the public on Kazakhstan's stock exchange this year, 365info.kz reports. The National IPO programme has already floated shares of the Kazakhstan Electric Grid Company (KEGOC) and KazTransOil.

Kazakhstan has attracted about \$33 billion in foreign direct investment during its first five-year industrialisation programme. Half of the investment went to the State Programme for Industrial-Innovative Development, President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev said at a ceremony commemorating the Day of Industrialisation on July 2. The second five-year industrialisation plan will focus on oil refining and metallurgy, food, chemical industries, industrial equipment and construction materials, he said.

Banks in Kazakhstan have seen increased volumes of deposits in the national currency, tenge, and decreased volumes of deposits in foreign currency between January and May of this year, Azer News reports. Tenge deposits increased from 5.198 trillion tenge (US\$27.91 billion) at the end of 2014 to 5.472 trillion tenge (US\$29.38 billion). The volume of foreign currency deposits in Kazakh banks decreased from 6.496 trillion tenge (US\$34.88 billion) at the end of December 2014 to 5.975 trillion tenge (US\$32 billion) at the end of May 2015. The total amount of deposits banks in Kazakhstan in all currencies fell from 11.694 trillion tenge (US\$62.8 billion) at the end of 2014 to 11.447 trillion tenge (US\$61.47 billion) at the end of May.

The European Bank of Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) has moved to a new, larger office in Astana, which reflects its growing investment in the country, an EBRD press release on July 11 said. Kazakh Vice Minister of Finance Ruslan Beketayev and EBRD Vice President and Chief Risk Officer Betsy Nelson cut the ribbon at the new office. The larger premises were urgently needed, the bank reports, because of rapidly expanding involvement in Kazakhstan following the signing of an Enhanced Partnership Agreement with the country in May 2014. So far this year, the EBRD team in Kazakhstan has signed 16 projects for \$501 million, making Kazakhstan the EBRD's fastest-growing portfolio.

The value of Kazakhstan's national companies declined in the first quarter of 2015, according to the Halyk IPO website. The total revenue of the group of companies during that period decreased by 13 percent to \$1.42 billion, falling to a four-year low. Analysts say implementation costs were higher this year, and also ascribe the losses to difficult economic conditions around the world as well as large debts in dollars held by some of the companies.

Belarus and Kazakhstan have the potential to increase bilateral trade by 10 percent annually, Chairman of the Committee on Agriculture of the Mazhilis (lower chamber of Parliament) of Kazakhstan Romin Madinov told reporters before meeting with members of the Belarusian National Assembly on July 9, the National Belarusian News Agency reports. Today, trade turnover is \$1.2 billion, he said. Madinov led a parliamentary delegation on a visit to Belarus between July 9-13, where they met with their counterparts and visited agricultural facilities.

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# BUSINESS

WEDNESDAY, JULY 15, 2015

## BUSINESS NEWS IN BRIEF

French supermarket chain Carrefour, the second largest retailer in the world, will be expanding into Kazakhstan, Forbes.kz reports. The first Carrefour store is expected to open in Almaty in October, with 15 more planned over the next five years. The Almaty Carrefour store is expected to be 12,500 square metres.

Female entrepreneurs in Kazakhstan employ 795,000 people, President of the Association of Businesswomen of Kazakhstan and member of the National Commission on Women Affairs, Family and Demographic Policy Raushan Sarsembayeva announced at a recent press conference in Central Communications Service. According to recent data, 41.5 percent of the nation's 1 million individual entrepreneurs are women, she said, and more than 52,000 Kazakh women have taken part in government programmes to support business. Developing small business in the country through the 100 concrete steps to implement President Nursultan Nazarbayev's five institutional reforms would be impossible without the participation of women, Sarsembayeva commented.

Kazakhstan's national atomic company, Kazatomprom, and the Akimat (regional administration) of the South Kazakhstan region agreed during a visit of Kazatomprom Chairman Askar Zhumagaliev to the region to support domestic producers. Under the agreement, signed by Zhumagaliev and Akim of South Kazakhstan Askar Myrzakhetov, uranium mining companies in the region plan to conclude contracts totalling \$24.6 million with domestic producers in the region. In 2015 and 2016, Kazatomprom will purchase electrical equipment, fuel and lubricants, clothing, pipes, paper products and other materials from local entrepreneurs. Zhumagaliev and Myrzakhetov also discussed the relocation of the subsidiary offices of Kazatomprom from Almaty to Shymkent at their meeting.

The number of active small businesses has grown in 10 regions, Bnews reports, with the biggest growth in South Kazakhstan and Karaganda. According to Ranking.kz, there were 116,300 active small enterprises in the country in May, an increase of 180 companies.

Kazakhstan has expanded expedited customs clearance to 300 large, tax-paying importers of foreign goods, Chairman of the State Revenue Committee of the Ministry of Finance Daulat Yergozhin announced at a press conference at the Central Communications Service. The State Revenue Committee has introduced a system of categories for participants in foreign economic activities based on risk management principles, Yergozhin explained. The committee and the National Chamber of Entrepreneurs worked together to create the corridor, which will allow select importers to pass customs clearances after entering the country. The list of select importers is constantly growing, the chairman said. He also added that the list of documents required for export-import operations had been shortened to no more than three documents to export, no more than five to import.

The first batch of commercial benzol was produced at the Atyrau complex for the production of aromatic hydrocarbons (KPA) on July 3, Ak Zhai reports. CEO of the refinery Kairat Urazbayev called it a present to Astana on its birthday. "In order to produce higher standards of [fuel], we need to recover from automobile gasolines the most harmful, from an ecological point of view, component: benzol," Urazbayev said. "Today the first batch of benzol has been recovered, the product that is in great demand in the world market. ... The Atyrau refinery was the first plant that processed crude oil of Kazakhstan, and today it became the first in petrochemistry." When operating at full capacity, the Kazakh-Chinese venture is expected to produce 133,000 tonnes of benzol and 496,000 tonnes of paraxylol per year.

## Plans for 26 Projects, 12 MOCs Signed at Kazakh-Indian Business Forum

By Malika Orazgaliyeva

ASTANA – A Kazakh-Indian business forum with the participation of Prime Minister of Kazakhstan Karim Massimov and Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi took place in Astana on July 7.

The forum was held in the framework of Modi's official visit to Kazakhstan. More than 100 people, including Ambassador of India to Kazakhstan Harsh Kumar Jain, representatives of major Indian and Kazakh companies and businesses and representatives of state bodies, national holdings and the media gathered for the meeting.

During the forum, the Kazakh side presented investment opportunities in the country and informed their visitors on support measures the government provides for foreign investors.

Modi praised the "huge strides" made by Kazakhstan in economic progress over the last decade. He noted that Kazakhstan offers very attractive conditions to potential investors and partners.

"Despite the fact that your country is landlocked and situated between two world powers, the government has introduced its own successful economic programme. Working



Prime Minister of Kazakhstan Karim Massimov (C) and Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi at the Kazakh-Indian Business Forum on July 7.

hard, your people demonstrated their talent and the big opportunities of the country," he said.

Following the forum, the National Agency for Export and Investment, KAZNEX Invest, and the Investment Promotion Agency Invest India signed a road map for trade, economic and investment cooperation between Kazakhstan and India, includ-

ing 26 promising projects in various fields, as well as 12 memoranda of cooperation between the partners of the two states.

The signed documents envision cooperation in the chemical industry and pharmacology, mining and processing rare metals like tungsten and molybdenum, as well as information technology projects.

Noting that Kazakhstan is blessed with natural resources, the Indian prime minister emphasised that India has huge demand for these resources, creating great potential for partnership between the two countries.

"Kazakhstan is rich in natural resources, with a big territory and small population size. Not many countries in the world have similar opportuni-

ties for development. On the other hand, India is a big country with a big population. We have a huge demand for your ... natural resources. We can achieve economic development in both of our countries through mutual cooperation," Modi said.

According to Modi, new technologies will help Kazakhstan join the top developed economies in the world by 2050. He also called for more investment from Kazakh companies in India, particularly in the areas of renewable energy, smart cities, housing and railways.

"Kazakhstan could benefit from partnerships with Indian companies, which will bring in modern technology, engineering skills and cost-effective mechanisms. Kazakhstan could also benefit from India's strength in the IT sector. Poor connectivity was the biggest barrier to deepening economic engagement between the two countries. We need to enhance connectivity between India and Kazakhstan," he said.

During the forum, participants were shown online the commencement of drilling at the Satpayev Exploration Block in Kazakhstan's North Caspian region, where the Indian company ONGC Videsh Ltd. has a 25 percent stake.

## Kazakhstan Loosens Domestic Antimonopoly Laws

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – Amendments to liberalise Kazakh antimonopoly regulation were signed into law May 5 by President Nursultan Nazarbayev. Known as "On Introduction of Amendments and Additions to Certain Legislative Acts of the Republic of Kazakhstan on Natural Monopolies and Regulated Markets" No. 312-V, the law came into force on May 18 with some exceptions.

Antimonopoly approval is now required for acquisition of more than 50 percent of the shares in a joint stock company or participatory interests in a limited liability partnership. Before the amendments were enacted, approval was required for acquisition of more than 25 percent.

The establishment of a legal entity

no longer requires antimonopoly approval executed by the Committee for Regulation of Natural Monopolies and Protection of Competition of the Ministry of National Economy.

In addition, approval of the antimonopoly committee is no longer required for transactions evaluated as economic concentration if the transactions are specifically named in Kazakh laws, decrees of the President and/or resolutions of the government.

The period for reviewing an application for antimonopoly approval is now 30 calendar days, rather than 50, and the committee has only five business days to specify a period for provision of additional information and/or documents.

With the enforcement of the amendments, the antimonopoly com-

mittee is entitled to issue written warnings which will advise specific market players to refrain from actions that may lead to antimonopoly violation. Such warnings may be issued when the antimonopoly committee does not have sufficient grounds to initiate a formal investigation, but the public statement of the market player, state authority or local executive authority implies that the market player's intended conduct may lead to a violation of the regulations.

The antimonopoly committee must apply to law enforcement authorities for assistance with the investigation it conducts against a market player. The committee has the right to forward the investigation materials to the authorities to decide whether or not it has sufficient grounds to initiate a criminal investigation.

## Innovative Enterprises to be 20 Percent of All Business by 2020

By Kamila Zhumabayeva

ASTANA – By 2020, the share of innovative enterprises is expected to increase to 20 percent, announced Laura Sadykova, deputy director of the Department of Technological and Innovation Development of the Ministry for Investment and Development on June 29.

Their implementation is included in the second five-year plan of the State Programme of Accelerated Industrial and Innovative Development (SPAIID) for 2015-2019. "We have set ourselves to ensure productivity growth by creating bases for transition to innovation-driven economy as the main objective of the second five-year plan," Sadykova stated.

Efforts will focus on integrated solutions in power engineering and utilities with alternative energy oriented to EXPO 2017, specified Sadykova in a statement on Prime Minister's official website. New materials are to include alloys with rare earth elements, robotics, automation of agricultural production, water management, bioinformatics and bioengineering, intelligent transportation and data processing software.

Measures aimed at reducing technological lag in metallurgy, petrochemicals, machinery, chemistry, construction and food industry are planned, according to Sadykova.

Innovation clusters will be developed within the Plan of the Nation and the introduction of their prod-

ucts should enhance the competitiveness of businesses, said Sadykova. At one such cluster in Almaty, engineers combined Korean and Russian technologies, added domestic savvy and made their own equipment, making their product better and cheaper than that of imported analogues, reported Khabar news agency. One hundred and fifty companies including those in the fields of intelligent transportation, instrumentation and oil and gas are currently operating at the Park of Innovation Technologies (PIT) on the outskirts of Almaty, the agency reported.

Apart from Kazakh markets, the focus is also on the Eurasian Economic Community, China, India, Malaysia, Vietnam and Iran, said Sanzhar Kettebekov, CEO of the PIT autonomous fund cluster. "Two thousand jobs with highly skilled workers are created at the park now," he said. It is also planned to involve advanced transnational companies and start-ups from the region to develop the innovation cluster, Khabar reported.

The second five-year plan of industrialisation identifies six priority areas, including oil refining, smelting, food and chemical industries, as well as production of industrial equipment and building materials, President Nursultan Nazarbayev stated in his speech on Industrialisation Day on July 2. "The programme is based on the cluster approach and we tried to keep in mind lessons learned and based on the experience

of the first five-year plan," said Nazarbayev.

The President stressed the need to increase efficiency and productivity of existing enterprises by introducing modernisation of lean production, robotics and automation as well. Nazarbayev noted the importance of the creation and development of emerging industries in Kazakhstan industries such as car production.

Nazarbayev said that industrialisation is essential to the country's economic policy, which aims to join the 30 most advanced countries of the world. In the first five years of industrialisation, nearly \$33 billion in direct foreign investment was attracted to Kazakhstan and half of it came through the SPAIID, the President noted in the speech.

A number of facilities, built within the new Industrialisation Map programme and Nurlu Zhol new economic policy were officially launched during a televised conference with Kazakhstan regions. In addition, the "Made in Kazakhstan" project and existing manufacturing facilities have been showcased.

According to the President, the next phase of industrialisation aims to redouble its efforts toward technological gains, and as a result of those efforts, the share of non-energy exports must double by 2025 and triple by 2040. These will be fueled by development of Nazarbayev University and the Park of Innovation Technologies – Kazakhstan's two leading innovation clusters.

## DHL, KTZ Express to Provide Increased Connectivity Between China, CIS, Europe

By Michelle Witte

ASTANA – DHL Global Forwarding and Kazakhstan Temir Zholy (KTZ) Express have signed a memorandum of understanding to provide greater rail connectivity between China, Kazakhstan and the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and Europe, the Post and Parcel website reported on July 1.

"KTZ Express is looking to establish the most advanced Central Asia logistics hub in Kazakhstan by enhancing various facilities across the country and improving our freight forwarding capabilities. The partnership with DHL will not only accelerate our pace towards achieving this goal but will also help us serve multinational corporations with regional needs in these high-potential markets," said Sanzhar Yelubayev, president of KTZ Express, according to a report by Asia Cargo News on June 30.

The agreement will give DHL additional commercial block train services with KTZ Express, a branch of Kazakhstan's state-owned railway operator, increasing their overland rail freight routes, according to Post and Parcel. KTZ Express will operate rail connections within Kazakhstan and between Kazakhstan and China, as well as add logistics service locations, including within the Khoros Special Economic Zone on the border between Kazakhstan and China, and increase its capabilities overall. DHL will focus on developing forwarding capabilities along routes that link China, Kazakhstan and CIS countries, as well as provide logistics expertise and value-added offerings like temperature-controlled containers for transporting sensitive technological material. The agreement also includes the development of additional rail routes along the Silk Road connecting Europe, Kazakhstan and China.

"KTZ Express will work hand in hand with DHL to further develop end-to-end logistics solutions via rail and multimodal solutions in this part of the world. We will continue to work on reviving the Silk Road and increasing our capacity to move goods within the

region as its economic growth and development gain critical momentum," said Yelubayev, according to Asia Cargo News.

**YELUBAYEV: "The partnership with DHL will not only accelerate our pace towards achieving this goal but will also help us serve multinational corporations with regional needs in these high-potential markets."**

CEO of DHL Global Forwarding China Steve Huang noted the "tremendous growth" of rail freight between Asia and Europe over the last few years and the potential for growth in hubs along that route, including in Kazakhstan. "Kazakhstan's own economic development stands to benefit significantly from strong infrastructural links to China and the EU – its two largest trading partners. Transportation alone makes up more than 10 percent of the country's services exports," he said, according to Post and Parcel.

"By partnering with KTZ Express, we hope to provide China-Europe trade expanded services in the pivotal Central Asia region, through investment in both new and traditional trade route infrastructure, like rail enhancements along the South Silk Road, in line with China's 'One Belt, One Road' initiative," Huang added.

According to the European Commission, daily China-EU trade exceeds \$1 billion, making it the second-largest cooperative economic relationship in the world. CEO of KTZ Askar Mamin noted in May that trade between major Eurasian hubs is predicted to increase by 1.5 times, from \$800 billion in 2014 to \$1.2 trillion by 2020. Kazakhstan hopes for 8 percent of that trade to be transported through its territory, KZT representatives first said in 2013.

# EDITORIALS

WEDNESDAY, JULY 15, 2015

## Rehabilitation of Rural Areas Needed to Ensure Country's Competitiveness

International trade shows that prosperity has rarely, if ever, been achieved or sustained without trade. It also plays a role in many other domains, including jobs, the environment and the fight against poverty.

To this regard, after nearly 20 years of negotiations, the final step before Kazakhstan becomes a World Trade Organisation (WTO) member would be the ratification of the accession package by the nation's Parliament by Oct. 31. The country will become a full-fledged member 30 days after it notifies the WTO of the ratification.

**Some can argue that under WTO rules, when trade is fully liberalised, a number of our sectors with a low competitive edge will either cease to exist or be re-orientated. On the other hand, accession to WTO is one of the major priorities of the government's policy aimed at full integration into the world economy through enhancing competitiveness and diversification of the national economy and making a fair contribution to world economic welfare.**

As part of the accession negotiations, Kazakhstan concluded 29 bilateral market access agreements on goods and 15 on services. On goods, the country has undertaken tariff concessions and commitments that bind tariff rates for all products on average at 6.1 percent. For agricultural products, the average is 7.6 percent; for non-agricultural products, 5.9 percent.

"The conclusion of Kazakhstan's accession is a tribute to the untiring efforts of the government of Kazakhstan, as well as to the WTO and its members. The high quality of the accession package will accelerate Kazakhstan's integration into the global trading system and provide a boost to Kazakhstan's economy for years to come. I particularly want to congratulate President Nazarbayev and Minister Aitzhanova for their key roles in concluding these negotiations. As President Nazarbayev has said, it is an 'historic' moment. I look forward to welcoming Kazakhstan as a member of the WTO very soon," said WTO Director General Roberto Azevêdo.

On one hand, some can argue that under WTO rules, when trade is fully liberalised, a number of our sectors with a low competitive edge will either cease to exist or be re-orientated. On the other hand, accession to WTO is one of the major priorities of the government's policy aimed at full integration into the world economy through enhancing competitiveness and diversification of the national economy and making a fair contribution to world economic welfare.

The public needs to be informed about the course and results of WTO negotiations, as well as about potential or existing problems. WTO rules will affect us all: consumers and producers, exporters and importers. The more the public is aware of WTO requirements, the more opportunities it will have to be ready for them.

The history of mankind is related to the evaluation of trade. International trade was limited to the most expensive commodities when transportation was difficult, although there was no limitation on theories and economic systems on supporting free trade since Adam Smith's "Wealth of Nations." Global trade is almost three times larger than the level of the early 1950s and the past few decades have experienced important changes that reshaped the global trade landscape.

The structure of trade has been characterised by a rising share of higher technology goods. This is another feature of the period. The contribution of high and medium-high technology exports such as machinery and transport equipment increased, whereas that

of lower technology products such as textiles declined. Technology-intensive export structures generally offer better prospects for future economic growth. Trade in high-technology products tends to grow faster than average and has larger spillover effects on skills.

If the country is not in a position to offer higher technology goods, how can it take advantage of membership in the world global trade system? David Ricardo, one of the most influential of the classical economists, argued there is mutual national benefit from trade even if one country is more competitive in every area than its trading counterpart

and that a nation should concentrate resources only on industries where it has a comparative advantage.

The advantages of Kazakhstan's membership in WTO, however, are of a more distant, long-term nature and therefore are not very obvious, while the downsides will quickly and painfully affect the entire domestic economy. The possible negative consequences are a considerable downturn in production in a number of sectors, weighty financial losses such as a reduction in customs revenues to the budget, weakening of the financial and banking system due to low capitalisation, threats to national and food security due to loss of control over certain markets transferred to foreign companies, growth of unemployment and an influx of cheap foreign foodstuffs. Moreover, several vitally important sectors might be suffer from foreign competition if no protective measures are taken. These are agriculture, light industry, food production, engineering and production of construction materials, among others. Let's provide one sector as an example.

Kazakhstan has passed a three-year programme for rehabilitating rural areas and this is a crucial step forward. Over 40 billion tenge (US\$214.2 million) per year could make a considerable improvement to our agricultural situation. According to the Kazakh leader, today, agriculture is one of the priority sectors of the country, which should be a "stable element of economic growth." The government of Kazakhstan marked three priorities for rural development: ensuring food self-sufficiency, increasing agricultural production for export and creating a "decent environment" in rural areas.

Taking into account all those measures, still the funds allocated by the state must grow, given that the material and technical base of this sector is in a poor state. The size of the state subsidies provided to the agricultural sector covers only 8 percent of the prime cost of farm produce. In Europe, this figure is five times higher. Therefore, there is a need to stipulate far greater state support for agriculture during the last couple of months before WTO membership. For example, the annual Russian subsidies to agriculture stand at around \$1 billion and Russia is insisting on increasing the figure to \$16 billion.

As trade barriers go down, exporters reduce prices, capturing a larger market share and increasing exports. Trade liberalisation via WTO should raise trade volumes by increasing both margins of trade. Kazakhstan's membership in WTO should be as painless as possible and, what is most important, it should play a positive part in ensuring stable economic growth.

## 100 Steps Programme Matches Ambition with a Practical Roadmap

It does not matter who you are or what position you hold: bold ambitions are never enough on their own. They always have to be matched with a practical programme to achieve your goals. As many people know, setting a target to lose weight, for example, doesn't work unless coupled with real changes to diets and exercise.

Governments and countries have far more complex and important challenges to overcome, but can't escape the same remorseless logic. National goals need to be coupled with well thought-out measures to achieve them, which then have to be put into practice. Such plans also need to be robust enough to cope with the inevitable bumps on the road.

No one can fault Kazakhstan for lack of ambition. The over-arching goal of joining the ranks of the top 30 developed countries by 2050 shows a country which has set its sights very high. Indeed, without remembering all that has been achieved since independence, it might seem a pretty impractical target. But continuing this impressive progress is no means certain, particularly given the worsening global outlook. All countries, including Kazakhstan, are being buffeted by strong geopolitical and economic headwinds.

This is why President Nursultan Nazarbayev's Plan of the Nation "100 Concrete Steps" programme, unveiled soon after his re-election in a landslide nearly two months ago, is so critical to the country's future. It sets out detailed, specific measures to deliver wide-ranging institutional change in five areas seen as the essential foundation for sustained progress. The aim is to ensure that the country can both chart its way through the current turbulent conditions and arrive as planned at the final destination.

It is a remarkably comprehensive reform agenda which will see the transformation of every sector and every area of society. A more effective, professional civil service which works better for citizens and the country will be shaped. The corrupt and the incompetent will be rooted out through better recruitment, monitoring and training. Public sector pay will be linked more closely to performance to encourage a much closer focus on outcomes.

Kazakhstan, too, will see the rule of law further strengthened through a more expert and impartial judiciary with better trained and accountable police. The expansion of trial by jury will increase both the role of the citizen and his or her trust in the process. So, too, will the creation of local police forces which can respond to the priorities of the communities they serve.

Such reforms to improve the rule of law will also help protect the rights of investors and increase the stake of citizens in their society. The rise of the

middle class, the growth of agile small and medium-sized businesses and Kazakhstan's openness to foreign investment and partnerships, exceptional within the wider region, have been major factors in the country's economic success and increasing prosperity.

There are a raft of practical, targeted measures within the 100 Steps programme to

**National goals need to be coupled with well thought-out measures to achieve them, which then have to be put into practice.**

support new investment and diversification and encourage entrepreneurship. The creation of an international financial centre in Astana, backed again with concrete steps, such as the introduction of the English law as the law of the centre, was another eye-catching initiative. Streamlining customs regulations and improving and modernising transport links will help boost trade and drive economic growth.

The 100 Steps initiative also contains important measures to further improve the cohesiveness of the country's society. Kazakhstan's strong sense of unity has been one of the main reasons for its success in an often-troubled region. The switch wherever possible to e-government will also be hastened to improve services and accountability. This will also help increase the effectiveness of the battle against corruption in all forms which the government has rightly made one of its main concerns. To implement the programme in full, it is expected the government will introduce more than 100 draft bills to the Parliament this autumn, a striking number by any standard.

Launching the programme, President Nazarbayev said it was not just a detailed action plan for the country in the months and years ahead, but also a checklist to monitor progress. He told the Astana Economic Forum that he wanted the government and country to be judged against how well it was doing against the 100 steps. It was the clearest signal he could have given to his citizens and to Kazakhstan's foreign partners that the country has embarked on another stage in its development.

Kazakhstan and its citizens have witnessed remarkable change over the last 24 years. But with this plan, those guiding the country's fortunes have shown they are determined to achieve far more. It may have been drawn up as a response to the worsening geo-political and economic conditions, but the sights have remained focused on the long-term goals for the country. Good intentions are being backed by detailed plans and determined action.

## Astana Is Powerful Symbol of Kazakhstan's Progress



Creating a successful new capital city is an enormous challenge. Putting the physical infrastructure in place is, of course, highly complex, requiring vision, detailed planning and commitment. But ensuring that the new capital moves from being an artificial creation to a city with a life of its own and a natural place within the country is an even bigger task.

Brazil, which replaced Rio de Janeiro with Brasilia as its capital in 1961, is widely regarded as the country which has managed this best. Brasilia now has a population fast approaching three million on a site which 60 years ago was barren land. What is even more striking is how the original vision behind its creation has been adopted and then adapted by its inhabitants.

As one of the world's youngest capitals, Astana is, of course, much younger than Brasilia, having only held the status for 17 years. It is not yet the finished article, but what has been achieved has been truly remarkable. A new political, economic and cultural powerhouse has risen.

Unsurprisingly, not everyone was confident of this success when the decision was made on July 6, 1994, that the capital should eventually be moved from Almaty to what was then called Akmola. It was, after all, a huge enterprise for a young country which faced many other challenges. Foreign diplomats were just some of those wary of the switch.

Yet the decision was not just a statement about the ambition of Kazakhstan, but had many practical advantages. For the first time, it placed the capital close to the centre of the country. There was plenty of space to grow, something geography made much more difficult in Almaty. And unlike Brasilia which was built from scratch, the new capital was based on a 270,000-strong town with more than 150 years of continued settlement history as an important regional centre in North and Central Kazakhstan.

It was in May 1998 that Akmola was renamed Astana which, as many of our readers know, means "the capital" in Kazakh. A few weeks later, the city was officially presented to the world as Kazakhstan's new capital. July 6 is marked with annual Astana Day festivities.

There is a great deal to celebrate. Envisioned and masterminded by President Nursultan Nazarbayev, who invented the whole idea and managed to persuade the Parliament and the nation of its feasibility, Astana has been transformed in an extraordinarily short time from a provincial city to Central Asia's major political, economic, and tourist centre.

Carefully planned, it is home to landmark buildings designed by many prominent architects such as Norman Foster, Manfredi Nicoletti and Kise Kurokawa. The spectacular cityscape they created vividly

represents the mix of cultures found within our borders, our position between Europe and Asia and the rising influence and status of Kazakhstan in the world.

With a population that tripled in 18 years, from 270,000 in 1996 to over 850,000 in 2014, Astana is already the country's second largest city. It is forecast that the number of people living and working in the capital will before long pass one million. In the early years, the rise in population was largely a result of Astana's role as the country's new political and administrative centre. But it is the city's economic success which will contribute most to its future growth.

Astana is already home to over 70 major enterprises and many thousands of fast-growing small and medium-sized businesses. Foreign firms, attracted by the benefits of the free economic zone, are increasingly investing in the city and looking to form long-term partnerships. Ambitious plans and incentives to develop the Astana International Financial Centre are already being put in place.

The city's universities have helped to position Astana as a promising hub for hi-tech and knowledge industries. It is a reputation which EXPO 2017, through its focus on future energy, will only enhance. The event is seeing new investment in the city's transport infrastructure, while the EXPO site is being carefully planned to leave a legacy of a vibrant new quarter for Astana with new homes, workplaces and academic buildings.

For a capital city to truly prosper, it must offer more than politics and commerce. Astana is home to remarkable cultural venues that showcase the rich history of the country and see regular performances by leading Kazakh and international artists. In addition to the top-line venues, there is also more to see and experience every month. Astana, not surprisingly, does not yet have the history or lively cultural tradition of the much longer established Almaty, but it is catching up fast. It is a magnet for the young and talented and they are helping shape an increasingly attractive place to live. Kazakhstan is fortunate – and unique in the region – in having in Almaty and Astana two such major international cities within its borders. That will undoubtedly be one of a number of Nazarbayev's indisputable legacies for the Kazakh nation.

Although Astana Day will perhaps be recognised most enthusiastically in the city, it is a national celebration. There are events across Kazakhstan to mark the anniversary. Astana is the whole country's property in which everyone, wherever they live, takes pride. It is a physical symbol of the modern, dynamic and influential country that the Kazakh people are creating together and how, with boldness, ambition and determination, all challenges can be overcome.

THE ASTANA TIMES

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# OPINIONS

WEDNESDAY, JULY 15, 2015

## Astana's Growth and Development Mirror the Nation's

By Marian Abisheva

One of the most significant achievements of independent Kazakhstan was the birth of the new capital. Transfer of the capital opened a new page in Kazakh history, which marked the beginning of the economic growth and prosperity of the country.

The advantages of Astana as the capital are determined by a number of factors, which include among others the beneficial geographical location in the central part of the country at the intersection of communication, transport, rail, road and air routes. In addition, the city has significant resources for future urban development because of a large free area for settlement, as well as personnel and labour and industrial potential.

Compared to other world capitals, Astana is still very young and has just started its development, but today there is no doubt that the future of Kazakhstan is embodied in this city.

Since the transfer of the capital, Astana has significantly expanded the geography of foreign economic relations and risen its trading and export potential, as clearly evidenced by the steady growth of foreign trade turnover in the city.



Currently, Astana is in a phase of stable economic growth. Volumes of industrial production have increased as well as investment in capital construction, housing, work on landscaping and gardening, collecting taxes and payments to the budget.

According to statistics, in 2013 the growth of industrial output in current prices reached 276.2 billion tenge (\$1.5 billion). Positive dynamics are observed in attracting investment. In only the first nine months of last year, investments in fixed assets amounted to 409.5 billion tenge (\$2.2 billion), which is 16.4 percent higher than in the same period of 2013. Astana-New City, a special economic zone, is responsible for attracting profitable investments. It acts as a "free economic zone," used globally as a tool to stimulate investment in the region.

The introduction of economic incentives to encourage economic and business activity has led to a sharp

increase in the construction industry. In 2013, about 1,100,000 square metres of housing was commissioned in Astana. High rates of development in the city provided a significant portion of work not only for the local population, but also for specialists from other regions of Kazakhstan.

The transport and communication complex is developing steadily in Astana; for instance, cargo turnover amounted to 110.2 percent in 2013 compared to 2012, whereas passenger turnover was 122 percent.

Small business has been developing quite rapidly. The number of active small and medium businesses in Astana reached 46,970.

In general, we observe that products and services in Astana today are being produced, built and consumed more intensively because of the growth of incomes. In 2013, the average nominal wage of employees reached 159,537 tenge (\$862) per month, which is 7 percent of growth compared to 2012 and significantly exceeds the nationwide average.

Development of the new capital and improvement of its socio-economic situation has led to significant population growth. At the beginning of 2014, the total population of the capital exceeded 814,000 people, which is 36,000 more than in 2013.

In a short time period, Astana, the rapidly growing modern city of the country, has already contributed a chapter in the history of the young independent state.

Today, the capital city is a symbol of the progress and prosperity of the Kazakh people. Constructing and equipping the new capital has created a strong impetus for the revival of industry, improvement of the competitive environment in the domestic market, increased investment attractiveness, revitalising small and medium-sized businesses and the formation of the new way of the country's economy. The rapid transformation of Astana is a visible symbol of the whole country as well as the evidence of the ability of Kazakhstan to become one of the most advanced countries in the world.

The state capital is not just a "main city" which concentrated the levers of power. Astana's development is inextricably linked with and symbolises the development of modern Kazakhstan statehood. Astana, always being in the forefront of social and economic reforms in the country, has become the personification of the sovereignty of the state and the pride of every citizen of Kazakhstan who cares about the fate and progress of the country. There is no doubt that

the rapid development of Astana now and in the future will be one of the most important factors determining the competitiveness of Kazakhstan in the international arena.

A distinctive feature of the city, besides the fact that Astana has recently rapidly increased its socio-economic indicators, is that the capital has already been officially recognised as a cultural, intellectual, information and innovation centre of Kazakhstan.

Astana is becoming a major cultural centre in Eurasia, too. The city's cultural life is represented by such artistic institutions as the State Philharmonic Hall, the Museum of Modern Art, Kuanyshbayev Kazakh Music and Drama Theatre, Gorky Russian Drama Theatre and others. In 2013, the State Opera and Ballet Theatre Astana Opera was opened, the architectural excellence and technical capabilities of which are on a par with world famous opera houses. In addition, since last year the Library of the First President of Kazakhstan, was opened.

There are more than 20 national and cultural centres in the formation and strengthening of ideas of spiritual unity, friendship of peoples, education of Kazakhstan patriotism and interethnic and interreligious harmony. The new capital is the heart of Eurasia, a place where cultures and

traditions intertwine, where peace and harmony between people of different backgrounds and faiths strive.

Since 2003, Astana has annually hosted the Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions, thus demonstrating a high level of tolerance in the country. Hosted at the Astana Palace of Peace and Harmony, it became a symbol of inter-ethnic and inter-confessional stability and a high level of harmony and friendship between the peoples of Kazakhstan. Reflecting the unity of religions and ethnic groups and cultures, the pyramidal shape represents a high and noble idea – a dialogue of civilisations and rapprochement between people of different cultures and religions.

In the post-Soviet space, Astana is the only example of a newly-built capital. This is a step that represents the willingness to take on track the achievement that speaks about our successes better than words.

We are now witnessing how the new capital opens up new opportunities for economic development and welfare growth.

**The author is a PhD in political science and an analyst at the Library of the First President of the Republic of Kazakhstan – Leader of the Nation.**

## When Disaster Strikes, Women and Girls Are the Backbone of Resilience

By Dr. Babatunde Osotimehin

World Population Day 2015 reminds us that women and girls are particularly vulnerable in humanitarian emergencies – but also play an active role in helping their communities cope with the effects of disaster. This should be reflected in strong recommendations at the upcoming World Humanitarian Summit Regional Consultation in Dushanbe later this month.

Ishwari Dangol spent 12 hours trying to pull her seven-year-old son from the rubble of the massive earthquake that shook Nepal in April. She was seven months pregnant at the time, and has since struggled to access antenatal care and cope with her son's tragic death.

Ishwari's experience shows just how vulnerable women are when natural disasters strike. Yet their specific needs are often ignored in crises.

We don't know when the next disaster will occur, or where. But we do know that the frequency and impact of natural catastrophes are



on the rise globally, with the Asia and Pacific region highly prone to earthquakes, floods, landslides and drought. This is why it is crucial for governments across this vast region to urgently get their preparedness systems up to speed. We have seen far too often how disaster risk reduction strategies have failed and how ill-prepared countries have slipped into a state of full-on emergency where lives are at even greater risk and the most basic needs are not met.

World Population Day, July 11, is a timely opportunity to highlight the role, needs and rights of women and girls in emergency preparedness and disaster response.

Natural disasters magnify the vul-

nerabilities and needs of women and girls. Pregnant women fear for their health and that of their unborn babies and wonder if they will deliver safely, as health centres and other key infrastructure may be destroyed, overcrowded, or inaccessible. Skilled birth attendants and emergency obstetrics care often become scarce or unavailable. In fact, an estimated 60 percent of all maternal deaths occur in emergency settings.

During crisis situations, women and girls are at much greater risk of reproductive health problems, sexual abuse and other forms of gender-based violence, forced marriage and even death. Worldwide, women and children are estimated to be up to 14 times more likely than men to die in a disaster.

For women and girls, part of being safe during humanitarian crises – whether natural disasters or man-made conflicts – means ensuring safe birth, safety from unintended pregnancy, and protection from violence.

Placing the protection and health of women and girls at the centre of

humanitarian response also makes communities more resilient and helps with recovery. Time and again, women, including young women, rise to the challenge of sustaining their households during difficult times and are often at the forefront of responding to disasters in their communities.

Ensuring their health and safety is not only a moral obligation; it is a strategic investment in disaster risk reduction that improves the rights of individuals and strengthens the resilience of nations.

For these reasons, the international community agreed at the UN General Assembly last year that basic health measures during humanitarian emergencies should include sexual and reproductive health services to save the lives of women, girls and newborns. This was reinforced in the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, which charts the way forward for the next 15 years.

Now, as governments, civil society representatives and other humanitarian actors from Central and

South Asia gather in Dushanbe on July 28-30 for the last regional consultation ahead of the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul, we must ensure that the needs of women and girls are prioritised in emergency preparedness plans and humanitarian response in the region and beyond.

National governments and local authorities can do a lot in this regard.

Engaging women and young people, as well as all vulnerable populations, as partners in preparedness planning is crucial.

Being prepared also means knowing where populations are and what their vulnerabilities are. The collection and analysis of population data, disaggregated by sex and age, must be strengthened so that humanitarian interventions reach all people in need, especially the most vulnerable and under-served.

Setting up appropriate coordination mechanisms to guarantee the delivery of a minimum initial service package for reproductive health is another important aspect of preparedness. This package should

help prevent gender-based violence, assist survivors of sexual assault by providing psychosocial counselling and health interventions to reduce the risk of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections, and safeguard the health of pregnant women, new mothers and their infants.

At the UN Population Fund, we are expanding our capacity to provide these services in partnership with governments and civil society – making sure that the rights and needs of the most vulnerable populations are at the forefront of humanitarian response to maintain their dignity, protect them from violence, and provide access to health services as quickly as possible when emergencies strike.

That is how we will ensure the health and safety of women and girls, and ultimately, the well-being and resilience of families, communities, countries and our world.

**The author is of Executive Director the United Nations Population Fund and Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations.**

## Kazakh Presidential Reforms Outline Modernisation Trend for Other CIS Countries

By Abzal Kassymov

Kazakhstan has entered a new phase of development – institutional transformation. Intensive work within the five institutional reforms and Plan of the Nation of 100 concrete steps initiated by President Nursultan Nazarbayev has started. These reforms and the work around them are being closely monitored by both domestic and foreign experts. If the political elite has an understanding of the need of the announced reforms, the social community still has questions, which will be addressed by Director of the Kazakhstan Institute for Strategic Studies Erlan Karin.

**President Nursultan Nazarbayev has already launched several modernisation programmes. In terms of political interests, why would he institute a new set of reforms?**

In world political history, it was national leaders who put forward programmes that set the fairway of successful development of their countries. It is no coincidence that in the five institutional reforms of the President you can see parallels with such programmes as the six arrows of Atatürk, three step strategy of Deng Xiaoping and seven principles of Lee Kuan Yew. ... Nazarbayev has repeatedly demonstrated the ability not only to timely



formulate a new agenda, but also drastically implement successful reforms. In fact, the five institutional reforms programme is a continuation of Nazarbayev's reformative course. This time, implementation of new radical and far-reaching reforms will ensure the country's transition to new standards of quality of life and performance of the state and society.

**Personally, I get confused when five reforms and Mangilik El are mentioned simultaneously as a concept. Which one is a priority?**

Mangilik El is an ideological platform which serves as a foundation for the five reforms. In fact, the concept of Mangilik El will be a set of basic values of our society found during the modern times of our independence. The main fundamental value of Mangilik El is strengthening independence. Therefore,

the five reforms is not just a new programme of development of the country; in a sense, it is a strategic doctrine that incorporates a system of priorities, goals and values of the new Kazakhstan, which can be called the doctrine of Nazarbayev.

**The goals for further development are set, the priorities are identified. What's next?**

The President has not only initiated a plan of reforms, but also suggested development of a specific and precise algorithm of its implementation, which is Plan of the Nation consisting of 100 concrete steps. And this is only the first stage of implementation of the presidential programme, as each declared step will require different kinds of other changes and innovations; in other words, it will result in snowballing reforms and transformation of both a local and universal nature.

Today, the very intense and hard work of the National Modernisation Commission is being managed within the working groups. Hundreds of analytical and research centres, as well as non-governmental organisations, are being attracted to their work. For several hours, every step, each proposed measure is being discussed in detail and all of them are considered from the perspective of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) standards in terms of quality of life and transition to a new level of public services. The stated goal of joining 30 developed countries is not an ultimate goal. We set the bar not for the status to become a member of some group of leading states, but to indicate the further steps and achieve the concrete results of the reforms.

**In the context of the five reforms, there is a lot of information about reform in public administration. In terms of attractiveness, of course such rhetoric is advantageous, but how realistic it is to conduct modernisation of state apparatus?**

Yes, you're right. A big part of Plan of the Nation is aimed at modernisation of state apparatus and consequently at improving the quality of management. Also, significant measures are aimed at the formation of transparent government, strengthening of public control over the work of government bodies and expansion of the area of responsibility of civil society. Such a strong emphasis on reforming public institutions is not accidental; today, many experts are unanimous in their opinion that success of economic reforms and overall development of the country is largely caused by an effective model of governance which acts as the main condition for success of the reforms. Therefore,

one of the key principles of the five reforms is accountable, transparent and efficient government. In other words, in the first place authorities would be interested in this as an initiator of the modernisation project.

**Isn't there a risk to launching a modernisation project amid economic challenges and political tension??**

Institutional reforms are aimed not only at introduction of new standards, but are also as a response by Kazakhstan to consistent and fundamental changes taking place in the world. New challenges in world politics and economics are quite serious, even fateful. In fact, currently a new world order, as well as an algorithm of its performance, is being defined and laid as well. Therefore, the chosen model of reflection today will determine the future situation of any state.

Promotion of the five presidential reforms creates a completely new agenda for Kazakhstan and quite an attractive trend for modernisation throughout the post-Soviet space. Hence the strong feedback we get from foreign experts and politicians, especially Russian ones. I get a lot of different offers from various foreign think tanks and political funds to take part in one or another conference, forum or symposium and every time my colleagues ask me to talk about the new reforms of Nur-

sultan Nazarbayev. In other words, the interest is very high and not only in connection with the interest in our country, but especially in terms of learning and using Kazakhstan's experience in modernisation.

**Wouldn't it be easier to preserve the status quo and look at modernisation during better external conditions?**

On the contrary, the new reforms, even though it may sound pompous, are a historic opportunity. It is therefore important to understand the ideology of the reforms and their meaning. Speaking about today's fateful moment, Nursultan Nazarbayev stressed that "the time of global changes gives each country a choice: either you choose reforms or devolution and downgrading. And only those who will stand through the time of changes with dignity which are capable of self-renewal and reforms." In this context, the five institutional reforms of the President are based on an understanding of the logic of global processes and express the aspiration of Kazakhstan to become part of the open world. It is no coincidence that reforms involve emphasis on development of the trilingual concept and modernisation of education and the science system; these all will provide Kazakh society with mobility and dynamism. In other words, the new agenda suggested by Nursultan Nazarbayev is to stimulate a powerful spurt of modernisation of our country.

**This interview first appeared in the Liter newspaper and is translated and reprinted here with permission.**

# EURASIA&WORLD

WEDNESDAY, JULY 15, 2015

## Kazakhstan Continues Liberalising Visa Regime, Works to Facilitate EU Entry for its Citizens



First Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan Rapol Zhoshybayev discusses changes to Kazakhstan's visa system in Astana on July 9.

By Malika Orazgaliyeva

ASTANA – First Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan Rapol Zhoshybayev said Kazakhstan was both moving forward with further liberalisation of its visa regime for foreigners and working to facilitate travel for its own citizens to European countries.

"In accordance with the government decree, the citizens of Australia, Hungary, Italy, Monaco, Belgium, Spain, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Malaysia, the United Arab Emirates, Singapore, the U.K., the U.S., Germany, Finland, France, Switzerland and Japan will be exempted from visa requirements for up to 15 calendar days from the moment of crossing the state border of Kazakhstan in the period from July 16, 2015, until Dec. 31, 2017," Zhoshybayev announced on July 9 at a press conference at the Central Communications Service.

During this period, citizens of the mentioned states holding all types of passports recognised by Kazakhstan may repeatedly enter, leave and transit through the territory of Kazakhstan without a visa for up to 15 days from crossing any state border open to international

traffic. Moreover, the number of visits to Kazakhstan will not be limited, he explained.

The registration of foreigners will be made directly at local border crossing points at the time of their entrance to the territory of Kazakhstan.

According to Zhoshybayev, this initiative is aimed at strengthening Kazakhstan's bilateral partnerships, as well as creating favourable conditions for potential investors, foreign businesses and tourists during their stay in the country.

This project will also have a positive impact on the flow of foreign tourists during the major international events planned for the next two years, among which are EXPO 2017 and Winter Universiade 2017, he added.

It was also announced that as of Jan. 1, 2017, Kazakhstan plans to abolish visa requirements for citizens of the 34 member states of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), as well as the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Malaysia and Singapore.

In May, President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev signed a decree on issues related to establishing the Astana International Financial Centre (AIFC), one of the

points of which is the introduction of a visa-free regime for up to 30 days for citizens of the OECD and the three mentioned countries.

"According to the action plan on implementation of the decree, introduction of the visa-free regime for citizens of these countries is scheduled for Jan. 1, 2017," Zhoshybayev said.

The establishment of the AIFC, which is to become a financial hub for the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), as well as all of West and Central Asia, is planned to be created using infrastructure built for EXPO 2017.

Today, the OECD includes Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Chile, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Israel, Japan, South Korea, Luxembourg, Mexico, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, the United Kingdom and the United States.

During the press conference, Zhoshybayev also revealed that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is currently negotiating with the European Union to simplify visa requirements for Kazakh citizens.

In his words, the European side is also working in this direction and will be ready to conclude an agreement with Kazakhstan on a simplified visa regime and readmission if the legislation of Kazakhstan is synchronised with European standards on illegal migration and organised crime, the return of persons, border control management and combating drug trafficking, strengthening protective characteristics of passports and protecting personal information stored in biometric documents.

To this end, the Kazakh Foreign Ministry has prepared a draft Action Plan on visa facilitation between Kazakhstan and the EU. Currently, this plan is being reviewed by the government of Kazakhstan, Zhoshybayev informed.

## \$500 Million in Agreements Signed, Investment Promoted During President's Milan Visit

By Malika Orazgaliyeva

President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev announced that his country will extend and expand the trial visa-free regime announced last year and due to end this July. Now, citizens from 20 countries will not need visas for short trips to Kazakhstan, he announced at a Kazakh-Italian business forum in Milan on June 27. About 20 agreements for a total amount of \$500 million were also signed at the forum.

The Kazakh delegation headed by Nazarbayev visited Milan to take part in a ceremony dedicated to the National Day of Kazakhstan at EXPO Milano 2015 as well as to visit the business forum. The President also held bilateral talks with Prime Minister of Italy Matteo Renzi.

Delivering a speech at the business forum, Nazarbayev said, "Investors are given the opportunity to attract foreign labour without any quotas and permits. Besides, we have established a visa-free regime for investors from 10 countries, including Italy. From July 15, we will prolong the visa-free regime for investors, and extended it for another 10 countries: Switzerland, Spain, Belgium, Hungary, Monaco, Singapore, Australia, Norway, Sweden and Finland. I think not many countries in the world can offer such beneficial conditions for investors."

The Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) with an integrated single market of 180 million people makes Kazakhstan attractive for investments, Nazarbayev pointed out. The trade bloc of Kazakhstan, Russia, Belarus, Kyrgyzstan and Armenia introduces a free movement of goods, capital, services and workforce. Kazakhstan can be considered as a gate to the EAEU, he explained.

Nazarbayev noted that EXPO 2017, which will be held in Astana in two years, will be a platform for demonstrating the best world developments and trends in the energy sector.

"The exhibition will also give a powerful impetus to our fruitful cooperation. I invite all of you to take part in EXPO 2017.

I am confident that today's forum is another important step to strengthen relations between Kazakhstan and Italy," the President said.

Renzi stressed that in addition to economic cooperation, the two countries share the idea of ensuring world peace, understanding between peoples and cultural interaction.

"It is important that all the countries of Asia and Europe work together in order to protect our planet from the extremism and religious fanaticism," he said.

Renzi noted the need to use Italy and Kazakhstan's trade potential in the agricultural and energy sectors, and suggested exchanging experiences between the students of higher education institutions.

Kazakhstan and Italy signed joint agreements in the agriculture, food, textiles, oil and gas, machine building and construction sectors.

International expositions traditionally hold National Day celebrations for the participating countries. This year, 110 out of 147 participating countries in EXPO Milano 2015 will host presentations. The National Days of Turkmenistan, Morocco, Argentina, Tunisia, Kyrgyzstan, and the U.K. have been already conducted since the opening of the exhibition in early May.

At the flag-raising ceremony, Nazarbayev and Italian Minister of Agriculture, Food and Forestry Policies Maurizio Martina gave speeches.

After the ceremony, Nazarbayev and Renzi visited Kazakhstan's pavilion.

Following the programme, Nazarbayev and Renzi moved to the Italian pavilion, where they visited the exhibition site and held negotiations. The parties discussed ways to strengthen bilateral cooperation in the trade, economic, investment and energy sectors, as well as exchanged views on topical issues of the international agenda. After the completion of talks, the officials left their records in the guest book.

Government officials from Kazakhstan and Italy, including Foreign Minister of Kazakhstan Erlan Idrissov, Deputy Chair of Kazakhstan's Mazhilis (lower chamber of Parliament) Dariga Nazarbayeva, Mayor of Astana and Head of the National Company Astana EXPO 2017 Adilbek Dzhaksybekov, Commissioner of EXPO 2017 Rapol Zhoshybayev, business community representatives of two countries, as well as General Secretary of the International Exhibitions Bureau Vicente Loscertales attended the events.

Kazakhstan has taken part in the world expositions since 2005, but this year the country's pavilion occupies a special place. During the first two months of operation, it has drawn great interest from tourists and guests of the exhibition.

The country's pavilion, created by the Facts and Fiction, a company from Germany, is presented under the topic, "Kazakhstan is the country of opportunities." According to the Italian media, Kazakhstan's pavilion is in the top five most visited country expositions. About 4,500 visitors attend the pavilion on a daily basis. Moreover, according to voting results provided by the popular Italian newspaper Repubblica, Kazakhstan's pavilion is currently in second position after Colombia's.

Kazakhstan's exposition has been attended by prominent political and cultural figures including the prince of Monaco, the prime minister of China, the ministers of economy of Germany and Hungary and the mayor of London.

The two-storey, 3,000 square-metre building is divided into several exposition zones on various subjects, such as 'Land cultivation,' 'Animal-husbandry,' 'Interesting facts about Kazakhstan,' 'Aquatic culture of Kazakhstan,' 'Kazakhstan's ecology' and 'Agriculture of the future.'

Visitors can get acquainted with nature conservation in the country, the culture of the country and the principles of sustainable development.

## Malaysian Ambassador Seeks to Build National Economic, Personal Connections with Kazakhstan

By Michelle Witte

ASTANA – Despite the geography that separates them, Kazakhstan and Malaysia are natural partners, with much in common – like relatives separated by a continent, Malaysian Ambassador to Kazakhstan Dato' Hidayat Abdul Hamid says.

"Malaysia and Kazakhstan are similar in many senses," he said in an interview on June 23. "While we embrace modernity, many traditional family values, such as respect for elders and old customs, are still being practised by our communities."

They are also multicultural, multiconfessional, predominantly Muslim nations with populations living in harmony, he noted. "I think Kazakhstan is a model of religious tolerance and ethnic harmony, just like Malaysia." While extremists are attempting to hijack Islam, he said, Kazakhstan and Malaysia stand as examples of moderation.

The countries have a history of cooperation in education, with Malaysia a favourite destination for Kazakh students travelling abroad for higher education and other courses of study. "Human capital development is an important area of our cooperation. Apart from university students and youth undergoing English



language and other short term training, the Malaysian Technical Cooperation Programme has offered training courses in many fields to Kazakh officials," he said. Thousands of Kazakh students have passed through these and other programmes.

These courses, in addition to their technical merits, bind the countries through the human contacts they build. "When I first arrived in Kazakhstan, one of my first courtesies calls was on the deputy foreign minister at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs," Hamid recalled. "To my surprise, the gentleman that I called upon was a colleague from when we both took an International Diplomatic Course at the Institute of Diplomacy and Foreign Relations in Kuala Lumpur in 1993!"

Malaysia is not the first nation you would imagine stepping in

to offer support and educational outreach to newly independent Kazakhstan, but in this, too, the countries have something in common. "Malaysia played an important role in Bosnia-Herzegovina, in Palestinian issues, in South Africa during the apartheid period," Hamid said. "We always like to contribute in whatever way we can. I think this is similar to what Kazakhs are doing now," he said, noting the country's work on nuclear non-proliferation, nuclear security, interfaith dialogue and regional stability.

"If you can help to achieve world peace, why not?" he said. "You contribute in any small manner and eventually you hope you can attain [these great goals]."

Despite their similarities, and their close government-to-government contacts – Hamid notes that the two leaders are "just a phone call away," and that such calls are made regularly – this has not translated into bilateral trade that reflects their true potential, he said. One of his primary goals here is to change that. "My mission is to enhance economic relations between both countries, to promote more business and trade, to match potential investors and businesses," he said.

To that end, Malaysia opened a trade office in Almaty in April, which it has combined with its existing tourism office. The ambassador hopes having a permanent presence here will help spread the word to Kazakh business owners about the possibility of working with Malaysia and help bring more potential partners together. "We hope to actively participate in more trade shows and organise Malaysian trade exhibitions to promote Malaysian products and services" to Kazakhstan's attractive market, he said.

Already, delegations are arriving. A recent mission saw representatives from Malaysia's oil and gas sector travel to Kazakhstan. "It was a small mission, but it was an eye opener," Hamid said. "Malaysia in South Asia is fast becoming a hub for the oil and gas industry ... so we see that there are a lot of things that can complement each other. On the last mission, quite a number of companies met their counterparts."

Malaysia's oil and gas service providers, including small businesses, could find a lot of potential in Kazakhstan, the ambassador noted.

The country is also ahead of the curve in diversifying extractive industries here, he said. A

Malaysian company operating two fields in Aktau is expanding into producing methanol and liquid petroleum gas. "This is what Kazakhstan aspires to, to diversify the industry further downstream. ... I'm happy that we could also contribute something here. That is another area with a lot of potential," Hamid said. He also noted that Kazakhstan's biggest cement factory, Central Asia Cement, is majority owned by Malaysian investors, and is making a profit.

The work that Kazakhstan is doing to improve its infrastructure and connectivity – building railways, roads and multimodal transportation hubs – will support increased trade, the ambassador said. "I think this all will facilitate the movement of goods, especially from Southeast Asia. It's a long, long way and the cost of transportation used to be very high," he said. This will change as connectivity improves. And, of course, Malaysia hopes to get in on the action. "Malaysian companies are also interested in participating in highway construction management, building houses and apartments, power generation, et cetera."

The elimination of some administrative barriers between the two countries was also a significant recent step, the ambassador

said, and was warmly welcomed. "We were very encouraged by the opening of the visa regime last year ... we hope, and we feel quite sure, that it will be extended. ... The effect, you can see clearly – there are more Malaysian companies coming here."

The ambassador hopes to encourage more tourism in both directions. Tourism from Kazakhstan to Malaysia has been stagnant for the past few years, he reports, but there is still a steady stream of about 20,000 people travelling from the steppe to the tropics each year. "We are increasing our tourism promotion in Kazakhstan," he said. "We opened our Tourism Malaysia office in Almaty in October last year as a hub for Central Asia." Malaysia was also the country partner of the Kazakhstan International Tourism Fair in April 2015. Hamid hopes to encourage more Malaysians to visit Kazakhstan as well.

Despite the distance, Kazakhs and Malaysians are finding each other. "In the past years, many Kazakhs and Malaysians have married, including from influential families in both countries," Hamid commented. "The high level of comfort and acceptance of both societies speak volumes about the potential for these unions to benefit both countries."

# Nation & Capital

WEDNESDAY, JULY 15, 2015

**CULTURE**

Debutantes Take Floor for Seventh Opera Ball in Almaty

B3

**SOCIETY**

Chevron Empowers Women of Akmol Oblast to Do Business

B5

**CAPITAL**

Astana Celebrates Anniversary with Fairs, Fireworks, Modern and Traditional Art

B8

## Globe-Trotting Singer Hopes to Find Soul Music Audience in Kazakhstan

By Michelle Witte

ASTANA – Soul music is not the first thing that comes to mind when surveying Kazakhstan’s sound scene, but singer Mekiel Barnett has hopes that the country’s music fans will be as welcoming to him as the rest of its people have been.

You’d be forgiven for finding Barnett’s arrival on the steppe unexpected, to say the least. Born in Ohio, Barnett and his family moved to Israel when he was a child. He speaks English, Hebrew and Arabic and grew up singing gospel and Motown music – none of which immediately calls to mind the central Kazakh steppe. But wait.

“I was raised as part of a community of black Hebrews,” Barnett said in an interview in Astana. “We have been here now for almost 40 years. Most of my formal education – from 6 to 18 – [was] in Israel. ... My music started in Israel.”

Music, in fact, became a major feature of the black Hebrew identity. “Music was all around me all my life, from when I was little. That’s the way we fed ourselves,” Barnett explained.

“Music was part of our lives ... as we grew up, we ended up joining different Israeli bands. Now, most of our community has citizenship and our kids are in the army, [but

for a long time], we weren’t legally in the country. We were denied citizenship for over 30 years, 25 years. So we went through struggles around that – we were given different temporary types of residency, but we weren’t allowed fully to belong. So during those years ... it was kind of rough, but music was our way of expression.”

Black Hebrew groups have been established by African American communities in the United States since the 19th century. Different organisations have different specific beliefs, but many believe themselves to be blood descendants of the Jewish prophet Abraham and therefore of the biblical tribe of Judah, which can claim Israel as an ancestral homeland. Over the last decade or so, black Hebrews have begun receiving permanent resident status and even citizenship in Israel. Eddie Butler, a black Hebrew singer, even represented Israel in the 2006 Eurovision Song Contest.

None of this, of course, would seem to point the way toward Islam and the steppe, but it will. But first, we have to return to the United States, and then to Prague, and meet Barnett’s son and inspiration. It’s a global story.

As a young adult, Barnett returned to the U.S., where for 18 years he worked in education and psychology, running group

homes. After nearly two decades away from Israel and the son he had there, he got a call that would change his life.

“Somebody called me and said ‘Your son’s in Prague. He’s doing music,’” Barnett said. He lit out to find him. “And he was living the dream that I had dreamed, although life had taken me in another direction,” Barnett explained. “It brought tears to my eyes, but it inspired me. It gave me a new breath of life. It made me want to reach for music. And ... I packed my apartment up and I got my passport ... within two years, I was ready to make a move.”

Seeing his adult son was like a punch to the gut, Barnett said. “He’s so much like me. When I was younger that’s what I wanted to do: I wanted to sing and write, it was inside of me. But you know how life is, it takes you in different directions.”

Having rediscovered his direction, Barnett headed back to Israel – and now we find the musical connection that would lead him to Kazakhstan: “I stayed in Israel for about eight months, coming back and forth. And then a friend of mine had a job in Kazakhstan, and he couldn’t go,” he said.

It turns out that a Pavlodar-born Israeli citizen, Larson Davidoff, a saxophone player, has been re-



turning to Kazakhstan every year for the past 15 years or so to perform, Barnett said. In the winter of 2013–2014, Barnett came to Kazakhstan with Davidoff to perform. They played at the Ramada Plaza in Astana for a few nights, and at the grand opening of the Krendel Cafe in the capital – where Barnett met Inga Bespalova of Pavlodar,

who, with her mother, owns Krendel cafes in Astana and Almaty. “I met them here and I fell in love with Inga,” Barnett said. After a final six months in Israel, Barnett returned to Kazakhstan, where he’s working on his first album with Davidoff in Pavlodar.

“I’ve got about seven songs written,” he said, mostly R&B and soul,

though he crosses genres. “Some of my stuff has a jazz [sound]. I do pop. It’s just me, it’s my expression.” The singer is confident his expression will find listeners here – and beyond. “I think I’m going to be heard,” he said. “[And] I don’t only want to be heard here, I want to be heard all over the world.”

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## Hollywood Actor and Martial Arts Master Steven Seagal Comes to Astana

By Aidar Uteshev

ASTANA – Famous Hollywood actor, director and producer Steven Seagal has arrived in Astana to take part in the First International Festival of Martial Arts, which will be held to mark the Day of the Capital celebrations.

Seagal, who has achieved the level of 7th dan in the Aikikai school of aikido came to the Kazakh capital as a master of martial arts.

The prominent guest was welcomed by Astana City Akim (Mayor) Adilbek Dzhaksybekov. Together they met with young graduates and experienced athletes of the Kazakh Aikido Federation in the sports hall of the Palace of Students.

“I am very pleased to see here so many children. They are our future,” said Seagal.

He demonstrated several aikido maneuvers on the carpet, talked about the particular elements of a proper fight and answered questions raised by local athletes.



Steven Seagal speaks with a child at a demonstration of aikido maneuvers in Astana.

## Almaty Café Opens with Mentally Challenged Employees

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – The Training Café, an eatery staffed by 20 individuals with mental illness, opened recently in Almaty. The project, financed by the Soros Foundation, is organised by the Psychoanalytic Association of Kazakhstan.

“I work as a street sweeper and I like this job and my team very much. We are like a big family here. As of today, it is very important for me to get liberty... I want to have independence, I want to live,” said 22-year-old Alexey Kapustin, according to Vlast magazine.

The employment is the first Kapustin has ever had. Getting the job is not just a victory; it is a real hope to become a full member of society.

“They often discuss independence, because all of them live in a care home, a special centre for people with mental illnesses. Our main purpose is to give the opportunity to work, to get skills and be independent. They are very happy to work and ready to work every day without weekends. They do their best and try to work hard,” said psychologist and café administrator Kamila Mergenbayeva in a July 1 interview for this story.

Although some employees have an intellectual age of 12, they are reliable and perform their tasks, she added. Early problems, such as shyness among the waiters, have been overcome and the employees are considered to be quite special.

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

## Kazakhstan Chooses Winners of Second International Journalism Contest

By Malika Orazgaliyeva

ASTANA – On the eve of Astana Day, the Kazakh Foreign Ministry and the Union of Journalists of Kazakhstan announced the winners of their second international journalism contest, “Kazakhstan through the eyes of foreign media.”

The contest attracted 55 entries from 35 countries, with five regional prizes awarded to journalists representing the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), Europe, the Americas, Asia and Oceania, as well as the Middle East and Africa.

Central Asian Dialogue journalist Alo Khodjaev from Uzbekistan won top prize among CIS journalists for his article “Loco-



motive of Progress,” which highlighted a plant for the production of electric locomotives in Astana as an example of Kazakhstan’s economic diversification.

“To be honest, all the journalists were very impressed by everything that we saw and heard. I have not seen such huge workshops, neither in our former Tashkent Aviation Production Association, nor in the factories

of Israel, Poland and Russia. The economy of Kazakhstan keeps on a good course...,” Khodjaev wrote in his story.

Bartosz Mendyk of Poland, who writes for NaWschodzie.eu, won among European journalists for his story “Nurly Zhol is the Path to the Future.” In his article, he said, “In my opinion, the main achievement of the President’s programme is that the coun-

try left the Soviet legacy in the past. This is the main meaning of Nurly Zhol, which will help open a new page in the history of Kazakhstan... If Kazakhstan entered the top 50 economies in the world, it means that the country can enter the top 30. It is not a utopia, but rather a real future. Kazakhstan can become a corridor linking Eurasia. This means that the country needs to create its own brands, develop small and medium-sized businesses, including family businesses, while educated people will help to achieve these goals.”

Among entrants from the Americas, Evelin Armella of Argentina won for her article “A Place to Discover: Kazakhstan.”

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### THINGS TO WATCH & PLACES TO GO

**KARAGANDA HIGHWAY**

July 18 at 8 p.m. Open Air Party

**PALACE OF SCHOOLCHILDREN**

July 19 at 8:45 a.m. Morning jogs

**KOKTAL 13**

July 19 at 12 a.m. Extreme ropejumping

**SARY ARKA CINEMA**

July 21 at 7:30 p.m. Ordeal, Spectacle

July 28 at 7:30 p.m. Traviata, Spectacle

## PEOPLE

WEDNESDAY, JULY 15, 2015

## Yevgeny Primakov: "Kazakhstan Is Capable of Handling Everything"



Evgeny Primakov (R) and Ilyas Omarov

By Ilyas Omarov

At the end of June in Moscow, people bid final farewell to Yevgeny Primakov, a prominent Russian politician of global significance and scholar with colossal credibility in the Russian community and international arena who died June 26.

"The peacemaking activity of Yevgeny Primakov brought him true respect in many countries," noted Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev in his letter extending condolences on behalf of the people of Kazakhstan and his own behalf to all Primakov's relatives and friends.

Due to his work, Primakov was one of the more secret people of the former Soviet Union. He started as a journalist, then became director of the Institute of World Economy and International Relations, which prepared classified reports for the leadership of the country during the Soviet period. During the change of eras, he was sent by Mikhail Gorbachev and Boris Yeltsin to the Foreign Intelligence Service and later to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Afterwards, being the Prime Minister, Primakov had the task to save the country from the default of 1998 and he, an un-

professional economist, managed to do it.

Primakov can be easily called a developer and an active researcher of a new area of analytical work in international relations with direct translation into policy – situation analysis, which made it possible to forecast and preempt the emergence of various military, political and economic situations, including during conflict flare-ups in different regions of the planet.

Primakov left a great artistic heritage in the form of numerous monographs and memoirs, each of which can be considered as a handbook, especially for international relations specialists. These books have been translated into 14 languages. They are a kind of crib notes for young diplomats, where one can find an answer on an issue in the modern international relations system after rereading them from time to time.

A couple of years ago during his visit to our embassy in Moscow, I approached Primakov with one of these books, indicatively titled "The Minefield of Politics," asking for an autograph. Having heard my name, Primakov with a warm, fatherly smile said, "My son-in-law has the same name," and signed the book wishing all the best.

We had a brief conversation, during which I asked, "What do you think about the implementation of the Kazakhstan 2050 Strategy?" and my question was responded briefly, but at the same time exhaustively. Primakov described Kazakhstan as one of the fastest growing world economies which has all the conditions to be among leaders. "To this end," he said, "your country has all the conditions" and in particular Primakov named, "first, its political leader; second, intellectual capacity accumulated in Kazakhstan's society and finally, availability of mineral resources in Kazakhstan."

"I think Kazakhstan is capable of handling everything," summarised the maestro of world politics.

Despite the advanced years, Primakov was, as it is called, in a good creative and intellectual form. Just a couple of months ago, the shelves were hit by another of his books entitled "Meetings at the Crossroads," where besides recollections, Primakov published his poems written in different years.

One of them, as if reflecting Primakov's nature which we used to see, reads:

"...I am quashing in myself a slave, and working in three shifts,

However, I am the same in actions and in deeds."

In one of his latest interviews when he was asked "about the life spent," Primakov admitted, "Of course, I didn't go against the fate, but it guided me. As for the assessment of all; well, if all of this is nearing the end, I must say that I lived well."

**The author is the editor in chief of the Diplomatic Herald magazine and president of the Association of Sports Journalists of Kazakhstan.**

## Globe-Trotting Singer Hopes to Find Soul Music Audience in Kazakhstan

Continued from Page B1

He and Davidoff are working together on Barnett's first album in Pavlodar at the moment, with Davidoff providing saxophone segments. They have four songs done, Barnett reported in June, and he hopes to be finished by the end of the year.

As for how a black Hebrew might fit in to Kazakh culture, Barnett says there are more connections than meet the eye. "I was raised around Muslims, I was raised with Palestinians," he said. "I've got Muslim friends, I speak Arabic, I was raised in a dual society. I understand Muslims, and Jews. So I understand both traditions, cultures, belief systems. So therefore, I can fit."

So, the traveller is now settling into a new continent, and working on a new language, Russian. "I'm coming in, learning a different culture. The people are different; the people are good people," he said.

The weather, for the American-Israeli, is not as welcoming. "When I first got here, we landed and they were like, 'It's minus 20, it's a good day!' and I thought 'Twenty below is a good day? What have I done? Where am I?'"

But he intends to appreciate the beauty of the steppe, despite the chill. As Barnett said in an interview with Kazakh writer Nelly Kalashnikova in May, "I like the whole world. ... I would like us to learn to live with this beauty, which is us, the beauty of the differences. It would be very beautiful world, and we would be much stronger."



## Kazakhstan Chooses Winners of Second Int'l Journalism Contest

Continued from Page B1

"Kazakhstan is a country little known, but it also has one of the most extensive territories of the planet. The ninth-largest country in the world is itself the largest landlocked state," wrote the author.

"The cultural life of the capital is full of different festivals, celebrations of days of culture and international music competitions and choreography. In the city, there are the National Theatre of Opera and Ballet, the Kazakh Drama Theatre, the Russian Drama Theatre and the Museum of Modern Art as major cultural attractions," Armella wrote of Astana.

The winner among Middle Eastern and African journalists was Ahmed Abdu Tarabek, a journalist from Egypt, recognised for his article "Astana, a Modern Inter-

national Metropolis," published in the Pens and Books newspaper. The author wrote the following:

"[Astana] has become a political, economic and cultural centre, whose influence is growing both in Kazakhstan and in various regional spheres. Astana appeared before the world as a young capital situated at the crossroads of major world civilisations, as well as a bridge between East and West. The world has learned from the modern capital's model, which has achieved social and religious harmony and demonstrates its particular vision of solving global problems. UNESCO has recognised the status of Astana as 'the city of peace,' which confirms the dialogue being conducted at the conferences held in the modern international capital."

Marwan Zubaidi, representing Radio Republik Indonesia, took the top spot among journalists in

Asia and Oceania for his article "Kazakhstan Inspires the World, Including Indonesia."

"Kazakhstan is the 'Virgin Islands' that continues to develop ... because its territory is located in two highly developed regions in the world," Zubaidi wrote in his article. "The World Bank categorised Kazakhstan as a country with a majority of upper income people with a gross domestic product reaching \$231.9 billion in 2013. Besides, Kazakhstan is the 10th largest petroleum-producing country in the world and has reserves of crude oil estimated to reach 40 billion barrels or 1.8 percent of all world oil reserves," he added.

In addition, two runners-up from each region were selected to be awarded merit certificates.

The winners were chosen by a panel including Kazakh Minister of Foreign Affairs Erlan Idrissov,

President of the Union of Journalists of Kazakhstan Seitkazy Matayev and Chairman of the Committee for International Information of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Roman Vassilenko.

The five winners will be rewarded with a trip to Kazakhstan, including visits to Astana, Almaty, the Burabai resort area, sightseeing activities and a cultural programme, along with interview opportunities with Kazakhstan's senior government officials and leading academics and journalists.

The number of entrants to the contest increased by one third over last year and the number of countries of origin of participants increased by more than 50 percent.

Kazakh Foreign Minister Erlan Idrissov noted an increase in participation in the contest this year. For comparison, in the first

contest last year, 41 journalists from 23 countries took part. The number of applications increased by one third, and the geography of the contest by more than half.

According to the foreign minister, the geographical expansion of the contest "reflects the international community's growing interest in Kazakhstan."

"I am delighted that the Foreign Ministry's initiative is wholeheartedly backed by the Union of Journalists of Kazakhstan, and this, in my opinion, is a good example of constructive cooperation between public authorities and civil society," Idrissov added.

Matayev said the Kazakh media community welcomes projects that enhance Kazakhstan's image as a hospitable country open to the world. "We are glad to meet and get acquainted with colleagues who exhibit such a genuine interest in our country while adhering

to high standards of professionalism in coverage of international issues," Matayev said.

Partners and sponsors of this year's contest were Transaero Airlines, the Almaty Bid Committee for the Olympic and Paralympic Games in 2022 in Almaty, the Hilton Garden Inn Astana and Rixos Borovoe hotels, national railway company Kazakhstan Temir Zholy and transport company Argymak.

Last year's winners were journalists from Belgium, Malaysia, Qatar, Guyana and Ukraine. From September 15–20, 2014, they took a trip to Kazakhstan, in the course of which they had a series of meetings organised at the Foreign Ministry, the Secretariat of the Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions, the National Press Club, and Kazmedia Centre among others. They also toured Astana and Almaty.



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# CULTURE

WEDNESDAY, JULY 15, 2015

## Debutantes Take Floor for Seventh Opera Ball in Almaty

By Julia Rutz

The finest opera singers in the world were applauded June 27 during the Seventh Opera Ball, one of the most significant and pompous cultural events in Kazakhstan. The event was held in Almaty's Royal Tulip Hotel.

The Best Male Vocal award was presented to Metropolitan Opera soloist Ryan Speedo Green (USA), while Astana Opera soloist Alfiya Karimova (Kazakhstan) was named Best Female Opera Vocalist. Each winner, who received \$10,000 in prize money, was chosen among other six finalists, all of whom performed during the evening.

Speaking to the press after the ceremony, Karimova, who has won in 31 different international competitions during her career, said this award meant more to her than receiving an Oscar. She also announced she will not be participating in any other music competitions in the future. Green, a bass-baritone, noted it was an honour for him to be recognized.

The Opera Ball introduced an additional nomination for young local vocalists in 2014, naming Maria Mudryak as the most promising opera singer in the country. Beginning this year, the award is also open to foreign performers. The prominent jury members were Paris Opera House music director Jean-Philippe Thiellay, Vienna State Opera music direc-



Kazakhstan's debutantes promenade at the seventh Opera Ball in Almaty on June 27.

tor Thomas Lausmann, Arena di Verona Theatre art director Paolo Gavazzeni and Abai State Theatre of Opera and Ballet general director Askar Buribayev.

The evening started with a greeting ceremony of famous musicians, Opera Ball finalists and prominent businessmen gracing the red carpet. Guests were entertained by

actors from the Almaty-based ArtiShok Theatre who staged several scenes from Alexandr Pushkin's "Eugene Onegin," creating the atmosphere of the classic ball, and a

performance by the Imperial Russian Ballet dancers. The ceremony was led by Miss Universe 2014, Paulina Vega, and Imperial Russian Ballet head Gediminas Taranda.

One of the annual highlights is the dance performances by debutantes. Among 60 pairs this year were Miss Kazakhstan 2014, Regina Vandsheva, Kazakh singer Diaz Ablayev and Miss Almaty 2010, Saltanat Bekzhigitova.

"The ball debutantes are young, ambitious and talented young ladies and gentlemen who are ready to conquer the world and this event is an opportunity for them to take a step in this direction and become the best representatives of their generation," said one of the ball's organisers Marat Omarov.

Unfortunately, the headliner of the event, La Scala Theatre and tenor soloist Roberto Alagna, Mudryak and Almaty Akim (Mayor) Akhmetzhan Yessimov were unable to attend the ceremony. The evening ended with a live performance by Kazakh singer Polina Griffis.

The tradition of organising balls in Almaty began in 2007. Two years later, the Viennese Ball was renamed the Charity Ball and became one of the first large-scale projects promoted by the Eventica group of companies, represented by Marat Omarov and Anastasiya Lototskoya. Starting in 2014, the event has been called the Opera Ball and is aimed at marking talented opera singers throughout the world. The next ball will be held May 28, 2016 and according to the organisers they are planning to invite Jose Carreras, a leading tenor in the world of classical opera.

## Promising Young Pianist Beisembayev Wins First Cliburn Junior Competition



Alim Beisembayev

By Julia Rutz

Seventeen-year-old Kazakh pianist Alim Beisembayev won \$10,000 and first place at the first Cliburn International Junior Piano Competition on June 28 at Texas Christian University in Fort Worth, United States.

Arsenii Mun, 16, from Russia and Youlan Ji, 16, from China, won \$5,000 for second and \$2,500 for third respectively.

In the final, Beisembayev performed Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No. 1 in B-flat Minor, op. 23. An American publication reported that the performance was full of gentle grace and fiery passion that wowed the international jury of four women and two men.

Nobody in Beisembayev's family has been connected to the world of classical music and the father of the talented pianist works as an engineer. Talking to the press, the contestant said that when he was five years old, his father took him to a toy store where he found a little piano.

"I couldn't stop playing a toy piano. So, I've been playing the piano ever since," said Beisembayev.

His talent surprised his parents. However, they continued supporting their son and the toy piano was

quickly replaced by a real instrument. Beisembayev has attended music schools in Kazakhstan, Russia and Great Britain, where he is currently living, and received scholarships from all of them.

Beisembayev's parents admit they often doubted whether it was the right decision to introduce their only child to music, as they have no idea about this world. Nevertheless, Beisembayev's shining eyes and passion to play convinced them that this is the path he had to follow.

"Despite the 11-hour time difference, my parents watched the whole show live from Cowtown," said Beisembayev.

He also mentioned that the contest week was extremely stressful. A lot of work went into this and the performing part was really nerve-wracking.

Since 2010, Beisembayev has been a student of the British Purcell School for young musicians in London. He visits his parents three times per year and the rest of his time he devotes to music.

Kazakh musician Nurgul Tuleuova in an interview with Tengrinews.kz said that she has been following Beisembayev's career from his early childhood. She said that the young musician has always shown persistence

and perseverance in order to improve the art of his performance. According to Tuleuova, at the age of 10, Beisembayev won an international television competition for young musicians called The Nutcracker.

"From a professional point of view, he is an extremely gifted person and he has a great future. I hope the country doesn't forget its talented children, such as [Beisembayev], even when we see that real talent can always find a way to succeed," said Tuleuova.

Beisembayev remains almost unknown among the Kazakh public. There are almost no video or audio materials available about him or his performances. But his numerous scholarships, including the one provided by the Spivakov Foundation, as well as competition victories speak to his talents and bright future.

The Van Cliburn International Competition, established in 1962, is held every four years for pianists between the ages of 13 and 17, is the latest addition to the music contest. This year the competition showcased 23 musicians from 13 countries selected via online applications and video submissions.

## Writers Discuss State, Future of Kazakh Literature

By Julia Rutz

Kazakh Secretary of State Gulshara Abdikalikova held a meeting with prominent writers of the country, such as Akim Tarazi, Anes Sarai, Sabit Dosanov, Dulat Issabekov and Nurlan Orazalin in the Akorda Presidential Residence in early June.

Participants discussed literature, art, publishing and developing the country's spiritual culture. They also emphasised the important role of the Union of Writers of Kazakhstan in the process of the comprehensive modernisation of the nation.

In a welcoming speech, Abdikalikova quoted Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev who stressed the importance of Kazakh intellectuals as the driving force to strengthen national values. She also noted that Kazakhstan is an active participant in the process of globalisation, which is characterised by new technologies and innovative development, while working to preserve Kazakhstan's unique national mentality, culture and traditions. In this regard, a special place is given to Kazakh literature, which can be an indicator of a country's cultural and spiritual development.

Today, there are 16 branches of the Union of Writers of Kazakh-

stan throughout the country, which include representatives of Kazakh, Russian, Uighur, Uzbek, Korean and other ethnic groups represented in the country. The union has established its own newspaper "Kazakh Literature" and several journals to improve public awareness of modern Kazakh literature and support young Kazakh writers.

During the meeting, the intellectuals proposed ideas to promote Kazakh literature and individual, highly valued works among the Kazakh public.

At the end of the meeting, Abdikalikova gave a number of specific instructions to state bodies to implement the ideas that had been proposed.

## Almaty Hard Rock Cafe Opens with Rock Show

By Julia Rutz

Hard Rock Cafe, the world famous chain of theme restaurants, has enlarged its presence around the globe by opening a venue in the heart of Almaty. Although the eatery has been entertaining locals and guests of the southern capital with good classic rock ballads and delicious American casual dining food since 2014, the grand opening show was held this year with a June 13 event at the Baluan Sholak Sports Palace.

The audience was warmed up by the winners of the Hard Rock Rising project, Almaty band iFly and Astana rockers from City Love. Despite the great atmosphere and successful stage presence of the young musicians, the guests were anxious for the headliners, Russian music legends Mumiy Troll and Maschina Vremeni. Both bands performed their classic hits, creating the atmosphere of a nostalgic night of memories and reveries. After the show, the musicians met with fans, giving autographs and taking pictures with the grateful followers.

"We are tired, but so happy. The public is great here. We have had a good relationship with Almaty for many years. This is not just friendship anymore, it is already love," said Mumiy Troll frontman Ilya Lagutenko after the performance.



He also invited Kazakh musicians to take part in his annual music festival V-Rocks, which will take place Aug. 23-30 in Vladivostok, Russia. The festival was first launched in 2013 and gathered performers from Japan, South Korea, China, South Africa, the U.S. and Russia.

One of the most vivid moments of the show was the guitar smashing ritual. Lagutenko and frontman Andrey Makarevich, as well as Hard Rock International President Hamish Dodds, chain vice president Antonio Bautista and Almaty Hard Rock Café representatives, wrecked seven instruments on the stage.

"People came today to celebrate this remarkable event with us and feel the real 'rocking' atmosphere. We will continue celebrating tomorrow, as June 14 is the day when the

brand was established," said one of the local restaurant's representatives.

Talking about future plans, Bautista noted Astana may become the next location for the iconic restaurant, as the city is expecting an influx of people for EXPO 2017.

"We expect to enlarge our chain by opening ten locations around the world every year. Tbilisi, Georgia and Baku, Azerbaijan will be the next. The Hard Rock Cafe will also come to St. Petersburg, making this city the second location in Russia after Moscow," he said.

Hard Rock Cafe has 198 locations, including restaurants, hotels, casinos and live music venues in 63 nations throughout the world. Kazakhstan became the 59th country where the legendary eatery opened its doors to the public.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 15, 2015

# Analytics School to be Established under the Library of First President

By Talgat Issenov

ASTANA – Deputy Director of the Library of the First President Timur Shaymergenov announced during a recent Central Communication Service (CCS) media briefing in Astana plans to establish an analytics school within the institution.

“We are planning to create an analytics school during the next three-five years. This institution will be aimed at training experts in different specialisations. They will be taught within the frames of the best international standards. Unfortunately, we experience a lack of such professionals today in Kazakhstan,” said Shaymergenov.

The speaker also noted remark-

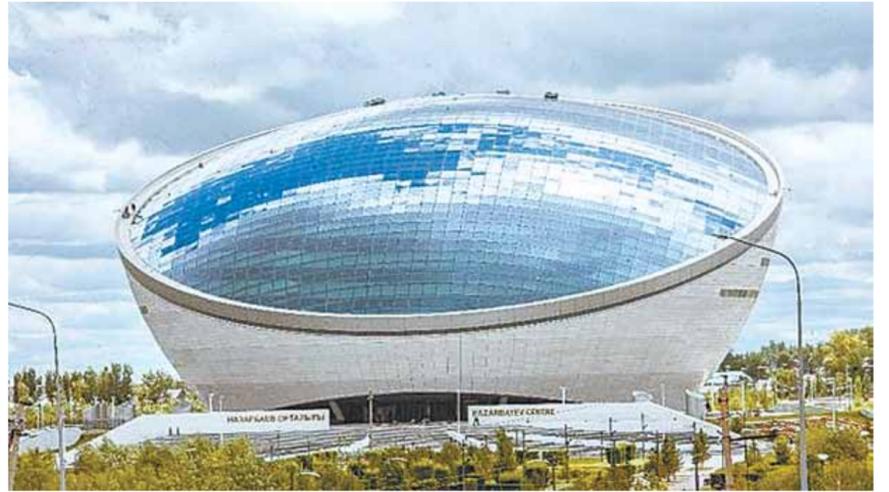
able international activity at the library, as it has held dozens of meetings with representatives of foreign centres and conducted more than 150 important events. Library representatives have participated in the Third Forum of Cooperation between China and Central Asia.

The Library of the First President was founded on March 13, 2014, in accordance with the Decree of President Nursultan Nazarbayev. It is meant to ensure the management of the personal library and archive of the President, as well as to help explore the history of the country and to promote the ideas and initiatives of the President within the country and abroad.

The library offers more than

19,100 book editions and more than 1,000 copies of periodicals and electronic publications. A new book by President Nazarbayev called “Mangilik El. Years that are Equal to Ages. The Era that is Equal to Centuries” is among recently received publications at the library.

The library has also rare and collectible editions, such as the album with sketches of Leonardo da Vinci, presented to the head of state in Milan, a Koran that was taken once to the space, an encyclopedic dictionary issued in 1838, which represents several references to Abul Khair Khan, and other interesting publications. The library will be open for initial visits July 1–10.



The Nazarbayev Centre building that houses the Library of the First President.

# New City Centre to Be Built in Karaganda



By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – A new city centre in Karaganda will be built under the corresponding city development plan accepted at a recent meeting. The effort will be directed by Karaganda Region first deputy akim (governor) Assylbek Duisseybayev.

“Everything the modern world already has – spacious parking lots, other communications, – can’t be constructed in the old city. That is why these problems have to be solved using a new site and after that, we will have good conditions for management. These conditions are crucial not only for the city, but also for the whole region,” said development plan author Karim Tusupbekov, according to 24.kz.

Duysseybayev supported Tusupbekov’s plan.

“It is not a secret that there is no five-star hotel in Karaganda. Negotiations have been held for decades, but investors don’t come here. The preliminary agreement is finally concluded and the project has to be realised,” he said.

Construction of a new centre on a vacant territory was planned a while ago, but only now has it been discussed so closely to the actual work. The project is not just ambitious, but is a real necessity. The present city centre does not have space for new buildings, as it is situated between a railroad and mines, constantly leading to heavy traffic on central streets.

Architects feel the new centre will become a historic part of the mining capital. The first build-

ings will be constructed this year and city planners intend to connect the southeast residential and Maykuduk industrial districts. Construction will be financed by the state budget and private companies.

Located between Respublika Avenue and Golubie Prudy, the centre will have an up-to-date trade and entertainment complex with a five-star hotel, a children and youth palace, an innovative library with interactive modern art museum, a kindergarten and a school for 1,200 students.

The city development plan also previews construction of several kindergartens, two schools, a children’s hospital, a sports centre and renovation of the park and precincts, as well as road reconstruction. The plan also includes modernising markets, opening small businesses, establishing a pharmaceutical complex, constructing a concert hall and transport junctions and creating a state-owned bus fleet.

The city has already purchased 28 new ambulances and their operation is 100 percent financed. In addition, the project has plans to reconstruct the city heating system, as well as to build a 30,000-seat football stadium according to Union of European Football Associations (UEFA) requirements. All the measures will contribute to Karaganda’s development and create new jobs.

# New City Tour Buses Help Visitors Rediscover Shymkent

By Julia Rutz

Tourists and locals wishing to see the sights of Shymkent this summer can tour the urban area aboard one of two new double-decker buses. Purchased by Zhibek Zholy, the two-storey vehicles take guests and locals past some of the city’s most important points and attractions.

“We need to develop domestic tourism and these buses are a step towards the goal. We have a lot of beautiful places that remain unknown for many visitors, as they don’t have enough time or just cannot get there. The tourist bus project will allow visiting everything worth seeing at once,” said head of the South Kazakhstan region Department of Business and Tourism Bauyrzhan Omarbekov.

According to Zhibek Zholy owner

Assel Ibokhodzhayeva, the buses have already become a favourite attraction for the people. Each bus has 66 seats, and tickets are typically sold out every day.

“This is not a commercial, but a patriotic project. The idea was born in our family after having visited several countries. We thought Shymkent deserves to be presented to visitors, as the city is developing and growing every year. We are glad to see that buses are much in demand among the population,” said Ibokhodzhayeva.

The two-hour trips are available every evening except Monday. The route starts next to the city’s techno park, where passengers can also buy tickets. A standard ticket is 500 tenge (US\$2.68); children under 14, 400 tenge (US\$2.14) and youngsters under six ride free.

The bus takes passengers past Fantasy World Park, Shamshi Avenue, the Zher Ana and Baidibek monuments, park of independence, arboretum and new administrative and business centre, as well as the city circus and Abai Park. During the trip, guests are offered an audio guide available in five different languages. They learn about the history of Shymkent, which is a regional centre and one of the oldest cities in the country, and hear interesting facts mixed with old myths and local legends.

At the opening ceremony of the tour route, Deputy Mayor Kairat Nurtai noted the project will promote the development of domestic and social tourism while also stressing the importance of education among the younger generation and stimulating their desire to learn more about the history of their country.



# Second Stage Completed in Steppe Eagle 2015 Peacekeeping Exercise, New Nations Participate

By Aiman Turebekova

ASTANA – The second phase of the Steppe Eagle 2015 peacekeeping exercises was completed June 25 at Iliskiy training area near Almaty, reported the Kazakh Ministry of Defence press service.

A feature of the second phase of the Steppe Eagle 2015 exercises was the preparation of the headquarters of peacekeeping units in the form of command and staff training. Soldiers and officers of KAZBRIG, KAZBAT 1 and KAZBAT 2 during the first week were trained on the simulators of the military decision-making process. Command-staff computer-simulation training took place by using the JCATS software programme. The programme manages the process on the computer, including planning, management and the application of units without the expense of motor sources and ammunition and the carrying out of the planned operation.

The second stage of annual peacekeeping exercises involved representatives from seven countries, including the United States of America, the United Kingdom, Afghanistan, Nepal, Kyrgyzstan,



Tajikistan and Turkey. Soldiers from Afghanistan, Nepal and Turkey took part in the exercises for the first time.

During the peacekeeping operations, the practical skills of KAZBRIG and KAZBAT staffs were tested as well as the skills to manage and control units in the planning civil-military interaction, demobilisation, disarmament and the reconciliation of warring parties. Furthermore, interoperability between Kazakhstan peacekeeping brigades with the soldiers of

the participating countries has developed due to the Partnership for Peace programme.

This year marked the 13th time the exercise was held. The first exercise took place in 2003 as a trilateral drill involving troops from Kazakhstan, the U.K. and the U.S. and the expanded exercises have been held annually since. More than 1,500 people as well as military observers from foreign states, experts from various NATO headquarters and military-diplomatic corps accredited in Kazakhstan participated in the exercises.

The annual Steppe Eagle exercise series is designed to prepare the Kazakh armed forces to join international peacekeeping exercises led by NATO or the United Nations.

The Kazakh Ministry of Defence press release highlighted further that international participants noted the high level of training of Kazakh peacekeepers and the coherence in joint military operations with foreign forces.

“Last year, the Kazakh delegation visited Nepal Army Birendra Peace Operations Training Centre (BPOTC), where representatives of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Kazakhstan became familiar with the history of the centre, its goals and objectives, training programmes, as well as took part in a meeting with Chief of General Staff Pradeep Bikram Rana and Chief of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations Brigadier General Jan Piyar Thapa. I think that in the future the military cooperation between our countries will develop,” said the representative of the Armed Forces of the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal Lieutenant Colonel Shah Navindra.

# Nearly 400 Families Receive Affordable Housing in Uralsk

Staff Report

Nearly 400 families in the Uralsk region’s Priuralye area received keys to state-funded affordable housing apartments as part of the country’s Astana Day celebrations.

Arman Utegulov, deputy akim (governor) of the region, noted that the Affordable Housing Programme initiated by President Nursultan Nazarbayev not only provides homes but helps create workplaces and boosts the construction industry. A children’s hospital, kindergarten and sports and wellness complex were built along with three multi-storey housing buildings for residents in Zachagansk village. This region was second after Astana in the amount of units constructed, according to the regional department of construction.

The restoration of damaged housing, which has been a problem in the Uralsk region, is also being addressed through public and

private partnerships. Some of the apartments in newly built buildings are given away to residents who live in substandard housing, while the rest of them are sold at the market price.

Altai Kulginov, akim (mayor) of Uralsk, thanked construction companies CB-Plus and Otdelstroi for building housings on time and of excellent quality. “Karachaganak Petroleum Operating allocates substantial resources for social projects and involves only Kazakh companies for cooperation. Orders from KPO enabled [staffs to reach] a new level in terms of work operation,” the Otdelstroi Director Valentina Mikhno told the Kazpravda newspaper. Mikhno mentioned that the company already built three houses through the programme and is working on the fourth.

Apartment housings in Uralsk are built for depositors of House Construction Savings Bank (Zhilstroisberbank), people on waiting lists and young families.

# SOCIETY

WEDNESDAY, JULY 15, 2015

## German Society for Int'l Cooperation Shares Development Assistance Experience

By Aiman Turebekova

ASTANA – As the current global federal enterprise for international cooperation in the field of sustainable development, the German Society for International Cooperation (GIZ) is supporting the German federal government in achieving its objectives.

GIZ operates throughout Germany and in more than 130 countries worldwide in many fields: economic development and employment promotion; governance and democracy; security, reconstruction, peace building and civil conflict transformation; food security, health and basic education and environmental protection, resource conservation and climate change mitigation.

Since the early 1990s, GIZ has been implementing sustainable development projects and programmes in Kazakhstan, initially on behalf of German public sector clients, but increasingly also for international and private sector clients. Its first office was opened in 1996 and today there are offices in both Astana and Almaty.

GIZ is supporting the Kazakh government in the fields of sustainable economic development, education and vocational training, good governance, the environment and climate as well as health.



Jörg Pudelka

There is no doubt that GIZ is a well-experienced organisation and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Kazakhstan invited a delegation from GIZ to share its skills.

Kazakhstan is planning to announce the launch of KazAID, a body to fund and promote development projects in Central Asia and the wider region. Germany has been one of the world's largest bilateral donors for the past two decades. According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) report, in 2013 Germany provided \$14.1 billion in official development assistance (ODA) according to preliminary data, a 3-percent increase in real terms from 2012 due to a rise in bilateral lending and higher contributions to inter-

national organisations. It is the third largest donor of the OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC) in terms of volume.

The Astana Times had the opportunity to interview GIZ Programme Director Jörg Pudelka. Pudelka has worked as an expert on constitutional law matters in an EU-funded project in the Russian Federation, then as project manager in Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan in the GIZ Programme Support for Legal and Judicial Reform in Central Asia. Currently, he is the director of the GIZ Regional Programme Promotion of the Rule of Law in Central Asia, which covers Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

**What is the value of ODA in the modern world?**

GIZ is an implementation agency; that means we are responsible for the technical aspects of official development assistance.

In Germany, it is the Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development that sets the policies for official development assistance. On the ministry's website ([www.bmz.de](http://www.bmz.de)), you can find more information on the value of ODA for Germany in the modern world.

GIZ is an experienced service provider and assists the German

government in achieving its objectives in the field of international cooperation. The organisation operates in many fields: economic development and employment promotion; governance and democracy; security, reconstruction, peace building and civil conflict transformation; food security, health and basic education and environmental protection, resource conservation and climate change mitigation.

**Could you share GIZ's experience in Kazakhstan? What are the major goals (missions) of the organisation in Central Asia?**

GIZ supports the government of Kazakhstan in the fields of sustainable economic development, education and vocational training, good governance and the rule of law, the environment and climate, as well as health. We operate in Kazakhstan on behalf of the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), the Federal Foreign Office, the Federal Ministry of the Interior (BMI), the Federal Office of Administration, the Federal Ministry of Health (BMG), the Federal Ministry of Economics and Technology (BMWi) and the European Commission by implementing specific projects in these fields. For example, we have advised the

drafting group on the new civil procedure code. We have also advised schools in developing their curricula.

GIZ has been active in Kazakhstan since the early 1990s (until 2010 under the name of GTZ). Thus, we could experience the development this country has undergone first hand. As this country has changed, so has the nature of our cooperation. While in the past it has been a recipient of aid, Kazakhstan is now an important partner for us in shaping the future of development cooperation, especially in Central Asia.

Kazakhstan was recently classified as an upper middle income country. KazAID is the first ODA programme among the Central Asian states and one that will begin with a neighbourhood focus.

**What prospects do you see for the KazAID programme?**

It is always good for us to see when recipients of aid become donors themselves. In the course of its many years of experience in all fields of development work, GIZ has already witnessed similar developments in other countries. In Saudi Arabia, Mexico and the new European Union (EU) member states, for example, we already cooperate with new ODA agencies. We hope that KazAID, too, will

become a partner for us in implementing projects in the future.

**How do you feel about working in Kazakhstan?**

I think Kazakhstan is a very exciting place to be at the moment. So much is happening; the country is going through a huge and fast-paced transformation process. You can really observe how Kazakhstan is changing.

In this transformation process, development of a system based on the rule of law plays an important part. For me as a lawyer, this provides the unique opportunity to be part of creating something new. While the legal system here already has clear tendencies towards the continental European traditions, we still have to make sure that new rules can be successfully implemented within the local setting and adapt them accordingly.

In particular, it is important to counteract forces that try to extricate Kazakhstan from the continental European legal sphere. For one, I am absolutely convinced that our shared continental European inheritance – which goes back as far as concerns private law (and thus the economically most-significant field of law) to ancient Roman times – has immense advantages compared to the Anglo-Saxon legal systems. But even disregarding this, a conversion to common law would delay Kazakhstan's further development for years. Insofar, one can only hope that Kazakhstan will continue on its path of legal reform. In this, GIZ will always be happy to lend its support.

## Chevron Empowers Women of Akmola Oblast to Do Business

By Bauyrzhan Barlybayev

The economic empowerment of women and the promotion of small- and medium-sized businesses are important elements of Chevron's social investments in Kazakhstan. In 2015, Chevron launched a new social investment project, Can-Do Women, focused on developing women's business potential in rural areas of the Akmola region. The project, implemented in partnership with the Union of Women Entrepreneurs of Kazakhstan, was supported by the National Commission for Women's Affairs and Family and Demographic Policy under the President of Kazakhstan.

The goal of the initiative is to provide women with counseling and mentorship assistance in developing businesses. Through a series of trainings, master classes and roundtable discussions in the regions, the project will help equip women with information on how



Meruert Kazbekova

to use financial tools to create or advance their businesses.

Union Chairwoman and member of the Mazhilis of the Parliament of the Republic of Kazakhstan Meruert Kazbekova commented that "the most topical issue for business today is our access to financial resources. That is why it is important to create a platform for dialogue to support rural women's entrepreneurship."

In addition, the project helps women enhance their financial

literacy as well as business and personnel management skills. Participants will then be able to apply for small grants to implement a socially important business idea.

Chevron's support for the project was based on the principle that small- and medium-sized businesses are the foundation for economic growth in any country. "Our company pays great attention to the development of entrepreneurship," said Chevron's Public Affairs Specialist Zhanar Koshpanova. "Earlier, we implemented a retraining programme for unemployed women. Within five years, thousands of women managed new specialties and started businesses, including mini-bakeries, kindergartens, barbershops, seamstress shops, etc. We hope that this programme will also be successful. We believe that with our assistance, women in Kazakhstan will not only improve their financial status, but also help other women, and these would ultimately contribute to the economic growth of our country."

## Almaty Café Opens with Mentally Challenged Employees



Alexey Kapustin is interviewed about his job. Photo: Vlast.kz.

Continued from Page B1

"Some of them don't know how to count, because they haven't had a full school education. Even two plus two is a great challenge for them, but we work on this," said Mergenbayeva. "But they do their work and thanks to our training, now everything is alright."

Each employee has his or her own

duties and responsibilities, such as Alexey, a street sweeper, Zhuldyz, a waiter, and Madina, a cleaner.

"All of them work on a shift basis, but labour training isn't the only thing we are doing here," added Mergenbayeva. "Usually they work only from 1 p.m. till 3p.m. and they are trained by a professional psychologist the rest of the time."

The café had financial problems in the beginning as there were not enough patrons and the income was sufficient only to pay the salary of the cook, she said. The situation has greatly improved thanks to people who visit, have lunch and support the operation.

Mergenbayeva is very optimistic, noting extensive plans to open similar cafés in Kazakhstan's big cities such as Astana, Shymkent, Karaganda and others, because people with mental illness live in every urban area. The most significant issue is rent, but the assistance of the Soros Foundation, coupled with a large discount by the owner, has helped the fledgling eatery.

"Rent for a good place with good publicity is expensive. We are supported by the Soros Foundation, which helped us to pay for six-month's rent in advance," she said. "The rent contract will expire in the end of October and we hope that after that we will continue working."

## Czech Development Cooperation Experience Could Be Useful for KazAID

By Aiman Turebekova

ASTANA – The Czech Republic is a relatively young actor in the community of nations rendering development assistance beyond its borders. It has already accumulated more than two decades of work in this field, however, and can therefore be of interest as a potential role model in Kazakhstan's attempt to launch a national operator of official development assistance (ODA) under the brand KazAID.

Therefore, Czech Development Agency Deputy Director Martin Naprstek was invited to share his country's experience in the field with Kazakh government officials under the joint training programme run by the United Nations Development Programme and Kazakhstan's Foreign Ministry.

The Czech ODA system underwent a significant transformation from 2008-2012, which progressively transferred bilateral development activities and projects to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) that were previously managed by nine different ministries. As a result, development cooperation has become an important component of Czech foreign policy. The country supports implementing development projects, offers scholarships enabling students to enrol at Czech universities and provides humanitarian aid, as well as a number of related activities. At the same time, it actively participates in international organisations that deal with issues of developing countries.

The Astana Times used Naprstek's visit to Astana to ask questions about the Czech ODA programme and his opinion about the prospects of KazAID.

**On what kinds of projects does the Czech ODA focus?**

The principles of Czech development cooperation are based on some important and internationally-recognised documents – mainly on the European Consensus on Development (2005), the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness (2005), the Accra Agenda for Action (2008) and the Busan Partnership for Effec-



Martin Naprstek

tive Development Cooperation (2011).

According to the Development Cooperation Strategy of the Czech Republic (2010-2017), our bilateral projects are focused mainly on eradication of poverty, economic and social development, environmental protection and promotion of democracy, human rights and good governance in developing countries.

Our sectorial priorities are based on the Czech Republic's comparative advantages and currently we are primarily active in environment, agriculture, education, social and health services and economic development.

In 2014, the Czech Development Agency implemented more than 120 projects in 14 countries in cooperation with Czech private companies, NGOs, universities and other partners.

**Afghanistan has been included among priority programme countries for development cooperation in the strategy of the Czech Development Cooperation for 2010-2017. What are the priority sectors of Czech development cooperation in Afghanistan?**

The Islamic Republic of Afghanistan has long been among the foreign policy priorities of the Czech Republic and, as such, has also been included among priority programme countries for development cooperation. The Czech Republic's

development cooperation there is currently focused mainly on agriculture (which provides a livelihood to about 80 percent of the Afghan population) – particularly through support for small farms and the introduction of modern farming methods. We are also active in agricultural education – including teacher training, the creation of school curricula and the cooperation of academic and state institutions. However, the implementation of standard development assistance in Afghanistan would require improvements in the security situation in the future.

**As you know, Kazakhstan is planning to establish its own ODA programme to implement development projects in Central Asia and the wider region and establishing KazAID would help build a more stable and secure environment. What prospects do you see for the KazAID programme?**

**KazAID should be using its good knowledge of local and regional issues and problems and also experiences from the recent development and economic success of Kazakhstan.**

As [being run by] an important actor in the region of Central Asia, KazAID should be using its good knowledge of local and regional issues and problems and also experiences from the recent development and economic success of Kazakhstan. On a larger scale – and as a member of the international donor community – the Republic of Kazakhstan should actively take part in efforts aimed mainly at eradication of poverty and social and economic development in developing countries all over the world.

NATION&CAPITAL

# TOURISM

WEDNESDAY, JULY 15, 2015

## Southern Thai Tourism Destinations Hope for Direct Flights from Kazakhstan



Photo: tourismthailand.org

By Michelle Witte

ASTANA – Two of southern Thailand's biggest tourism centres, Phuket Province and Koh Samui of Surat Thani province, joined the "Amazing Road Show to Kazakhstan 2015" campaign to open new tourist markets and establish direct

flights to the regions, the National News Bureau of Thailand reported.

Tens of thousands of Kazakhs travel to Phuket each year, said Vice President of the Phuket Tourism Association Bhuritt Maswongssa, according to the report. Most come in the high season and travel by charter flight. Opening a direct flight between the countries

would promote year round tourism, not only in the high season, and thereby increase tourism numbers overall.

Representatives of the Phuket Tourism Association were to meet with Air Astana representatives on June 17 to discuss the possibility of an Astana-Phuket flight. On June 19, the Thai tourism delegates

were to meet with Kazakh officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to discuss tourism between the two nations and other forms of cooperation, the Thai news outlet said.

The Amazing Road Show campaign, held from June 15–20 in Almaty and Astana, was organised by the Tourism Association of Thailand.

In December 2014, Air Astana launched a twice-a-week direct flight from Astana to Bangkok, but the flight does not operate year round. Direct flights between Almaty and Bangkok were launched in 2003.

According to data on tourism from the World Bank, 26 million people travelled to Thailand as tourists in 2013. Kazakhstan's outbound tourism has grown steadily over the past decade, with more than 10 million people travelling out of the country on leisure last year, according to the World Bank.

## Air Astana Adds Seven Planes for International Flights



By Julia Rutz

The largest Kazakh aviation company Air Astana signed an agreement on June 16 in Paris-Le Bourget to lease seven aircraft, including two A320neo, one A321neo and four long-range A321neo LR planes. The aircraft will be delivered by American Air Lease Corporation (Los Angeles), reported the press service of Air Astana company.

The first A320neo aircraft is expected to arrive in Kazakhstan in spring 2016, while other planes will be delivered during 2018 and 2019. A320neo airliners will offer domestic flights as well as international routes to China, India, Russia and the United Arab Emirates. The A321neo LR can carry out long-haul flights, including those from Astana to London and from Almaty to Bangkok, Ho Chi Minh City and Hong Kong.

"A320 airbus has proved its exceptional performance in operation for the past nine years. It also has an attractive appearance, low operating costs, high reliability and high levels of security. The new generation aircraft A320neo provides a significant

improvement in comfort, efficiency and operational capabilities, especially during long-haul flights between Asia and Europe," said Air Astana President, Peter Foster.

It was reported that A320neo has 16 seats in business class and 132 seats in economy class. The A321neo has 28 seats in business class and 151 seats in economy class and the A321neo LR offers 16 seats in business class and 150 seats in economy class. All new airliners will be equipped with individual entertainment systems in both classes.

Air Astana is a joint venture of the Samruk Kazyna Sovereign Wealth Fund and BAE Systems with respective shares of 51 percent and 49 percent. The aviation company launched regular flights on May 15, 2002 and has a route network that includes more than 60 international and domestic flights operated from major hubs of the country located in Almaty, Astana and Atyrau. The fleet consists of 30 Western-made aircraft, such as Boeing 767-300ER, Boeing 757-200, Airbus A320 and Embraer E190.

## Almaty Celebrates Alpinad Fest with Mass Climbing of Abai Peak

By Aiman Turebekova

More than 250 people celebrated Alpinad July 4 by climbing Abai Peak in the Zailiisky Alatau mountain range. The organisers dedicated the event to the 170th anniversary of the great Kazakh literary figure Abai Kunanbaiuly, whose name was given to the 4,010-metre peak near Almaty. The festival also marked the 20th anniversary of President Nursultan Nazarbayev's ascent to the summit, reported Kazpravda.kz.

Popular in a number of post-Soviet countries, Alpinad features a mass climbing of a particular summit. The tradition originated in 1933 when 58 people scaled Europe's highest peak, Mount Elbrus in the Caucasus.

"The event was held in order to attract people to the active forms of recreation and development and popularisation of climbing.

Everyone without age restrictions and with a good physical condition was invited to participate," according to a press release from Almaty akimat (city administration).

Alpinad started at 6 a.m. from the Shymbulak Ski Resort (2,200 metres), continuing through Talgar Pass (3,200 metres) and Bogdanovich Glacier to the top of Abai Peak. The event, completed under the supervision of climbers and trainers, ended at 2 p.m. The day was organised by Almaty akimat, the Kazakh National Olympic Committee, Almaty Department of Physical Culture and Sports and Kazakhstan Mountaineering Club.

Participants were excited about the event and shared comments on their Facebook and Twitter accounts. Popular Kazakh blogger Kuat Dombai noted there were many foreigners on the mountain, including individuals from Russia, China and Western countries. He

admitted to being late to the start, causing him to get stuck in a "traffic jam" on the mountain heel created by a line of climbers waiting for their turn to scale the summit.

"Having stood for two hours ... buckled with a safety carabiner and having had only a sandwich with kazy (horse sausage) for breakfast, I divided the number of those in

line to a speed of ascent and had to resort to a shameful escape. No hope for me. Today Abai won, but I will be back, God willing, 'cause nothing compares to this pill of excitement, pure adrenaline, karmic closeness to God and the charge for the whole week. It is a blessing of God," Dombai enthusiastically commented on his Facebook page.



Kuat Dombai and other climbers at the 2015 Alpinad. Photo from Kuat Dombai.

## Expedition Launches to Visit Previous Kazakh Capitals



By Dmitry Lee

ASTANA – An international expedition to highlight the 550th anniversary of the Kazakh Khanate and the upcoming Astana Day on July 6 has been launched in Uralsk, BNews.kz reported on June 22.

"One of the main issues of national history is the emergence, formation and development of the state," said head of the expedition and Director of the Regional Centre of History and Archaeology Murat Sdykov. "For the Kazakhs, this process originates from the time of forming the nomadic civilisation and culture that formed the main characteristics of the economic-cultural type, the foundations of language, traditions and customs. The statehood was the result of a long nomadic, tribal, ethno-political evolution in the

vast territory in the 15th century that has become the foundation of the formation of the Kazakh ethnic group," he added.

The expedition will go from Uralsk to Atyrau, Saraishyk, Urda, Orenburg and will return back to Uralsk. All the cities along the itinerary were, at different points in Kazakh history, capitals. Saraishyk was the capital of the Kazakh Khanate in the beginning of the 18th century; Urda was the capital of the Bukeyev Khanate in the middle of the 19th century and Orenburg was an administrative centre of the Kazakh Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic from 1922 to 1925.

"Celebrations of the 550th anniversary of the Kazakh Khanate give Russian historians a unique opportunity to pay attention to these important dates based on

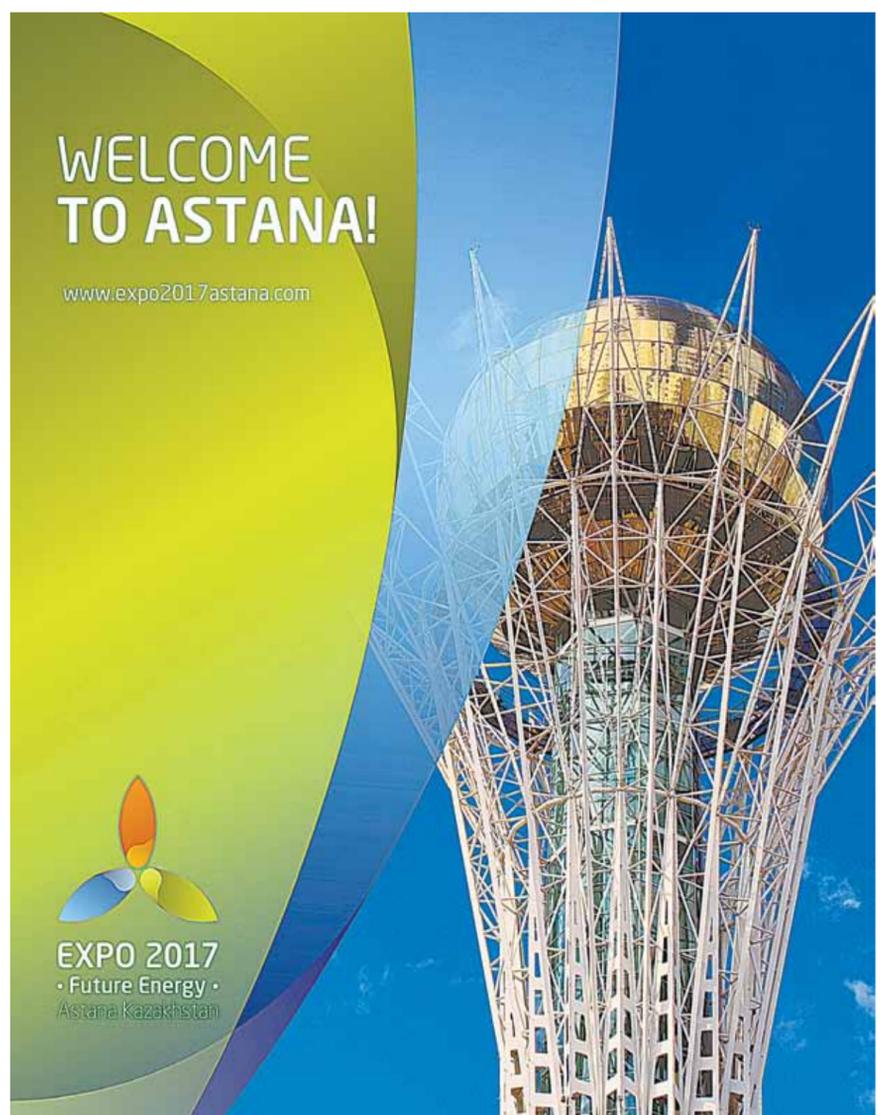
modern scientific cooperation," said Denis Maryskin, a scientist at the Western Kazakhstan Public Fund of Science and Education. "A scientific expedition could help scholars hold an active exchange of opinions and relative questions," he concluded.

The public fund Akzhol with the support of the Uralsk city administration, Atyrau Dosmukhamedov State University and the Western Kazakhstan Centre of History and Archaeology are among the organisers of the exhibition.

Celebrations and events have been held this year to mark the 550th anniversary of the Kazakh Khanate. The Khanate was founded by Kazakh sultans Kerei and Zhanybek. The Kazakh Khanate lasted until the 19th century before it was joined to the Russian Empire.

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## SPORTS

WEDNESDAY, JULY 15, 2015

## Sagymbayev Appointed Astana Barys First Head Coach from Kazakhstan

By Arsen Dilim

Despite the fact that hockey season ended a few weeks ago, news about Astana's favourite team sport is exciting fans in the midst of summer.

News recently spread quickly among the hockey world that the head coach of Barys Andrei Nazarov had accepted an invitation to lead SKA Saint Petersburg, current holders of Gagarin Cup.

As a consequence, there was a vacancy in the place of the head coach of Kazakhstan's only representative in the Continental Hockey League (KHL). There were



Yerlan Sagymbayev

many predictions on who would be named to the spot. Most pundits expected another foreign specialist

to be appointed. However, on June 22, the team owners announced the appointment of Yerlan Sagymbayev, the club's first ever home-grown coach.

Sagymbayev is well-known to local fans. The 45-year-old has experience as a player in a number of clubs like Torpedo Ust-Kamenogorsk, Avtomobilist Karaganda, Avangard Omsk, Metallurg Novokuznetsk and Siberia Novosibirsk. He also captained Team Kazakhstan at the Olympic Games in Nagano 1998. Those were the national team's first Olympic Games, and it did spectacularly well, reaching the quarterfinals, the highest

achievement in Kazakhstan hockey's history.

Due to health problems, Sagymbayev had to end his career early. However, he has gained some notable experience in Kazakhstan hockey as a coach and has proven himself to be a solid specialist. Before Barys he led Torpedo Ust-Kamenogorsk, Sary-Arka Karaganda and Irtysh Pavlodar. He was a member of the coaching staff of hockey clubs Snezhnye Barys and Barys. Sagymbayev also coached the national team.

It remains only to wish good luck to the new man at the helm of Astana's most favoured club.

## Kairat Eliminates Former Euro Champions, Other Kazakh Clubs Less Lucky as Europa League Starts

By Galiaskar Seitzhan

ASTANA – The European football season started for three Kazakh contenders with the first qualification round of the Europa League on July 2 and 9. Two of them, FC Aktobe and FC Ordabasy Shymkent failed to deliver in the two-leg ties against Estonian and Israeli clubs respectively. Kairat Almaty, however, accomplished a remarkable victory against Crvena Zvezda, also known as Red Star Belgrade, winners of the 1991 European Champions Cup.

The first among the three Kazakh clubs, FC Aktobe is a joint record holder, along with FC Irtysh Pavlodar, in term of national championship titles won – five. The club is considered in Kazakhstan to be the one with the most experience in European tournaments and is believed to have a solid budget and strong line-up. Therefore, it was a big surprise when the west Kazakhstan club lost the first match on home soil against a lesser-known and less funded Estonian club MJ Nõmme Kalju 0-1. Despite clear domination on the field and creating many more scoring chances than the opponents, Aktobe failed to hit its target and allowed a goal in an attack by the guests. The situation repeated in the second leg, and, thanks to a goalless draw in Tallinn, it was the Estonian team who progressed to the second round.

FC Ordabasy Shymkent had a more experienced opposition in Beitar Jerusalem, a six-time champion of the Israeli football league. The first game in Kazakhstan ended with a dull 0-0. At the Teddy stadium, in the holy city of three religions, Beitar proved to be the stronger side and won 2-1, although the Ordabasy had their chances to snatch away the victory on the away goals rule.

Last year's runners up in the domestic league, FC Kairat Almaty had the toughest draw out of three Kazakh contenders, facing the Serbian giants Crvena Zvezda. The Belgrade club has an impressive history of victories in Europe, including the European Champions Cup in 1991. It is also known for an impressive army of fans known well beyond Serbia's borders for their passionate, and sometimes aggressive, support of their club. A

few of its current squad's youngest players last month became world champions after beating their Brazilian peers in the FIFA U20 World Cup final in New Zealand. Therefore, the Serbs were clear favourites to win the tie. However, Kairat managed a surprise 2-0 away victory. The host players were quick to explain the loss with bad luck and "arbitrary rulings" from the match's Polish referee as he showed one of the Red Star's defenders a red card in the early minutes of the game.

The return leg on Almaty's Central Stadium became an impressive display of loyalty from the Kairat's fans who turned out en masse in the club's traditional yellow jerseys and actively supported the home players throughout the match. The game itself proved to be a high quality rivalry, in which Kairat was no worse but with more quality in finishing attacks, which led to two more goals scored. The Red Star players managed only to earn a penalty kick at the end of the match, which fixed the 2-1 victory for the home side.

Following this remarkable accomplishment, Kairat Almaty progressed to the second round of the Europa League qualifications. There it will face a potentially dangerous opposition from the Armenian club Alashkert, surprise winners in the first round against Scottish Premier League side Saint Johnstone FC. The first match will be played in Almaty on July 16 and the second a week later in Yerevan.

Kairat hopes to field against the Armenians its newest signing, Anatoliy Tymoshchuk. A veteran star defender of the Ukrainian national team, he is a former player of Dynamo Kyiv and Zenit Saint Petersburg, as well as Bayern Munich with which he won the UEFA Champions League in 2013. Despite being 36 years old, the pundits say he is still capable of adding more strength to his new club's defence lines.

The current holders of the Kazakh Premier League title, FC Astana, start their campaign in the Champions League qualification round with an away match against Slovenia's FC Maribor on July 14, with the return leg scheduled at Astana Arena on July 22. The local fans hope Astana will be able to emulate Kairat's model of succeeding against a former Yugoslav side.

## Kazakh Davis Cup Squad Heads to Australia for Quarterfinals

By Alexander Lyakhov

ALMATY – After a brilliant victory over Italy, Kazakhstan's Davis Cup team is readying for its fourth Davis Cup quarterfinals appearance in five years. They will face Australia July 17-19 in Darwin, Australia. Other pairs in the quarterfinal match ups include Great Britain and France, Argentina and Serbia, as well as Belgium and Canada.

Darwin lies in the far north of Australia, close to the equator. Here in the Marrara Sporting Complex, a temporary tennis stadium with a grass court has been created. The climate, forecasted to be about +28°C during the matches, and the surface of the court will be well suited for the host country.

The Kazakh and Australian

team captains, in accordance with the regulations, choose their team players 10 days before the start of the match.

The Kazakhstan team will include:

- Mikhail Kukushkin (ATP Individual Ranking 63 / ATP Pairs Ranking 349);
- Alexander Nedovesov (ATP Individual Ranking 115 / ATP Pairs Ranking 146);
- Andrey Golubev (ATP Individual Ranking 155 / ATP Pairs Ranking 131);
- Dmitry Popko (ATP Individual Ranking 370 / ATP Pairs Ranking 595).

The Australian team, captained by 52-year-old Wally Masur, will consist of:

- Nick Kyrgios (ATP Individual

Ranking 41 / ATP Pairs Ranking 198);

- Samuel Groth (ATP Individual Ranking 69 / ATP Pairs Ranking 59);
- Thanasi Kokkinakis (ATP Individual Ranking 71 / ATP Pairs Ranking 175);
- Lleyton Hewitt (ATP Individual Ranking 279 / ATP Pairs Ranking 208).

Hewitt is a former world number one and three-time winner of Grand Slam tournaments with experience with Davis Cup wins. In 1999 and 2003, Hewitt along with Mark Philippoussis, Wayne Arthurs and the world's best pair of their time – Todd Woodbridge and Mark Woodford achieved great Davis Cup success.

It is thought that the Australians

will pair Hewitt and Groth in doubles matches. Groth is familiar to Kazakh fans for pairing with Andrei Golubev to reach the 2014 French Open doubles semifinals.

On the singles side, Australia team members Kyrgios and Kokkinakis are expected to be Cup standouts as both are young and have experienced Davis Cup success. One year ago in Cottesloe, Nick defeated in three sets Uzbekistan's team leader Denis Istomin, and Kokkinakis in March in Ostrava (Czech Republic) bounced back from two sets to love against Lukáš Rosol, bringing his team its first point.

The history of matches between the players of the two squads is brief. At the 2009 French Open, Hewitt easily bested Golubev 6:4, 6:3, 6:1. In 2014 at the Indian Wells Masters, Kukushkin defeated Groth 6:4, 2:6, 7:6 (7:4), and earlier this year Kukushkin lost to Kyrgios on clay in Nice – 6:7 (5:7), 2:6.

The article first appeared in [lyakhov.kz](http://lyakhov.kz). Translated and placed with permission.

## Kazakh Epee Fencers Win Gold at Asian Fencing Championships

By Julia Rutz

Kazakh epee fencers won gold at the 2015 Asian Fencing Championships, which took place in Singapore on June 20-25, reported tennersnews.

The Kazakhstan men's team, represented by Elmir Alimzhanov, Ivan Deryabin, Dmitry Alexanin and Ruslan Kurbanov, who was also a silver medalist at the World Universiade, defeated the national team of Korea with a score of 45:37 and then beat China with a 45:43 win in the final.

This was the second medal the national team of Kazakhstan received at the Asian Championships in Singapore this year. Earlier, Kazakh fencer Elmir Alimzhanov won the bronze in the

individual competition among men. Elimzhanov is a two-time champion of the Asian Champi-

onships and participated in the 2012 Olympic Games in London.

"Today, I am happy to receive

the bronze medal. It was hard to win," said Alimzhanov.

The Kazakh epee fencer couldn't beat his rival from South Korea, Park Kyoung-doo, who in his turn, failed to beat a Chinese athlete.

Kazakhstan's female team, scoring 29:45, couldn't win against the team from Hong Kong in the quarterfinal. Among female fencers were a champion of Asia, Ulyana Balaganskaya, as well as bronze medalists from the 2014 Asian Games 2014 Tamara Pochekutova, Tatiana Prikhodko and Diana Pamansha.

The Kazakh team is planning to participate in the coming World Universiade in South Korea and then in World Championships in Moscow, Russia.



Kazakhstan's Ruslan Kurbanov (R) fights Dong Chao of China at the Asian Fencing Championships. Photo by The New Paper.

## Kazakh Wrestlers Take Numerous Medals at Asian Junior Championship

By Yerbolat Uatkhonov

ASTANA – Kazakh Greco-Roman wrestler Dastan Zarlykhanov from the Akmola region won gold in the 55-kilogrammes category at the July 9-12 2015 Junior Asian Free Style, Greco-Roman Style and Female Wrestling Championships in Myanmar, according to the Bnews website.

Zarlykhanov graduated from the sports school named after T. Ualiyeva in the Zhaksynskoi district of the Akmola region and now studies at the school of higher sportsmanship in the region. Winning the championship of Asia has put Dastan into an elite, international class of wrestler. He is coached by Yegor Mukshtadt.

In the 84-kilogramme category, another Kazakh athlete, Husein

Mutsolgov, also took gold. Tamerlan Shadukayev won a silver medal in the 74-kilogramme category and bronze medals went to Shaharbek Rakhman (66 kilogrammes) and Tsarkis Pshenichnikov (96 kilogrammes).

**The Kazakh Greco-Roman wrestling team, coached by Boranbek Konyratov, won the competition with 65 points**

The Kazakh Greco-Roman wrestling team, coached by Boranbek Konyratov, won the competition with 65 points. An Indian team earned 59 points to finish runner-up. The Iranian team finished in

the third place with 58 points, according to the Zakon website.

Female Kazakh wrestlers Marina Sedneva (55 kilogrammes) and Zhamilya Bakbergenova (67 kilogrammes) won silver. Svetlana Ankicheva in the 44-kilogrammes category and Marina Zueva in the 51-kilogrammes category took bronze. The women's team is coached by Adilet Yermakov.

Kazakh Freestyle wrestlers Ilyas Zhumai (66 kilogrammes) and Bagdaulet Almentai (96 kilogrammes) won gold. Bauyrzhan Torebek (60 kilogrammes) and Iliskhan Chilayev (84 kilogrammes) won silver. Bronze medals went to Yemur Kabatayev in the 55-kilogrammes category and Kuandyk Yergeshev in the 74-kilogrammes category. The freestyle team is coached by Manarbek Kyshtaubayev.



# CAPITAL

WEDNESDAY, JULY 15, 2015

## Astana Celebrates Anniversary with Fairs, Fireworks, Modern and Traditional Art



By Michelle Witte  
and Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – Astana Day, the annual combined celebration of the birthday of Kazakhstan's capital city and the President who has shaped its modern form, was marked this year by a weekend of traditional and contemporary performances and capped by a riverside laser show and fireworks display.

The celebrations around July 6

mark the 17th birthday of Kazakhstan's young capital. It was on this day in 1994 when the country's Parliament passed the resolution to move the capital from Almaty to the city then called Akmola. The capital was officially moved to Akmola in December 1997, the city was renamed Astana in May 1998 and formally presented to the world in the summer of 1998.

July 6 this year also marked the 75th birthday of President Nursultan Nazarbayev, who first

suggested the idea of moving the capital in 1994, at the lowest ebb of social and economic crisis in the country following the collapse of the Soviet Union. He has since personally overseen the construction of the capital as the symbol of the country's modern growth.

Speaking at a formal reception to mark the anniversary on July 6, the Kazakh leader underlined Astana had continued on a path of evolving into a true economic, cultural, and educational hub of Kazakhstan, in addition to a status of the administrative capital.

As a result, Astana today is among the regions that are donors to the national budget, Nazarbayev highlighted.

"Implementation of the Nurly Zhol (Path to the Future) programme is bringing all regions [of Kazakhstan] closer to the capital... Hosting the EXPO 2017 will [develop] technological leadership of our country and demonstrate Kazakhstan's accomplishments in alternative energy. Establishment of the Astana International Financial Centre is another ambitious initiative. It will define a direction of progress not only for Astana but for the whole country for many years ahead," Nazarbayev said.

"Local leadership and global competitiveness is a formula that we will follow", he emphasised.

The President also thanked all those who contribute to Astana's progress. "A unique Eurasian culture is being shaped here, the youth earns a competitive education, new families are formed that look into their future with confidence. I am certain that thanks to our unity, diligence, and persistence, we will reach all our

goals," the President concluded.

In Astana, the Saturday and Sunday before the Monday holiday were packed with events and performances, many promoting Kazakh and Central Asian culture, but also peppered with offerings from around the world, including the Australian performance troupe Strange Fruit, who put on a gravity-defying display of dance, theatre and acrobatics atop swaying poles towering over the crowd near the city's Baiterek Monument, as well as marching Scottish bagpipers.

Nurly Zhol Boulevard was turned into an avenue of futuristic art objects for Astana Art Fest, which displayed objects of design, architecture and technologies. Artists, famous architects, directors of art programmes and videographers from France, Germany, the Netherlands, Italy, the U.S., Spain, Russia and Kazakhstan presented their works at the event, and visitors were swept into street theatrical performances

and training workshops. President Nazarbayev visited the festival to explore the modern art and technologies under the themes of fire energy, water energy and air energy, in keeping with the Future Energy theme of EXPO 2017, which Astana will host.

The ancient San Carlo Theatre of Naples also offered a birthday treat, presenting the "Giselle" ballet on July 6 at the Astana Opera. A shortened version of "Aida" was also presented on July 1 outside of the city's Palace of Peace and Harmony.

Elsewhere in the city were cooking exhibitions, parades, horse shows, public opera performances, kite festivals, magic shows and, in the evenings, music and fireworks along the banks of the Yessil River that bisects the town.

Commerce was also an important part of events, with the usual craft and heritage fair set up around Khan Shatyr, where craftsmen from around the region sold traditional clothing, pottery and other souvenirs and performers demonstrated traditional skills, including horse tricks and hunting with eagles. Another pop-up tent displaying locally made clothes, accessories and food was erected near the Baiterek Tower, showcasing the country's more modern offerings.

Some kilometres outside of modern Astana, the anniversary was honoured with more traditional games. At the Tulpar Sport Club in Astana's suburbs, a kokpar tournament was held. Kokpar is a traditional Kazakh horse game, likened to polo – but played with a goat carcass. Teams from around the country gathered to play in the two-day clash.

Director of the Astana Kokpar Club Amanzhol Khasenov said his organisation had been teaching boys to play and arranging tournaments for the past 14 years. "This is a tradition that comes from our ancestors," he said in an interview on July 6. "In ancient times, when our tribes didn't have wars, they played this game, because the game helps players learn to become good horsemen.

The game teaches boys to handle horses very well and to educate their horses and get the skills necessary for battle."

Even now, with no battles to be fought, the game is important in maintaining Kazakhstan's tradition of exceptional horsemanship, he said.

Spectator Gerhard Dippenaar, 27, of South Africa, who has lived in Astana for eight months and came to the tournament on July 6, said "kokpar is by a long shot the manliest sport I've seen in a long time. Great to see Astana keep cultural activities like this alive!"

Two huge fireworks displays capped the weekend of events. At 11p.m. on July 5, Astana's sky was illuminated by hundreds of fireworks shot over the Yessil River. The fireworks were reflected in the waters of the river and up to 35,000 watched the show, including on large LED displays. Water displays in different languages and video clips were also projected on fountains using modern light and laser technologies. On July 6, 10-minute fireworks displays were presented on the riverbank, at Khan Shatyr mall square, at the intersection of Pushkin and Abylay Khan streets, near the Astana Music Hall restaurant and near Zhas Batyr Stadium.

More than 100 musicians also participated in a parade dedicated to Astana Day. The parade and musicians went from Astana Art Gallery to Zhastar Palace, performing such compositions as capital martial music, war songs and Voice of Asia compositions.

"We try to vary and do something new every year, inviting new teams. Last year, we invited orchestras from Ekaterinburg and Novosibirsk, but this year we invited a band from Omsk. Every band is unique," said Oral Rysmagambetov, one of the organisers of the event, as reported by Bnews.

Since the transfer of the capital to Astana, it has grown from a town of 280,000 people to a city of more than 850,000 as of Jan. 1, 2015.

