



President Nazarbayev Signs Protocol on Kazakhstan's Accession to WTO



Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev (L) exchanges the signed protocol with WTO Director-General Roberto Azevêdo, the document that signified an official WTO member status for Kazakhstan after nearly 20 years of negotiations, during the official ceremony in Geneva on July 27.

By Galiaskar Seitghan

ASTANA – Kazakhstan's President, Nursultan Nazarbayev, attended the World Trade Organisation (WTO) General Council session in Geneva on July 27 to sign the protocol on the nation's accession to the world's largest trade alliance. The accession came after talks lasting almost two decades to allow Kazakhstan to embrace global competition on beneficial terms.

"Kazakhstan will soon start operating under the WTO rules. However, we have been adjusting our economic policies for a long

time in this direction by removing barriers, acting as an engine of regional integration and promoting the principles of open collaboration," the Kazakh leader emphasised, according to the Akorda press service.

Director-General Roberto Azevêdo signed the Protocol on the Accession of Kazakhstan on behalf of the WTO, following the General Council's approval of the Central Asian country's WTO terms of entry.

"This is a truly historic occasion for Kazakhstan, and for the WTO. For Kazakhstan, this is recognition of the efforts you have made over

recent years and your commitment to this process. It is an endorsement of the extensive programme of reforms, which you have undertaken," he emphasised.

Azevêdo called the decision to join the WTO a "message to the world that Kazakhstan is open for business."

"Kazakhstan's accession adds an important voice to our discussions here. It brings the organisation closer to the heart of Central Asia. And it brings us closer to our goal of universal membership," he said.

Nazarbayev expressed his appreciation of an "impressive job" on all sides following what he called a

"very tough negotiation process." He emphasised that during the negotiations with the WTO, Kazakhstan's economy went through "dramatic" changes.

"Over the past years, we have come a long way in integrating Kazakhstan's economy into the global market. We have implemented ambitious institutional reforms. They include further development of international economic cooperation. Effective implementation of the reforms will help to shape a brand new institutional environment," Nazarbayev underlined.

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Kazakh PM Treks to Kyrgyzstan, Discusses EAEU, Tourism

By Malika Rustem

ASTANA – On Sunday, July 19, Kazakh Prime Minister Karim Massimov paid a one-day visit to Kyrgyzstan where he discussed bilateral cooperation with his counterpart Temir Sariyev, as well as issues related to Kyrgyzstan's accession to the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU).

Massimov announced he arrived to Cholpon Ata, a town on northern shore of the Lake Issyk-Kul, by way of walking as reported by Kazakhstanskaya Pravda. The prime minister and part of the accompanying delegation did so by trekking the Zailisky Alatau range, part of the Tien Shan mountains, separating Almaty from a favoured destination for the city's vacationers.

Welcoming his guest, Sariyev expressed his appreciation of

Astana's support for Kyrgyzstan's efforts to join the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), which among other changes envisions elimination of customs control at the Kazakh-Kyrgyz border.

Sariyev said he looked forward to an increase in Kazakh vacationers' visits to Kyrgyz resorts. Massimov responded by saying that for the first time since his student days he did not come on wheels but actually walked to the Issyk Kul.

"I didn't use any type of transportation. I literally walked on my foot to Issyk Kul. I crossed the border [not far from] the Khan Tengri. Kyrgyzstan is entering the EAEU, which means that our borders will open soon. I hope that all people in Kazakhstan will take up the lead and walk to Issyk Kul just as I did," said Massimov.

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Kazakhstan Ranks 50th in Global Competitiveness Rating

By Kamila Zhumabayeva and Michelle Witte

ASTANA – Kazakhstan was ranked 50 out of 144 countries in the 2014-2015 Global Competitiveness Report issued by the World Economic Forum, putting it ahead of all BRICS countries except China, a number of European countries, including Belgium and France, and solid Asian economies like South Korea. It was also in 50th place last year and had risen from 72nd place in 2011-2012.

"We define competitiveness as the set of institutions, policies, and factors that determine the level of productivity of a country," the report explained in its first chapter. "The level of productivity, in turn, sets the level of prosperity that can be reached by an economy. The

productivity level also determines the rates of return obtained by investments in an economy, which in turn are the fundamental drivers of its growth rates. In other words, a more competitive economy is one that is likely to grow faster over time." Competitiveness, therefore, involves static and dynamic components.

Economies are assessed according to 12 pillars of competitiveness defined by the report: institutions, infrastructure, macroeconomic environment, health and primary education, higher education and training, goods market efficiency, labour market efficiency, financial market development, technological readiness, market size, business sophistication and innovation.

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Almaty 2022 Bid Set for Historic Vote in Malaysia

By Altair Nurbekov

KUALALUMPUR – In the morning hours of July 31, a high-level Kazakh delegation will make one last effort here to persuade the International Olympic Committee (IOC) members to cast their votes in favour of Almaty's bid to host the Winter Olympic Games in 2022. The Chinese delegation will make a similar try, but naturally for Beijing's cause. Whichever of the two bids prevails, the world will learn the outcome around 6 p.m. Kuala Lumpur time (GMT+8) the same day.

Regardless of the result, it is a historic moment for Kazakhstan. Never before has a city from Central Asia been closer to hosting humanity's grandest festival of sports and cultures.

Obviously, Beijing may still be seen as a strong favourite to win the contest, but Almaty's bid team has already accomplished a great feat in raising the city's, and indeed the nation's profile in the Olympic Movement. The tone of comments about Almaty's bid coming from IOC members, sport pundits and numerous publications in the international media is often one of curiosity, but also increasingly a favourable one.

The bid committee has argued that Almaty 2022 wants to change the way Olympics are planned and hosted by ensuring a true and lasting legacy for the city and region. Yet another ambition is to inspire more cities to bid for the Games in the future and thereby overcome a temporary crisis of confidence in the international sports movement.

What the world has little known before this bid is that Almaty has a long tradition in winter sports, beginning in the 1950s during the Soviet Union when the city was the centre for outdoor winter activities. Since Kazakhstan's independence two decades ago, Almaty has grown into a leading winter sports centre in Eurasia and a promising tourist destination, the bid committee noted in a July 23 press release.

One of the strengths of Almaty's bid is the fact that "70 percent of the venues necessary for the Games already exist and are currently fully utilised for winter sports." In the last 15 years of Kazakhstan's economic boom, which has helped Almaty develop into Central Asia's undisputed commercial centre, the city has added six top-tier venues to its already-existing collection of world-class

ski resorts and other competition venues. A major boost came from co-hosting the Asian Winter Games with Astana in 2011.

Furthermore, with the Winter Universiade scheduled to take place in Almaty in less than two years, 80 percent of the necessary venues will exist and see regular use.

According to Kazakh Minister of Culture and Sport Arystanbek Mukhamediuly, "Almaty's bid for the Winter Games is driven by our people's passion for winter sports and is well aligned with our long-term sports infrastructure plan. Almaty will only need two additional competition venues for the [Olympic] Games. Rising demand from the city and region makes the addition of these venues a natural continuation of our strategic plan."

The bid committee named the major winter sport events hosted recently by Almaty, including the 2011 Asian Winter Games, 2015 FIS Junior Nordic World Championships Under 23, 2014 World University Speed Skating Championships, 2015 ISU World Sprint Speed Skating Championships, 2012 and 2013 FIS Nordic Combined World Cups, 2010-2014

FIS Ski Jumping Grand Prix and 2010-2012 FIS Ski Jumping Continental Cups. Through the successful presentation of these international competitions, Almaty has proven itself as a trustworthy and competent host with a strong team of experienced event professionals and volunteers, as well as in-depth technical and sports expertise.

Almaty 2022's Games concept is also one of the most compact in more than 30 years. All venues are located within a 30-kilometre radius of the Olympic Village – an unprecedented convenience for the movement's most important stakeholders, the athletes, as well as for the Olympic family and spectators.

The bid committee's argument is that Almaty 2022 is a truly green and sustainable plan due to numerous existing venues and minimal construction needs. With the Sliding Centre and the Almaty Olympic Arena as the only additional venues needed, "no sensitive mountain ecosystems will be affected by their construction and no large-scale transportation projects are required to reach the mountain venues from the city," the committee claims.

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Future champions ski on the slopes near Almaty. For more stories and opinions on Almaty 2022 Olympic Bid see pages A6, A7, B6 and B7.

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NATION

WEDNESDAY, JULY 29, 2015

Kazakhstan Joins OECD Schools of Government, Plans Improvements to Training of Officials

By Michelle Witte

ASTANA – Kazakhstan's Academy of Public Administration has joined the Global Network of Schools of Government of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and a delegation from the academy took part in its annual meeting in Paris on July 6 before going on a study tour of other European countries. The July 6-11 trip was supported by the EU project, Civil Service Reform and Modernisation in Kazakhstan (CSR), which reported the news on its website, Support-csr.kz.

Belonging to the OECD Global Network of Schools of Government allows the academy teaching staff to participate in joint projects, research and publications with the OECD network of schools and prepare training programmes following the OECD network's framework. Membership is ex-

pected to improve methods of training Kazakh government officials and allow the academy to

Belonging to the OECD Global Network of Schools of Government allows the academy teaching staff to participate in joint projects, research and publications with the OECD network of schools and prepare training programmes following the OECD network's framework.

participate in discussions on proposals to improve the country's civil service model, according to the CSR report.

Head of the Kazakh delegation, Rector of the Academy of Public Administration Bolatbek Abdrassilov, shared Kazakhstan's experiences in modernising the academy's teaching methods and scientific activities at the annual

meeting, discussing new practice-oriented training programmes for civil servants based on compe-

tence and the organisation of research to improve the activities of state bodies. These approaches are being supported by the CSR project with the help of universities in OECD member states, the CSR said.

Modernising the civil service, international experience in implementing government reforms, improving technology and methods

of training of civil servants and the role of the OECD in promoting innovation in this field were also topics at the meeting.

Following the meeting, the delegation travelled to meet representatives of public administration schools in the U.K., Italy, Poland, Lithuania and other countries, CSR project representatives report. In the U.K., they met representatives of the Major Projects Authority (MPA) at the Office of the Prime Minister to discuss civil servants' training on project management and reviewed examples of successful British practices in implementing project management principles in the activities of state bodies. They also discussed the PRINCE2 project management system used in the U.K. and suggested it as a tool for Kazakhstan. They also expressed interest in organising training sessions for their Kazakh counterparts.

The Leadership Academy of the MPA was founded to help ensure the professional development of MPA staff and the staff of other government agencies involved in large-scale, publicly funded projects. The Leadership Academy and the Said Business School (SBS) of Oxford University are currently implementing a special 18-month programme on training for core competencies in project management. Kazakhstan's academy and the two U.K. academies reached a preliminary agreement on experience exchange and cooperation in training civil servants on project management.

Abdrassilov also met Stephen Jackson, executive director of the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education at the British Academy of Sciences, with whom he discussed the possibility of British experts taking part in improving the accreditation system of Kazakhstan's higher education institutions.

NATIONAL NEWS IN BRIEF

More than 200 surgical procedures have been conducted by military surgeons of the Main Military Hospital of the Ministry of Defence of Kazakhstan since the beginning of 2015, Bnews reported. More than half of them were complicated, modern, minimally invasive surgeries carried out with the least possible intervention, significantly speeding up the recovery process of patients. According to the press service of the Ministry of Defence, making the complex surgeries with the use of new technologies became possible due to the growing professionalism of military surgeons. As a result of cooperation with major medical institutions abroad, military surgeons have an opportunity to study in England and Germany and take part in joint surgeries with doctors from Russia, Ukraine and India.

Kazakh and Kyrgyz antitrust authorities have signed a memorandum of understanding on competition policy, Bnews reported, citing the Committee for Regulation of Natural Monopolies and Protection of Competition of the Ministry of National Economy of Kazakhstan. The chairman of the Committee for Regulation of Natural Monopolies and Protection of Competition met with the director of the State Agency for Anti-monopoly Regulation of Kyrgyzstan in Astana. The agreement defines a mechanism for exchanging information on competition policy matters and the enforcement and investigations of antitrust laws violations.

The procedure of attracting foreign labour to Kazakhstan will be reviewed, it was announced by Vice Minister of Health and Social Development Birzhan Nurymbetov at a recent Central Communications Service press conference. The review is part of the 100 Concrete Steps to implement Kazakhstan's institutional reform project; among the 100 steps are measures to increase the investment attractiveness of the country, including attracting foreign labour. Kazakhstan's migration policy is based on protecting the domestic labour market while drawing highly qualified foreign workers. This year, the quota for foreign workers is 0.7 percent of the economically active population, or approximately 63,000 workers. As of July 1, there were 38,346 foreigners working in Kazakhstan, Nurymbetov said. About 63 percent are highly qualified specialists; the rest are skilled and seasonal workers. Foreign workers come from 144 countries but the bulk are from China (32 percent) and Turkey (12 percent), he said.

Almaty has unveiled its tourism plan for the 2022 Olympic Games, for which the city is currently bidding. The Financial Express reported. The city has secured legally binding guarantees from hotel owners, real estate developers and city authorities for over 31,000 rooms, including 10,580 rooms in dedicated Villages for the Olympic Family; 15,475 rooms in new, serviced apartments; and 5,175 rooms in existing hotels and wellness resorts in all categories, according to the article. Mayor of Astana Akhmetzhan Yessimov said, "Almaty's guarantees exceed all IOC [International Olympic Committee] requirements. All client groups will find comfortable accommodation in our city across all categories – from five-star hotels to university residences for low-budget visitors. All rooms are either already built, under construction, planned or guaranteed by individual contracts."

Kazakhstan plans for 75 percent of its able-bodied convicts to be employed by 2018, Kazinform reported, citing the website of the Prosecutor General's Office. The Prosecutor General's Office and the Ministry of the Interior are working to increase the employment through the Employment in Prisons 2017 Programme. Criminal investigations departments and executive bodies across the country have so far signed memorandums on joint measures for the employment of convicts. According to Kazinform, there are 104 process units of small and medium-sized businesses today that employ more than 1,400 prisoners.

Mazhilis Launches Analysis of Legislative Work

By Kseniya Voronina

ASTANA – A systematic and comprehensive analysis of the legislative work of the Kazakh Parliament has begun in the Mazhilis (lower house of Parliament) and its structural and its structural divisions.

"The first results of this work for the session in the new format are published for general use. The publication contains a QR

code – a key with the help of which you can see the information and analytical materials in the electronic version using mobile devices. In addition, every department, every civil servant providing legislative work of members of the Parliament, has a task to carry out systematic monitoring of issues not only on the specific bill under consideration, but also to analyse the current problems in this area raised by participants in the dis-

ussion and require legislative regulation. With this view, appropriate changes and additions were made to 19 normative legal acts of internal use," Speaker of Mazhilis Kabibulla Dzhakupov said at the closing of the fourth session of the Parliament of the fifth convocation.

He also noted that there are a lot of problems in the course of the analytical work that must be addressed through law.

"For a comprehensive solution

of these and other operational problems, which are repeated from session to session, we propose to develop a plan of joint actions of the Parliament and the Government in the field of legislation, with the purpose of better assistance of legislative tasks set by the President," Dzhakupov said.

The speaker further noted that strong legal frameworks formed in Kazakhstan since the country gained independence have helped

the country succeed and that the country now hopes to be among the world's most developed nations.

Dzhakupov also noted that Kazakhstan President Nursultan Nazarbayev has said that Kazakhstan is entering its third phase of state-legal development and that all public bodies should develop and adopt the necessary measures for the unconditional implementation of the tasks related to this stage of development.

Kazakh Banks Decrease Foreign Debt to 10 Billion Tenge

By Kseniya Voronina

Kazakh banks recently restructured and decreased their foreign debt to 30 billion tenge (US\$161 million).

"A determined effort was made to restructure foreign debts of corresponding banks, which led to a decrease of the debts from 40 to 10 billion tenge (from US\$215 million to US\$53 million), which is a very modest number for second-tier banks," said National Bank Chairman Kairat Kelimbetov.

He also noted that the state sold its shares of the banks, saying, "BTA Bank was united with Kazkommerzbank and as of today this is one of major banks of the country and it has a good, ambitious development programme."

Kelimbetov said that the government is going to support commercial banks, financing 500-600 bil-

lion tenge (US\$2.7 billion-US\$3.2 billion) in 2015.

"Last year, the National Bank provided two trillion tenge (US\$10.7 billion) of liquidity using exchange swaps and retirement assets," he added.

Also, the National Bank chairman said that the main target of the National Bank is to provide short-term liquidity. But, he added, banks are currently able to provide short-term liquidity to one another at low rates without the National Bank.

Kelimbetov explained the low activity of the nation's banks, saying, "Banks aren't very active in crediting. I consider that the problem is in the lack of good credit users. There are not many good credit users today."

The National Bank set the task for second-tier banks to decrease the level of problem loans to 10 percent before 2016.

900 People Evacuated after Mudslide Hits Almaty Outskirts

By Malika Rustem

More than 900 Almaty residents have been evacuated following a mudslide that hit the city early on July 23. No fatalities have been reported, however, homes in the mudslide area are reported to have been flooded.

Experts believe the slide is a result of hot weather that melted portions of the Kargalinka Glacier near the city.

Almaty authorities have declared an emergency situation and have sent 1,196 rescue workers, backed by three helicopters and 160 units of equipment. They

have also provided food and water, medicine and psychological counselling. They have also begun to clean the streets and repair damage to neighbourhoods, according to information released by the Committee for Emergency Situations of the Ministry of International Affairs.

Deputy Prime Minister of Kazakhstan Berdybek Saparbayev and Deputy Interior Minister Vladimir Bozhko have also visited the affected area, according to the committee.

Almaty has experienced an abnormally hot summer with temperatures above 40°C for 10 days prior to the mudslide.



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.



EURASIA&WORLD

WEDNESDAY, JULY 29, 2015

EXTERNAL NEWS IN BRIEF

President of Ukraine Petro Poroshenko is to visit Kazakhstan this autumn. The visit was discussed at the recent Kazakh-Ukrainian interstate committee in Kyiv on July 15-16, the Kyiv Post reported. Prospects for cooperation between the two countries were also discussed. Minister of Regional Development, Building and Housing and Communal Services of Ukraine Hennadii Zubko and First Deputy Prime Minister Kazakhstan Bakytzhan Sagintayev were among the participants of the meeting.

President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev signed the law "On ratification of the agreement between Kazakhstan and the United States on mutual legal assistance in criminal matters," on July 16, the Akorda press service reported. Mutual legal assistance treaties provide formal intergovernmental mechanisms for law enforcement agencies to exchange evidence and provide other forms of law enforcement assistance in criminal investigations, prosecutions and related proceedings. The U.S. and Kazakhstan can now help each other in taking witness testimony, releasing documents and records, locating and identifying persons or evidence, executing requests for searches and seizures, transferring persons in custody, tracing and forfeiting the proceeds of crime, and other actions. Kazakhstan is the first country in Central Asia to codify this exchange of assistance with the U.S. through such a treaty.

Deputy Foreign Minister of Kazakhstan Yerzhan Ashikbayev and UN Resident Coordinator in Kazakhstan Stephen Tull signed the Partnership Framework for Development in Kazakhstan for 2016-2020 on July 22, the UN Development Programme office in Astana reported. The new agreement sets the vision and direction for the UN Country Team (UNCT) in Kazakhstan for the period. "The coming years will be defined by important contextual changes for the United Nations-Kazakhstan partnership ... The Partnership Framework for Development has been particularly guided by the country's aspirations under the Kazakhstan 2050 Strategy and related national strategies and policies such as the new Nurly Zhol economic policy, and the nascent post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)," the UNDP press release said.

Kazakhstan plans to involve foreign experts in some branches of the Ministry for Investment and Development, Minister for Investment and Development of Kazakhstan Asset Iskeshev said at a briefing at the Central Communications Service on July 20. Bringing foreign experts in to work on some government issues is a common practice around the globe, he noted. He commented that Kazakhstan hopes to attract British experts in aviation, Canadian experts in geology and German experts in energy-efficiency, for example.

Belarus 24, Belarus' only international satellite TV channel, will expand into Russia and Kazakhstan, the channel's press service reported. The company has expanded into Kazakhstan and signed a contract with Eurasia Media Distribution, which distributes more than 50 TV channels in the country, works with 95 cable operators and has 300,000 subscribers. Negotiations are underway to allow Belarus 24 into Alma TV, the largest operator in Kazakhstan.

A Soyuz space capsule carrying three astronauts from Russia, Japan and the U.S. successfully took off from Kazakhstan's Baikonur Cosmodrome and docked at the International Space Station (ISS) on July 23. The launch, originally scheduled for May, had been delayed after a cargo rocket launch failed in April, the BBC reported. Astronauts Oleg Kononenko, Kjell Lindgren and Kimiya Yui have now joined Genady Padalka, Mikhail Kornienko and Scott Kelly on board the ISS. The latter two are more than four months into a nearly year-long mission on the space station.

Nazarbayev University Holds Training for African Healthcare Officials

By Malika Rustem

ASTANA – A fortnight-long international seminar on public health for specialists from Africa began July 20 at the Nazarbayev University (NU), reported the university's press service.

Scholars from the Centre for Life Sciences (CLS) National Laboratory Astana at NU will hold courses for 24 professionals from eight countries on issues of epidemiology, biomedicine and public health. Kazakh Deputy Foreign Minister Yerzhan Ashikbayev greeted the participants on the opening day, wishing them successful training and highlighting his nation's commitment to assist with the development goals of African countries. The specialists are from Botswana, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Swaziland, Tanzania and Zimbabwe.

The CLS scientists will use the seminar to provide an intensive training programme and exchange expertise in the three fields in accordance with modern requirements of global healthcare.

"This is a joint project of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan and the UN Development Programme (UNDP) in Kazakhstan. It was decided to organise several seminars and to dedicate one of them to medicine. [...] We will share the experience of Kazakh scientists. The programme will have several parts: the first one is meth-



African students join NU professors and Kazakh officials at the launch of the seminar.

odological; the second part is visiting different laboratories and the last part is to learn about the work of hospitals in the city," said Adil Supiyev, head of the CLS laboratory of epidemiology and public health.

He added his hope was that workshop participants would gain knowledge and skills that will be applicable in their countries. The training focuses on methods of scientific research in the field of epidemiology and biomedicine. Supiyev noted it is

also useful for the centre's scientists to learn more about experiences in the participating countries, as most of them work in the public healthcare system.

Munkhtuya Altangerel, UNDP Deputy Resident Representative in Kazakhstan, noted the UNDP is present in all countries of the African continent.

"UNDP is now working on the objectives of sustainable development in which we particularly stress the importance of South-South Cooperation, partnerships

and knowledge-sharing within the framework of such cooperation. UNDP believes that the engine of development in the future will be this type of partnership, which includes the exchange of experience between different countries, both developed and developing," she said.

Seminar attendant Michael Nyamuranga, who works in the Zimbabwe Ministry of Health and Child Care, said one of Africa's major healthcare concerns is infectious diseases.

"I hope this training will help me learn how to better deal with these problems, especially when working with limited resources," he added.

The symposium's main goal is to help participants acquire systematised theoretical knowledge and practical skills in the three medical areas. The programme includes lectures and workshops presented by leading NU researchers.

The curriculum is the inaugural event of the Africana Training Programme, part of the joint project between the Kazakh Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the UNDP aimed at delivering development assistance to countries in Africa, Oceania, and the Caribbean through capacity-building training for young professionals. The project's goal is to strengthen the scope of select mid-career specialists, university graduates and researchers to allow central and local governments to operate in a more effective, transparent and accountable manner.

During 2015, UNDP and the ministry will also organise a series of professional update courses in Kazakhstan in the fields of oil and gas exploration, public health and Kazakh agriculture for specific individuals from a number of African countries. The project envisions two more short-term thematic trainings in agriculture and oil and gas exploration, with field visits for 90 students from 23 African nations.

Iran Nuclear Deal Is Positive News for World and Kazakhstan, MFA Says

By Galiaskar Seitzhan

ASTANA – The Foreign Ministry of Kazakhstan issued a statement on July 15 in which it welcomed the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action over the Iranian nuclear programme approved a day earlier in Vienna. The deal is the result of nine years of talks between Iran and the P5+1 group of international mediators: the U.S., Russia, China, France, the U.K. and Germany.

"Strict implementation of this plan will enhance the nuclear non-proliferation agenda [and] help each member of the Nonproliferation Treaty exercise their lawful right to engage in peaceful nuclear activities, provided there is strict compliance with the provisions of the Treaty and IAEA [International Atomic Energy Agency] requirements," the statement read.

According to the Foreign Ministry, the agreement is "further evidence that diplomacy is the only way to resolve complex international issues."

In terms of regional implications, Astana believes that the deal "will have a positive impact on

the economic and social development of all countries in the region, and will further strengthen cooperation between Kazakhstan and Iran."

Noting that Astana has "consistently advocated for peaceful dialogue and negotiations" on the Iranian nuclear programme, the Foreign Ministry added that Kazakhstan "was proud to have made a practical contribution to the negotiations on Iran's nuclear programme" by hosting two rounds of talks in February and April 2013 at the initiative of President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev. The meetings that took place in Almaty encouraged "an atmosphere of trust between Iran and the P5+1 and contributed to the achievement of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action," the ministry said.

Previously, Iran and the P5+1 negotiators commended Kazakhstan's support in searching for a diplomatic solution to the complex issue. Following the agreement in Vienna, Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Lavrov, who has been among the six international negotiators with Iran since the launch of talks in 2006, also

welcomed Kazakhstan's contribution, along with Austria and Switzerland, who also hosted talks.

"At a certain stage, some rounds were hosted by our Kazakh friends. All of [the hosts] helped create the conditions that helped everything to conclude in the way that it eventually did," he noted while answering questions from the media in Moscow on July 16.

According to reports from Vienna, the plan of action sets significant limits on Iran's sensitive nuclear activities. Among other concessions, Iran has obliged itself to reduce its stockpile of enriched uranium – used to make reactor fuel, but also nuclear weapons – by 98 percent to 300 kilograms for 15 years. The Middle Eastern nation also agreed to cut, at least for a decade, the number of centrifuges it has to enrich uranium by two-thirds, to 5,060.

The IAEA will need to verify the Iranians' compliance with the agreement terms, following which the UN, EU and U.S. will lift the sanctions imposed on Tehran for its previous lack of engagement with the global nuclear watchdog. Media reports say this includes

the release of more than \$100 billion in frozen assets, mainly in Western banks. Among the deal's conditions is also the possibility of reinstating sanctions if the international community finds that Iran is not complying.

One of the deal's solutions to the problem of how Iran could renounce its stockpile of enriched

uranium refers to the IAEA Bank of Low Enriched Uranium (LEU) that is being created in Kazakhstan. According to the annex to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, "Iran may choose to seek to sell excess enriched uranium to the IAEA fuel bank in Kazakhstan when the fuel bank becomes operational." Reportedly, the LEU bank is expected to launch its activities two years following the signing of the Country Agreement between the IAEA and Ka-

zakhstan scheduled to take place in Astana in late August. Commenting on the deal, Deputy Director of the Kazakhstan Institute of Strategic Studies Sanat Kuskumbayev said it was "difficult to overestimate the importance of this agreement."

According to the analyst, "its implementation will enhance a whole system of regional and global security, as normalisation of Iran's relations with the leading global actors has far-reaching implications not only for the Middle East but also for the neighbouring regions, Central Asia in particular.

KUSHKUMBAYEV: "We look forward to the expansion of trade and economic links with Iran and through its territory with the Persian Gulf area, the countries of the Middle East and South Asia."

uranium refers to the IAEA Bank of Low Enriched Uranium (LEU) that is being created in Kazakhstan. According to the annex to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, "Iran may choose to seek to sell excess enriched uranium to the IAEA fuel bank in Kazakhstan when the fuel bank becomes operational." Reportedly, the LEU bank is expected to launch its activities two years following the signing of the Country Agreement between the IAEA and Ka-

Tensions caused by the Iranian nuclear programme and risks of another conflict flaring up there were seriously affecting the international relations system."

"Reaching consensus in these matters is important, positive news for Kazakhstan, as we can now look forward to the expansion of trade and economic links with Iran and through its territory with the Persian Gulf area, the countries of the Middle East and South Asia," Kuskumbayev concluded.

Kazakh Prime Minister Treks to Kyrgyzstan, Discusses Eurasian Economic Union, Tourism

Continued from Page A1

Khan Tengri is a 7,010-metre peak on the border between Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and China.

The Kyrgyz prime minister also raised the issue of the construction of a shortcut highway between Almaty and Cholpon-Ata.

"We have managed to put on track a direct flight from Almaty to Tamchy, but this is not enough. We should build a high-speed road from Almaty to Cholpon-Ata. The road will pass through Kemin and Mikhailovka. We could set a task to our government bodies to work

on this issue. We have finished construction of the road to Kemin (Bishkek-Naryn-Torugart), which is on our side. When the road will be fully finished, the distance will be cut to only 250 kilometres. [Guests] from Kazakhstan will be able to get to the Issyk-Kul in 2.5 hours," he said.

In turn, Massimov instructed the members of his delegation to speed up the feasibility studies of the highway construction project.

"I think this is a good path. We have agreed to sign a corresponding intergovernmental agreement in order for people [to use] this

trail to enjoy the beauty of Kyrgyzstan," Massimov said.

Sariyev also proposed to consider the transfer of 800 metres of the Kazakh transit road into the use of Kyrgyzstan. The Bishkek-Naryn-Torugart highway passes near to Tokmok town through the territory of Kazakhstan.

"We propose to adopt a separate agreement on the use of our side of this piece of the area. We will be soon in a common economic union. If this agreement is signed, we will take responsibility to maintain this section of the road," the Kyrgyz prime minister explained.

Kyrgyz sources have reported that the prime ministers also agreed on an uninterrupted supply of Kazakh coal to Kyrgyzstan.

The Kazakh government's website reported July 20 on another Kazakh-Kyrgyz meeting on a senior level, this time in Astana. According to the press release, Kazakh First Deputy Prime Minister Bakhytzhan Sagintayev assured the visiting Kyrgyz Minister of Economy Oleg Pankratov of Astana's commitment to continue providing methodological, technical and financial assistance to the Kyrgyz partners in joining the EAEU. Among concrete

issues discussed in this regard, the release named eliminating sanitary-quarantine, veterinary and phytosanitary controls at the Kazakh-Kyrgyz border. The trade turnover between Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan reached \$924 million in 2014, according to Kyrgyz government statistics.

Kyrgyzstan is set to become the fifth member of the EAEU within weeks, following President Almazbek Atambayev's signature of the necessary paperwork at a Moscow summit on May 8 and ratification of the related agreements in parliaments of Kazakhstan, Belarus, Russia and Armenia.

ECONOMY

WEDNESDAY, JULY 29, 2015

President Nazarbayev Signs Protocol on Kazakhstan's Accession to WTO

Continued from Page A1

According to the WTO press release, the negotiations on Kazakhstan's membership were finalised by the Working Party on June 10. Kazakhstan's WTO accession package was adopted by the 52 Working Party members through a referendum on June 22.

The Working Party Chairperson, Finnish Ambassador Vesa Himanen, announced that during the course of the negotiations, Kazakhstan adopted 50 new laws and introduced amendments to 10 international agreements within the framework of the Customs Union and the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU). The progress in this area – overseen by President Nazarbayev and in close coordination with the EAEU partners – significantly helped accelerate the talks during the last year. “The package agreed with Kazakhstan is a high quality one, which makes a valuable contribution to enhancing access to markets and upgrading terms of multilateral trade systems, thereby strengthening the WTO”, Himanen said, according to the Akorda.

Nazarbayev pointed out that during the long period of talks with the WTO, Kazakhstan's GDP per capita increased 18-fold and reached the levels of Central and Eastern Europe. The country's external trade volume increased to \$120 billion annually, of which more than 90 percent is with the WTO member states, he said.

“Kazakhstan is rich in mineral resources, and we intend to change the structure of our economy to remove the dependency on exporting raw materials. Today 54 percent of our GDP is linked to the services industry. It includes the financial sector, telecommunications, construction, energy and transport. Liberalisation of the financial services within the WTO will proceed in parallel with the process of establishing the Astana International Financial Centre. We hope that it will become a backbone of Kazakhstan's financial infrastructure, and eventually a financial hub for the entire region. We invite all countries to participate in this project,” President Nazarbayev said.

He further highlighted the priority of developing infrastructure, transport and logistical services in Kazakhstan, including the construction of Western Europe – Western China road corridor and the Nury Zhol (Path to the Future) policy of infrastructure projects.

“We work [hard] to become part of the global community. That is why we develop strategic corridors that will connect major markets. Our infrastructure projects will help maximise our unique transit potential – and that will be a big benefit for the country's economy and international markets,” the President said.

Nazarbayev also emphasised his government's efforts to enhance domestic conditions for luring more foreign investors.

“By improving the investment climate, we are now prioritising the diversification of our economy. All the necessary conditions are created for investments to go not only to the oil and gas and mining sectors, but also to the processing industries,” he said.

The President reminded that the WTO's main principle was preventing discriminative measures in international trade.

“A policy of sanctions, which mixes economics with politics, impedes trade and does not correspond with WTO principles. I think our common goal is to prevent this from happening,” he said, referring to tensions between Russia and the West, which have affected economic growth in Eurasia since their introduction in mid-2014.

The President concluded his remarks by confirming readiness to further strengthen constructive cooperation with Kazakhstan's international partners within the framework of the WTO.

Speaking to the media in Geneva, Kazakhstan's Foreign Minister Ernan Idrissov described the accession as “historic.”

“We have worked very hard. This has been a long and winding road,” Idrissov said, according to a report from Agence France Press.

“We believe that our membership will continue to help the process of economic reforms,” he told journalists, adding that diversification was Astana's “top priority” and that the WTO membership can only enhance these efforts.

The country's Minister for Economic Integration, Zhanar Aitzhanova, who led the accession talks in recent years, told reporters in Geneva that Astana had agreed to “continue to undertake full liberalisation reforms.” Crucially, this will apply to the telecommunications sector, where previous caps on foreign investment are to be abolished, the AFP highlighted.

Among international partners, the European Commissioner for Trade, Cecilia Malmström, was among the early commentators to welcome the news.

“Kazakhstan has worked hard to prepare for the WTO membership and to make the changes needed in its domestic legal and regulatory system. The EU has strongly and continuously supported Kazakhstan's accession to the WTO and the country's determination in its commitment to open trade and investment has been rewarded today,” she commented.

Kazakhstan's legislators will now need to review and ratify the documents agreed in Geneva by Oct. 31, the WTO press release said.

NB Widens Tenge's Trading Band

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – National Bank Chairman Kairat Kelimbetov announced widening the tenge's trading band against the U.S. dollar at a Central Communications Service briefing July 15. The lower limit of the band was kept at 170 and the National Bank raised the tenge's upper trading limit to 198 per one U.S. dollar.

“Exchange policy won't be changed in the second half-year period. The National Bank decided to widen the tenge's trading band for the U.S. dollar from the current 185 +3/-15 tenge to 185 +13/-15 tenge, continuing the policy of flexible and smooth rate control to achieve inflationary targeting on a mid-term horizon, taking into account the fact that the exchange rate almost achieved the maximum of the exchange band,” Kelimbetov said at the briefing.

Kelimbetov noted that this decision gives the National Bank flexibility over the next 12 months and the ability to pursue a well-reasoned and consistent policy for flexible and smooth control of the exchange band. The policy enabled the National Bank to withstand all tests of 2014 and stresses coming from foreign markets. The National Bank also believes that



Kairat Kelimbetov

it will be able to meet additional challenges over the next year.

The policy also sufficiently decreases the risk of accumulation of depreciatory expectations in the economy, blocks pressure on the tenge exchange rate and avoids severe corrections, which happened in 2009 and 2014, finance officials believe. The National Bank will not switch the tenge to float freely until 2017 and continues to participate in the domestic currency market to provide financial stability of the exchange rate, reported the National Bank press service.

“Taking into account that the exchange rate is 187 tenge to one U.S. dollar today and in the case of maximal loosening up to 198 tenge to 1 U.S. dollar at the rate of one

tenge per month, the exchange rate will be loosened to the amount of 5.9 percent per year. Such process will make deposits in tenge, which offer 10.5 percent interest, more profitable than deposits in foreign currency, which offer only 3 percent interest,” said Kazakhstan economist and Director of Macroeconomic Research Centre Olzhas Khudaibergenov, as reported by Tengrinews.

Khudaibergenov is optimistic about the National Bank plans and believes that if the National Bank is able to hit the target, it will re-establish credibility and continue the policy in the future, saying, “In general, the plan is a ‘happy medium’ for the Kazakh economy in present conditions.”

Astana Offers \$4 Billion Record Bond Sale

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – Kazakhstan offered \$4 billion in bonds July 14, a record for the state and made the nation the first among developing countries to take advantage of the calming effect following the recollection of the debt crisis in Greece. Kazakhstan had \$2.5 billion in 10-year bonds at 285 basis points over U.S. treasuries and \$1.5 billion in 30-year notes at 335 basis points over their U.S. equivalent.

“A request was to the amount of \$10 billion. I can say that Kazakhstan offered bonds very successfully. This is the first offering after a long period of time of uncertainty with Greece and negotiations held with Iran,” said Minister of Finance Bakhyt Sultanov, according to Tengrinews.

He also noted the bond offering gave investors the opportunity to assess risks in Kazakhstan.

“We continue to offer bonds in accord with the programme, showing and creating yield curve. This is a good evaluation of investors' risks for Kazakhstan. The creation of the yield curve is very important not only for Kazakhstan investors, but also for emitters in the quasi-public sector and private companies,” added Sultanov.

“The issuance window is opening and the Kazakhstan deal will be a test of the primary-market appetite. I expect demand for

both tranches to be strong, as the government seems willing to pay up for the certainty of getting the deal done,” said Mark Baker, who helps oversee \$1.5 billion in emerging-market debt at Standard Life Investments Ltd. in London, as reported by Bloomberg.



Bakhyt Sultanov

Kazakhstan returned to the international market after raising \$2.5 billion in 10-year and 30-year bonds in October. Developing-nation dollar bonds have rallied this month, with the average yield falling 20 basis points. The yield on the Kazakh dollar bonds due in 2024 traded at 4.88 percent, 78 basis points below this year's high on Jan. 6. The yield on notes due in 2044 fell one basis point to 6.19 percent from this year's high on

March 18. The yield on both notes rose on Tuesday.

JPMorgan Chase & Co., Citigroup Inc., Kazkommerts Securities and Halyk Finance are arranging the Kazakhstan bond sale.

“As of today, the current situation at the world capital market is very favourable to bond offerings, because interest rates are low and even having rather low credit ratings (Kazakhstan has approximately a BBB credit rating), it is possible to attract large sums with low rates. This situation is very profitable for Kazakhstan, which has financial problems with its budget because of low prices for oil, which led to export decrease and affected currency earnings and the balance of payments in general. Taking into account the abovementioned facts, I can say that bond offerings are a sound decision in the conditions,” said Kazakhstan Institute for Strategic Studies chief research fellow Vyacheslav Dodonov, PhD, in an interview on July 21.

Dodonov added bond offerings in the future will depend on the situation with the national budget and need for Kazakh economy support.

“If the state has need in new bond offerings, they will be profitable, too, because the capital market situation will be favourable in the nearest future. As of today, Kazakhstan's national debt isn't high and it is possible to increase it within reasonable limits,” he said.

ECONOMY NEWS IN BRIEF

Ukraine wants to buy gas from Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, Tengrinews reported. The question was raised again during the meeting of Deputy Prime Minister of Ukraine Hennadii Zubko, Deputy Prime Minister of Kazakhstan Bakhytzhon Sagintayev and Minister of Energy of Ukraine Vladimir Demchishin earlier this month. Head of the European Integration Department at the Ukrainian Energy and Coal Industry Ministry Mykhailo Bno-Airiyan tweeted that the question had been raised after the meeting. “We are ready to buy gas from Kazakhstan. We should return to this issue. There are transit issues, but we have to work it out,” Bno-Airiyan tweeted, according to the report. “There is a similar situation with transit of gas from Turkmenistan. We need the transit of Central Asian gas.”

Trade turnover between Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan was \$377.6 million in the second quarter 2015, Bnews reported, citing the information service of Kyrgyzstan's Customs Service. Kazakhstan is its neighbour's third biggest trading partner, after Russia and China. Imports from Kazakhstan represented \$265.32 million; exports to Kazakhstan were \$112.27 million.

Indian state-run power equipment maker BHEL signed three agreements with Kazakh companies during the visit of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi to the country earlier in July. The Economic Times reported. BHEL also signed agreements with Kazakhstan's national power utility Samruk Energy, with Kazakhstan Utility Systems (KUS) to build power plants and combined heat and power plants, and with national export and development company KAZNEX Invest.

Kyrgyzstan will import 850 million kilowatt-hours of electricity from Kazakhstan in 2015, Bnews.kz reported, citing the press service of Kyrgyzstan's Ministry of Energy and Industry. A water shortage in the country in recent years has forced Kyrgyzstan to buy electricity from its neighbours. Kyrgyzstan will also buy 150 million kilowatt-hours from Tajikistan.

Astana has made more than \$388.1 million between January and May this year, Kazinform reported, citing an announcement at the sitting of the city's Permanent Commission on Budget, Economy and Entrepreneurship. The income represents 103.2 percent of what was expected to be earned for that reporting period.

The Kazakh government plans to reduce the share of imported milk consumed in Kazakhstan from 28 percent to 18 percent by 2020 as part of the 100 Concrete Steps to implement the nation's five institutional reforms, Kazinform reported. At a Central Communications Service briefing on July 23, Deputy Minister of Agriculture Yermek Kosherbayev said, “Due to the creation of production cooperatives it is planned to increase milk production by 500,000 tonnes by 2020 and to increase the processing capacity of production from 40 percent to 70 percent, and to reduce the share of imports in the consumption of milk from 28 percent to 18 percent.” Activities as part of the 60th step are to attract investors to Kazakhstan's dairy sector. State support for processing projects is a priority of the Agribusiness 2020 programme and the second five-year plan of the State Programme for Accelerated Industrial-Innovative Development.

Kazakhstan is among the world's 50 best exporting countries, taking 49th place, Minister of Investment and Development of Kazakhstan Asset Issekeshiev announced on July 20, Kazinform reported. Kazakhstan exports about 850 types of goods to about 260 million people around the world, he said. The main export destinations are Russia, Central Asia countries, Iran and China. Kazakhstan produces 40 percent of the world's yellow phosphorus and 46 percent of its uranium; the two are major export products. Kazakhstan is among the top three countries producing and exporting titanium and flour.

Kazakhstan Ranks 50th in Global Competitiveness Rating

Continued from Page A1

The report categorises them into three economic stages and two transition stages: stage one, factor-driven; stage two, efficiency-driven; and stage three, innovation-driven; plus transitions between stages one and two and between stages two and three. The report classified Kazakhstan as transitioning from stage two to stage three, among 24 other countries including Malaysia, Russia, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates and others.

The report takes the stages of development into account by attributing higher relative weights to pillars that are more relevant for economies in each stage of development, it explained. Efficiency-enhancing pillars like higher education and training, goods market efficiency, labour market efficiency, financial market development, technological readiness and market size were weighted most heavily for Kazakh-

stan's stage of development. When ranked on those pillars alone, Kazakhstan rose to 48th place, but falls to 89 when ranked on business sophistication and innovation, the key pillars for third-stage, innovation-driven economies.

Kazakhstan's ranking, just out of the range of the top third, was buoyed by high marks for its macroeconomic environment – including ranking ninth for government budget balance and 11th for government debt as a percent of gross domestic product – and labour market efficiency, including coming in 16 for pay and productivity, 20 for flexibility of wage determination and 22 for hiring and firing practices. It also fared well on strength of investor protection – 22nd – and on mobile telephone subscriptions among the population – fourth.

Weighing down the country's ranking were poor scores among the basic requirements in health and primary education (96), in fi-

nanial market development (98) among the efficiency enhancers, and in both business sophistication (91) and innovation (85) among the innovation factors. Kazakhstan was rated highly for its rail infrastructure but very poorly for its roads and ports (113 and 123, respectively). On the innovation side, Kazakhstan's highest scores were for willingness to delegate authority (55) and company spending on research and development (68).

The most problematic factors for doing business in the country were identified, in order of severity, as corruption, access to financing, inefficient government bureaucracy and tax regulation. The information is drawn from the 2014 edition of the World Economic Forum's Executive Opinion Survey.

Kazakhstan's current Nurly Zhol economic programme, announced in November, focuses heavily on infrastructure development, particularly road and port infrastructure,

and envisions trip times between Kazakh cities cut by one third by 2019. Following President Nursultan Nazarbayev's reelection in April, the government announced the policy would coordinate with China's New Silk Road Economic Belt expected to boost the development of transit infrastructure dramatically in the short and medium term.

The country is working with marine terminal operator DP World of the UAE as an advisor on two key port development projects: the “dry port” of the Khorghos Special Economic Zone on the border with China and the port of Aktau, Kazakhstan's main cargo and bulk terminal on the Caspian Sea. Kazakhstan Temir Zholy, the national railway company, has also launched a pilot project on multimodal rail-air transport connections through the country.

Kazakhstan has also taken steps to reduce corruption through its new Plan of the Nation, which

outlines steps for creating a more professional civil service and more stringent requirements for law enforcement and judicial personnel, among other reforms. The country also signed a landmark Partnership for Re-Energising the Reform Process in Kazakhstan with the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development in May 2014, expressly aimed at increasing access to financing in the country, which has led to 80 percent increase in the bank's domestic lending.

The rankings generated some unexpected groupings, with one example being Kazakhstan, the Philippines, China, Lao PDR, Mongolia, the U.S., Israel, Namibia and Tanzania sharing the same scores as to the extent to which organised crime imposes costs on doing business.

The Global Competitiveness Rankings work with partner institutes around the globe. In Kazakhstan, their partner was the National Analytical Centre.

BUSINESS

WEDNESDAY, JULY 29, 2015

BUSINESS NEWS IN BRIEF

The first exclusive exhibition of Iranian companies in Kazakhstan opened in the Aktau port on July 21, the Tehran Times reported. The companies showcased work in agriculture, fishing, the oil and gas industry, transport and transit, tourism, construction, and technical and engineering services. Kazakhstan was the 20th leading importer of Iranian non-oil goods for the Iranian calendar year ending on March 20, the report said, citing the Iran Customs Administration. Iran's non-oil exports to Kazakhstan totalled \$205.11 million; its imports of non-oil goods reached \$175.95 million.

Astana is to get its first McDonald's restaurants, the city's Department of Architecture and City Planning announced. The opening dates have not been announced, but the department said one of the fast food restaurants will be on the left bank of the Yessil River, the other one on the right bank. McDonald's has more than 35,000 restaurants in 119 countries, as of 2013.

Kazakhstan's largest mobile phone operator, KCell, announced on July 17 that its net income had fallen by nearly a quarter, 23.6 percent, in the first half of 2015, Reuters reported. It blamed the downturn on rising competition and aggressive pricing policies. KCell, which is controlled by Swedish-based TeliaSonera AB, said its net income dropped from January-June to 24.6 billion tenge (US\$131.3 million).

Air Astana has seen its operating profit increase by 115 percent in the first half of 2015, the Buying Business Travel reported. Kazakhstan's flagship airline recorded a net profit of \$8.3 million in that quarter. In the first half of 2014, it suffered a loss of \$36.4 million. Passenger numbers also rose in the first half of 2015 by 4 percent to 1.82 million, perhaps buoyed by recently added routes from Astana to Paris, Seoul, Bangkok and Tbilisi.

The number of small- and medium-sized enterprises in Astana has grown 13.7 percent since July 1, 2014 to the same date this year, and their share of gross value added to the gross regional product has increased by 58.8 percent in that period, Bnews reported, citing Astana.kz. As of July 1, there were 96,241 active SMEs in Astana, including eight farms. The number of people employed in SMEs increased year on year by 14.2 percent.

A special tax regime is to be put into place for agricultural cooperatives through the law "On Agricultural Cooperation," Vice Minister of Agriculture Yermek Kosherbayev announced at a Central Communications Service briefing on July 23. The law will help agricultural cooperatives to transition from non-commercial to commercial entities, which will help them accumulate income collectively. The law also provides for legal mechanisms for establishing commercial agricultural cooperatives and allows for a variety of types of ownership. The law will introduce a compulsory internal audit. The bill is now in the lower chamber of Kazakhstan's Parliament.

Kazakhstan has allocated \$14.43 million to subsidise the guaranteed purchase price for processing plants and raw materials for personal subsidiary farms through the Agribusiness 2020 Programme, director of the Department of Production and Processing of Livestock Products at the Ministry of Agriculture Yerkebulan Akhmetov announced, as reported by the website of Kazakhstan's prime minister. The subsidy programme was launched last year.

President of Kazakhstan signed the law "On ratification of an agreement between the Republic of Kazakhstan and Japan on promotion and mutual protection of investments," the Akorda press service reported on July 23.

Kazakhstan, Germany Agree to Expand Energy Cooperation During Astana Forum

By Kamila Zhumabayeva

ASTANA – The first Kazakh-German forum on energy and infrastructure networks was held July 14 in the city. The delegations, headed by Kazakh Ministry of Investment and Development First Vice Minister Albert Rau and the German Energy Agency Managing Director Ulrich Benterbusch, signed a memorandum on cooperation in energy conservation and efficiency.

Government delegations and company representatives from both countries opened their speeches on the Kazakh and German perspectives regarding cooperation in fields of energy efficiency and infrastructure networks, energy efficiency in industry and network infrastructure. The participants visited the EXPO 2017 exhibition site the following day.

The framework conditions and further plans in the field of Kazakh energy efficiency, planning strategy for network industrialisation and modernisation and market development were major topics at the forum. The setting provided an opportunity to exchange experience and technologies between companies from both nations, according to the press release from the Office of German Economy in Central Asia.

In relation to entering the World



Trade Organisation (WTO) and strengthening competition in the global arena, chairman of the Institute for the Development of Electric Power Industry and Energy Conservation Zhakyp Bogenbayev stressed the need to modernise and attract new technologies to make Kazakh products more competitive in the global market.

"The transfer of technologies, facilities and the training of our specialists in the field of energy conservation are among the most promising key directions of Kazakh-German energy cooperation," he said in an interview. "The memorandum is an opportunity for us to engage in these clearly-defined actions, and authorised bodies can coordinate all actions," he said.

Bogenbayev also spoke about Kazakhstan's innovative developments in the field of energetics.

"New proposals, facilities, technology on improvement of the energy management system, efficiency and fuel burning are some of the developments that are important to a lot of joint foreign companies like Siemens and IBB," he noted.

Deputy head of the department of international energy policy at the German Federal Ministry of Economics and Energetics Jorg Kirsch listed the three major directions in which German companies are interested regarding the energy sphere in Kazakhstan.

"First of all, Kazakhstan is in fifth place in supplying oil to Ger-

many. It is very important, because we think the net supply of mineral resources will be developing here, too. Secondly, we are interested in what Kazakhstan does about energy efficiency and conservation and we think that renewable energy in Kazakhstan will be as developed as it is in a largely experienced area in Germany. Thirdly, Kazakh and German companies can cooperate with each other," he explained.

Kirsch responded to a question about inventive German developments in energetics which he thinks may be realised in Kazakhstan.

"We have renewable energy sources such as wind and sun which need to be checked for

compatibility with local rates here and whether using them can be economical for Kazakhstan," he added.

Kirsch also mentioned issues with heating stations and distribution and technical issues such as pump technology to be developed in future.

The energy intensity of the Kazakh gross domestic product (GDP) is higher than many other countries and production of raw materials, loss of electric power transmission and inefficient use of heat and electricity are the reasons behind this, stated the press release. According to 2015 Kazakh GDP and economic data, the GDP made up \$249 billion and real GDP growth was estimated at 4.6 percent in 2014.

Future Energy is the theme of EXPO 2017, the international specialised exhibition to be held in the city. Exhibition objects can become an example for the introduction of alternative sources of energy and energy conservation that can serve as a good opportunity for joint projects of Kazakh and German companies, according to the press release. German companies are leaders in improving energy efficiency and conservation and in technologies of renewable energy and throughout the years many of these companies have been represented in Kazakhstan.

Technology Centre Announces Three More Commercial Successes

By Michelle Witte

ASTANA – Three more projects funded by the Technology Commercialisation Centre (TCC) in Astana have found commercial success in Kazakhstan and beyond in agricultural, cosmetics and mining, the TCC announced.

The three projects include a microbe cocktail created by scientists at the National Centre for Microorganisms to eliminate fatty waste from dairy and meat production, a software programme created by a team in Karaganda that calculates the layout and specifications for supports in mine shafts, and a line of high-end skincare products infused with local plant extracts.

The microbe cocktail eats the fatty waste from dairy and meat production processes and has been tested successfully at a dairy production site and a slaughter house, TCC Lead Expert Erik Azulay said in a July 22 interview. The process will now be licensed to agricultural production facilities from the centre where it was developed and is looking to expand across the country.

The mine support software, which generates the technical passport for the design of mine shaft supports, has gone from TCC funding to commercial success in seven months, a rate Azulay called "unheard of." The project has concluded two contracts, he reported, one for 8 million tenge (US\$42,771) and one for 18.5 million (US\$98,930), and is in the final stages of talks on a third.

"We found a project, they had an idea, they had some basic software," Azulay said. "To give them a grant, to have them funded and to have them already up and running and have three contracts [in that timeframe] is pretty much unheard of. So we're extremely proud of that one. ... It's one of our big successes."

Abylai Akhymbekov, who manages the mining software project, said the team of developers

wasn't surprised at their success – they just needed a hand. "They knew that there is a problem and it should be solved. They knew that the demand was high among mining companies, they just needed a real product – and a domestic product, because the alternatives that are used now, from abroad, are not always that suitable for our mines." The new software, because of its specific technical results, saves companies a lot of time and money on calculating the best and safest design for their mine supports.

The final project is a cosmetic product that has already seen success in Russia and is now being modified for the Kazakh market. The RNA-based skin care products, which are currently being produced in Germany with Kazakh ingredients, will soon be made in Kazakhstan, following the completion of their manufacturing operation here in September. Azulay reported that the company has sold about \$39,000 worth of merchandise in Kazakhstan in the two months since they began operation, and they are expecting a huge boost in sales once the cosmetics are produced locally. "We're very optimistic and happy about that."

Azulay is also pleased about the licensing agreements that the software and microbe projects have concluded. Licensing is still relatively uncommon in Kazakhstan, and he points out that after only about a year, the TCC has increased invention licensing in Kazakhstan by 40 or 50 percent – adding four licensing deals, with more likely by the end of the year, to Kazakhstan's annual average of only 10-14.

"Part of our goal is to help spread the knowledge of and train people about the value of intellectual property, and part of that is licensing deals," Azulay said. "Companies can now see that licensing is a viable option so that innovating ecosystem we're promoting is starting to grow."

Nine Kazakh Startup Teams to Receive Technology Training in Silicon Valley

By Yerbolat Uatkhonov

ASTANA – Nine Kazakh tech startup teams have won the opportunity to receive training in Silicon Valley as a result of their performance in the Technation competition, which attracted startup groups from former Soviet Union countries, Europe and Asia.

"More than 20 experts in the U.S. will teach our young members of the startup teams. We have many good ideas, but our marketing, business plans and design aren't developed well. The project is partially financed by the Kazakhstan government, partially by Kazakhstan investors," said Deputy Chairman of National Agency for Technological Development Zhumatai Salimov, reported Bnews.

The competition was organised by the Ministry for Investment and

Development of Kazakhstan in cooperation with the National Agency for Technological Development and Happy Farm business accelerator.

An expert panel examined 345 startup concepts. Of those, 41 percent were related to mobile technology and 33 percent involved e-commerce. The remainder involved media and cloud-based technology ideas.

Kazakh startup teams were the most numerous and submitted 262 projects, which is 76 percent of all the ideas submitted. Forty-six startup teams from Ukraine presented ideas and 14 came from Russia.

Submissions were also received from Azerbaijan, Belarus, China, Kyrgyzstan, Slovenia, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Thailand, the U.K., the U.S., and Uzbekistan.

Experts and mentors of the

Technation programme selected the best 80 teams, which took part in working seminars where they created business plans, presentations for investors and businessmen and worked on networking.

The Technation panel then chose the 40 best teams, which were then provided the opportunity to participate in interactive workshops as well as to study how to create startups and how to analyse the investment attractiveness of commercial projects.

Ultimately, nine Kazakh teams were selected to participate in the education programme in Silicon Valley, United States. The panel announced the names of the winning teams in Almaty on July 26. The Kazakh teams are Crystal, Greedy, FastCallManager, Indybo, Mobile CRM, Mangust, AlmaSales, picVpic and BIZMO.

EBRD Organises \$300 Million Syndicated Loan for Modernisation of Country's Railways

By Madi Barlybayev

ASTANA – The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) and a group of international commercial banks are providing a syndicated financing package of \$300 million in support of a comprehensive modernisation and restructuring programme of Kazakhstan's Temir Zholy (KTZ), the country's rail operator, the lender said in a July 27 press release. The proceeds of the loan will be used to refinance KTZ's eurobonds.

KTZ is a national railway company that manages railway infrastructure and operates freight and a large share of passenger train services.

The EBRD will extend \$150 million of this amount for its own account and syndicate the remaining \$150 million to commercial banks.

The syndicate comprises the following banks: Citibank, NA, London branch; Mizuho Bank, Ltd; Société Générale; Sumitomo Mitsui Banking Corporation; and the Bank of Tokyo-Mitsubishi UFJ, Ltd.

The signing ceremony took place at the EBRD headquarters in London in the presence of representatives of the EBRD, KTZ and the Kazakh Embassy in the UK.

As part of the project, the EBRD will engage with KTZ on tariff system reform and the ongoing business transformation of the company. KTZ will also continue to implement sustainable energy technologies, which are a constant feature of its long-term cooperation with the EBRD.

Natalia Khanjenkova, EBRD managing director for Turkey and Central Asia, said at the signing at the bank's headquarters in London: "We are proud to further

support railway sector reform in Kazakhstan with this syndicated financing package. International financiers' interest in the project demonstrates investor confidence in KTZ and Kazakhstan."

Sholpan Omarbekova, KTZ managing director for finance and economics, added: "With this new transaction the EBRD will not only provide financing, but also assist KTZ with advancing the reform of the regulatory framework in the sector."

To date, the EBRD has invested more than \$7 billion in various sectors of Kazakhstan's economy. The bank is the largest investor in the non-oil and gas sectors of the country's economy. The EBRD, owned by 64 countries and two intergovernmental institutions, is supporting the development of market economies and democracies.

EDITORIAL & OPINIONS

WEDNESDAY, JULY 29, 2015

Race to Host 2022 Winter Olympics Has Been Well Run Regardless of Who Wins

The long race to host the 2022 Winter Olympics is in the final straight. The marathon that began more than two years ago for those cities taking part will finally come to an end on July 31 in Kuala Lumpur with a vote by the International Olympic Committee (IOC).

Like all the best sporting contests, there has been plenty of unpredictability. Heavily favoured contenders have not lasted the pace, leaving Almaty and Beijing as the last two in the race. It is not an outcome experts would have predicted at the start.

No one knows who will cross the finish line first. The ballot is secret and those voting rightly don't reveal their intentions. But Beijing, of course, remains the favourite. It is a great world city, which recently hosted a successful Summer Games.

The fact, however, that there remains such uncertainty over the result of the vote underlines Almaty's extraordinarily strong performance. A bid seen very much at the beginning as rank outsider has won praise and friends for what it can offer the Olympic Movement and sport.

Such has been the change in attitude that no one who has been following the process closely should be shocked if the underdog comes out on top or be concerned that Almaty would not stage first-class Games. With most venues already operating or being built and detailed plans in place for the rest of the infrastructure for 2022, Almaty is far further in preparedness than Beijing or many other cities that have been chosen to host major sporting events.

There should be no surprise, of course, over such advanced preparations. Almaty is already a major winter sports centre. It successfully hosted the Asian Winter Games in 2011 and is preparing to welcome in 2017 thousands of student athletes, officials and visitors to the Winter Universiade – the biggest winter sport event outside the Olympics.

Visitors and athletes to Almaty will find not only great facilities and plenty of snow but also a modern, vibrant and fascinating city situated in an area of spectacular natural beauty. It was this mix of qualities that senior IOC figures said made them look at Almaty's bid in a much more positive way than they had anticipated.

It is also why Almaty and Kazakhstan will be the winners no matter which way the vote goes in Malaysia. If the city wins the right to host the 2022 Games, there will be huge excitement across our sports-mad nation. This passion for winter sports, along with the detailed planning which has already taken place and the commitment at the city and national levels, will ensure that the 2022 Games will be memorable. It will be a deserved win and a result which fits well with Olympic ideals and ambitions.

But while there will be real disappointment if Almaty is passed at the finish line, the contest has brought major and lasting benefits for the city and country. The strength of the bid has put the city and Kazakhstan very much on the Olympic map. This won't be the last time that Kazakhstan throws its hat in the ring for major sporting events. Thanks to all the hard work that has gone into presenting the 2022 case, future proposals will have an even stronger base.

Favourable comments from surprised IOC members also point to a broader benefit. It is clear the bid – and the hard evidence which supported it – has helped bring people up to date about Kazakhstan. The more people hear and see for themselves what the country has to offer and what's been achieved, the more they understand this is a modern country with a huge amount to offer that is making its way successfully in the world. It's why the 2022 bid was such a strong sign of confidence in our country's future.

Kazakhstan: 100 Steps Toward a New Nation

By Erlan Idrissov

Kazakhstan's 100 Concrete Steps initiative was launched in the spring as a direct response to worsening regional and global conditions. Increased tensions between the major powers had led to tit-for-tat sanctions which had an impact far beyond the countries directly involved. Slowing growth across the world had seen the price of energy and raw materials fall. Europe, Kazakhstan's biggest trading partner, remained in economic trouble, as has been underlined by the difficulties of putting in place a rescue package for Greece.

It can be tempting, when faced with such unexpected storms, to put aside long-term goals and focus all efforts on getting through the crisis safely. But faced with these strong geopolitical and economic headwinds, Kazakhstan's solution was to accelerate the country's modernisation plans.

The 100 Concrete Steps programme, called Plan of the Nation, was unveiled soon after President Nursultan Nazarbayev's re-election and is designed to provide the strong national platform needed to overcome both short-term challenges and achieve the country's ambition of joining the top 30 developed countries by 2050. It is a comprehensive reform package that builds on past progress to drive improvements in all the country's institutional pillars.

Among the detailed measures are reforms to create a more effective and professional public service. Open recruitment, better training, and pay and promotion linked to performance will be introduced. Experts are to be brought in from the private sector and, where needed, from outside Kazakhstan to ensure the state sector works more effectively for citizens and the country.

Similar far-reaching reforms including the expansion of trial by jury and increased rights for defendants are being introduced to strengthen the rule of law. The entire judicial process is becoming more transparent. Judges will have to serve, for the first time, a probation period and won't be appointed without gaining relevant experience. The involvement of distinguished



judges and lawyers from abroad will again bring up standards to international levels.

Recruitment of the police is to be overhauled and new and existing officers are to be judged against tough professional criteria. Training will be improved while the creation of local police forces accountable to communities will increase trust and responsiveness.

The programme also sets out concrete steps to improve the performance of the economy by strengthening protection for investors, cutting red tape, making tax more transparent and supporting entrepreneurship. Customs and planning regulations are to be streamlined and the electricity industry and transport links modernised. The ultimate goal is to build up and strengthen the country's middle class as the backbone of further economic and political development.

A major drive to increase exports of goods and services is being launched along with the creation, through attractive tax concessions, English system of law, and help for investors, of a new Astana International Financial Centre. Together with Kazakhstan's full membership of the WTO which comes into force later this

year, it underlines the country's commitment to building a world-class and diversified economy.

Proposals to improve health and education provision are also central to the reforms. An overhaul of the way health services are provided and funded will see access and quality strengthened. Standards in schools including literacy are to be improved, universities given greater autonomy and, by gradually switching courses to English, increase the skills of Kazakh students while attracting more talented young people from overseas. A highly educated workforce will be needed for the long-term success of the reform programme.

Across the board as well, there are radical measures to increase openness and accountability and devolve decision-making, wherever possible, to a local level. Departments and agencies will have to publish regular information so citizens can judge their performance.

The switch to services being provided electronically will be speeded up to cut delays and reduce the potential for corruption. Indeed, the determination to root out all corruption, which President Nazarbayev has identified as an important goal for the country, is a constant theme of the reforms.

Taken together, these 100 Steps mean there's nothing short of a quiet revolution taking place in Kazakhstan. Seasoned economists and observers, including Russia's Sberbank chief German Gref who said he had experienced a "culture shock" at the depth and scope of Kazakhstan's reform agenda, have forecast it will lead to a radically different nation. In fact, such is the scope of reforms that hundreds of legislative amendments will have to be introduced in the fall session of the Parliament. January 1, 2016 is set to usher in a stronger, more agile and modern country.

By setting a goal of becoming one of the 30 most developed countries Kazakhstan has raised its sights very high. This detailed programme shows that, despite the current storms, the country is determined not to be blown off course.

The author is Minister of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan. The opinion was first published by The Diplomat on July 25, 2015.

Almaty 2022 Olympic Bid, the Perfect Fit for Agenda 2020

By Andrey Kryukov

With just 10 days left to go, the Host City race for the 2022 Winter Olympic Games is shaping up to be one of the most exciting and important in recent decades. Dramatic changes that have unfolded within the Olympic Movement since the beginning of the bidding process have had major implications on the race, and look to be a major factor in determining which city emerges victorious in Kuala Lumpur on July 31.

The dramatic changes I am referring to are all related to the International Olympic Com-

mittee's (IOC) recent adoption of the critical Olympic Agenda 2020 reforms. These reforms, produced through extensive consultation with the Olympic Family and its many stakeholders, represent the IOC's bold new vision for the Games in the 21st century and are a monumental step forward for the Olympic Movement.

Under the IOC's new guidelines, bid cities bear less of the cost of bidding for the Games and are even rewarded for cutting costs by using existing infrastructure to host the Games in a responsible and prudent manner. The IOC Session approved these reforms in December 2014, which means that the race for 2022 Winter Games Host City is the first to fall under their purview.

In Almaty, much has changed since the beginning of the bidding process, but the one thing that has remained consistent is our vision and concept for the Winter Games. From the get-go, Almaty 2022 designed its Games Plan to match the long-term needs of our city and region. This is real change for the Winter Games and fits perfectly with the goals of Olympic Agenda 2020. That is what we mean by "Keeping it Real".

Almaty is a real winter sports city surrounded by 4,000-metre high mountains with plenty of real snow flowing gently into the city itself. This will benefit the athletes by providing the ideal competitive conditions for both the 2022 Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games.

When I say ideal competition conditions, I mean that Almaty's mountain venues will average between 120-150 centimetres of fresh, natural snow coverage during our proposed Games periods. We also have dozens of rivers and numerous large mountain lakes available for potential snow making without impacting local water supply.

Additionally, Almaty 2022's Games Plan is one of the most compact and efficient plans in over 30 years. All venues are within a 30 kilometres radius of the Olympic Village and 70 per cent of our venues are already completed and in use. Moreover, by the time of the 2017 Winter Universiade, over 80 percent will exist, with another five years until the 2022 Winter Games.

Almaty's bid budgets are modest because we only have to build two new venues in order to host the 2022 Winter Games. No new mountain venues and no major transportation projects need to be developed, meaning negligible impact on the environment.



This is not only great for athletes and spectators, it also sets a model for future Green Winter Games and fulfils an important element of Agenda 2020: sustainability.

Almaty has already seen the power of Olympic Agenda 2020 in action. Thanks to our successful meetings with the Evaluation Commission, we reduced our original budget by \$500 million.

That is Olympic Agenda 2020 in action, not in theory.

For us, "Keeping it Real" means keeping Agenda 2020 real. Our vision for a sensible, affordable and sustainable Winter Games is real and perfectly suited to bring the IOC's new Olympic Agenda 2020 reforms to life.

Almaty 2022 promises a return to a responsible Games model by adapting the Winter Games to fit our city and its long-term needs. We want to show the world that young and developing nations similar to Kazakhstan can host the Games affordably and sustainably.

On July 31, we intend to show the IOC members that their vision and our vision are one and the same. Almaty is ready to take the next step on the world stage and we can think of no better partner than the Olympic Movement.

The author is the vice-chairman of Almaty 2022 Bid Committee.



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Roman Vassilenko
Editor-in-Chief
The Astana Times

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OPINIONS

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Hosting Olympic Games Offers Widespread Benefits, Kazakhstan's Diplomat Says

By Aiman Turebekova

Astana – During its 121st session in Copenhagen, Denmark in October 2009, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) selected Rio de Janeiro, Brazil as host city for the Games of the XXXI Olympiad. The large-scale event will be held next year from Aug. 5-21.

This will be the first Olympic Games to be held in South America, the second in Latin America after the 1968 Olympic Games in Mexico City and the first since 2000 taking place in the Southern Hemisphere.

The Astana Times recently interviewed Kazakhstan Ambassador to Brazil Bakytzhan Ordabayev, who also represents the country in Argentina and Chile.

How is Rio de Janeiro preparing for the 2016 Summer Olympic Games?

The next Summer Olympic and Paralympic Games will be held in four zones of the city of Rio de Janeiro: Barra, Deodoro, Maracanã and Copacabana.

The Barra da Tijuca neighbourhood, often simply called Barra, will be the heart of the Rio 2016 Olympic and Paralympic Games. Located in the western section of the city, it is surrounded by lagoons and mountains and boasts one of the best beaches in Rio.

The Barra zone will be home to Barra Olympic Park, the largest concentration of Games venues, plus the Riocentro Exhibition Centre that has four pavilions, the new Olympic golf course and the Pontal venue. In all, the 15 competition venues in Barra will stage 23 Olympic sport disciplines and



Bakytzhan Ordabayev

13 Paralympic sport disciplines. The zone will also be home to the Olympic and Paralympic Village, athletes' park and international broadcasting centre-main press centre complex.

Deodoro Olympic Park will be the second largest concentration of competition venues during the Rio 2016 Games, promising a vibrant mix of traditional and newer sports. Located in the western part of Rio, the neighbourhood of Deodoro played a prominent role in the 2007 Pan-American Games, when a number of new venues were built there. This resulted in increased participation of young people in several sports and the aim is to build on this achievement through the Rio 2016 Games. A sporting legacy will be left in the shape of the X-Park, which will include the Whitewater Stadium and Olympic BMX Centre, along with a 500,000 square metre public leisure area, the second biggest in Rio.

The region has a strong military presence thanks to large barracks and two of the venues built for the Pan-Am Games that will be renovated for the Rio 2016 Games – the Olympic Shooting Centre and Olympic Equestrian Centre –

are used by the army. Deodoro's nine venues will host 11 Olympic sports and four Paralympic sports in 2016.

The Maracanã zone is in the northern part of Rio, close to the city centre. It includes two of Rio's most famous landmarks: Maracanã Stadium, which will stage the opening and closing ceremonies and football matches, and Sambódromo, the home of the carnival parade that will host the Olympic marathon and Olympic and Paralympic archery events.

Arguably Rio de Janeiro's most famous neighbourhood, Copacabana is defined by its 4 kilometre-long crescent-shaped beach. It is here that the beach volleyball arena will be located – at the sport's spiritual home in Brazil. The marathon swimming, triathlon, para-triathlon, Olympic cycling road race and Paralympic marathon events will be held in the waters and land around Fort Copacabana at the southern end of the beach. In addition, this venue will stage the rowing, canoe sprint and paracanoe events.

Construction of major facilities such as the Centre of Rio and the Olympic arena has come to an end. At the same time, according to the opinion of Brazilian experts, the construction of some Olympic venues is late by 30 percent. In particular, work is delayed for preparation of a cycling road and a golf course.

Nevertheless, the administration of Rio de Janeiro has an active pace of construction. Work is underway to launch the underground, which will be delivered by the deadline. The cost of underground construction in Rio de Janeiro will amount to 8.7 billion Brazilian re-

als (US\$2.7 billion). The city's authorities have ordered 604 underground trains from China and 90 trains will be transferred in the near future.

In addition to the underground, work is underway on the construction of bus rapid transit (BRT) transport systems. In general, the BRT line will include 63 stations with a length of 59 km.

According to approximate data, more than 12,000 athletes from 205 countries will take part in the Games. Currently, the budget of the event is \$2.93 billion dollars, without taking into account the financial costs of the government on the development of infrastructure at the venue of the Olympic Games.

What are the benefits the 2016 Summer Olympic Games will bring to Brazil?

Thanks to Brazil's World Cup, the number of foreign tourists visiting Brazil in 2014 grew by 10.6 percent in comparison to the year 2013. According to the Ministry of Tourism of Brazil, in June 2014 the influx of tourists tripled.

In this regard, Brazilian social scientists are already predicting a significant increase in the flow of tourists for the Olympics in 2016. For instance, 30 countries were represented at the World Cup, whereas at the Olympic Games Brazil will host more than 200 countries.

This is a unique opportunity to show Brazil to the world.

One of the main advantages of the Olympic Games is the creation of jobs as well as the development and restoration of the city's infrastructure.

In my opinion, Brazil has had a

unique opportunity to consolidate the brand "Brazil" in the international arena, as Brazil won two consecutive, significant events in the international arena, the FIFA World Cup 2014 and 2016 Olympics. This further increases the image of the country and illustrates the development of the state and its economy.

As you know, Kazakhstan has put forward the candidacy of Almaty city to host the Winter Olympic Games in 2022. Almaty is competing with Beijing, which hosted the Summer Olympics in 2008. According to Bloomberg, the most expensive Games were held in Beijing. The Chinese authorities spent \$43 billion on them: \$20 billion was spent on infrastructure, the construction of the Olympic Village and stadium with 80,000 seats. Do you consider it appropriate to spend such a sum? Is it not better to improve the already existing buildings, thus saving budget money?

Undoubtedly, major international events such as the Olympic Games require significant investment. It is true, however, that already-existing sports facilities do not always meet all the requirements of the IOC.

Much depends on the degree of infrastructure development of the capital which is hosting the Games. For example, the Olympic Games that were held in Atlanta in 1996 cost only \$1.7 billion.

Any Olympic Games are not just sports records and achievements, but also the opportunity to get a very good capital gain. For example, after the Olympics in Beijing, air has become cleaner; thanks to the Olympic Games, 200 technol-

ogy companies have switched to environmentally-friendly production methods and the city is actively developing green construction. London has become lively from 2012 due to the influx of tourists.

One of the main advantages of Almaty is the presence of objects of sport infrastructure. Seventy percent of the facilities are already available and the objects themselves are all within a radius of 35 km. In Beijing, there is also the problem of lack of sports infrastructure designed for the Olympic Winter Games and the distance between the two cities where it is planned to hold the Olympics in case of victory is about 240 km. There is no doubt Almaty has advantages in this regard.

What do you think what are additional advantages of the Almaty 2022 bid?

Of course, the real winter with beautiful scenery including renowned mountains and lakes, is a plus for our country. In addition, it should be noted that the 7th Asian Winter Games in 2011 were held at a high level in the cities of Astana and Almaty. IOC President Jacques Rogge praised the quality of the Games. At the Asian Games, we were able to show the development of our country and the willingness to take the XXXI Olympic Winter Games.

Sunkar, the international ski jump complex, biathlon complex and renovated Shymbulak ski resort, as well as the Baluan Sholak Sports Palace and FAC Medeu, were built in Almaty on the eve of the Asian Games. Besides, Almaty was honored to host the Winter Universiade in 2017, which is an indicator of the stability of the economic potential of the country and the city.

Today, two ice arenas for 3,000 and 12,000 visitors and the athletic village for 5,000 athletes are being built in Almaty. Thus in the near future, almost the entire sports infrastructure required for the Olympic Games will be launched in the city.

Venetian Cartographer to Help Prove 550th Anniversary of Kazakh Statehood

By Aliya Sagandykova

The question of undeniable importance for Kazakhstan: to consider the year 1991 as a starting point, or to look for and find the origins of statehood in the shroud of the Middle Ages. Two hundred scientists, historians from Kazakhstan, Russia, Turkey, Ukraine and the United States will exchange their findings and ideas in a series of conferences known as the 550th anniversary of Kazakh Khanate, to be held in Astana in 2015.

Among the sources on the history of Kazakh statehood, the medieval maps created in Western Europe have a special place. They reflect not only and not so much the history of Kazakh statehood, as the perception of the place of Kazakh statehood in the global system of political and economic relations in the complex and in many ways intriguing era. In this context, Mappo Mundo, the World Map compiled by Venetian monk Fra Mauro in about 1460, holds a special place as one of the most detailed and large-scale maps of the time. What can it tell us about the history of Kazakhstan's foreign relations of the era? The answers to this and many other questions are given by the author of the research work, Columbia University professor and director of the Kazakhstan branch of Masters of Development Practice/Global Classroom Rafis Abazov.

Mappo Mundo as a historical source on the history of Kazakh land

The world map of Fra Mauro presents the vision of the world according to the views in the 15th century and depicts among other things the territory of what is now Kazakhstan with some interesting details. The map, commissioned by the King of Portugal, was presumably created between 1450 and 1460 by a Venetian monk-cartographer in the monastery of San Gio-



vanni (near Venice). This is one of the most mysterious and intriguing maps of the Middle Ages, which has haunted researchers from many countries. It is important and interesting because – together with other political and cultural maps of the Middle Ages – it can serve as a source for the study of the history and development of the Kazakh state in the 15th century, particularly in the context of the scientific debate on the 550th anniversary of Kazakh statehood.

This map has its own interesting history as a historical source and it is an important document to study regarding early Kazakh statehood for three reasons. First, it was prepared in consultation with numerous written sources, including many sources that did not survive to the modern era. Second, it was based on numerous personal interviews with travellers and diplomats of the time. Mauro conducted interviews not only with the Venetian and Genoese citizens, but also with traders, travellers and ambassadors who lived in the Asian quarter of Venice. Many of the inhabitants of the Asian quarter were from the Central Asian region, where the foundations of Kazakh statehood were established

around the same time. Among them were probably representatives of Kazakh and other Turkic tribes, in particular, Kipchaks. Third, the content of the map is also fascinating, as this monumental map, measuring 2.4 by 2.4 metres, includes about 3,000 written marks, names and notes. Taking into account the characteristics of the era, they may contain special meaning, secret signs and codes including the history of diplomatic and military relations of Venice with states in the territory of Kazakhstan. Third, speaking in the context of Central Asian history, of course, the most valuable part is the usage of written medieval documents. Mauro conducted – in modern terms – a content analysis of information on the political, military and cultural status in the region. Many of these sources have simply not survived to modern time.

Secrets of scientist and cartographer Fra Mauro

We can only guess about the secrets of this monumental research work, as all the scientific and technical archive of cartographer Fra Mauro and all of his records and interviews mysteriously disappeared

after his death in 1464 or 1465. What could he have? The answer lies in part in the fate of this map. Even though the map was commissioned and paid by the King of Portugal, Afonso V (1432-1481), researcher Dr. Piero Falchetta suggests that the first copy never reached its customer. He believes that the vaults of Marciano contain the second copy, though it was also made by the au-

thor. Falchetta believes that many of the secret lodge spy networks and the royal courts were highly interested that the map would not leave Venice and that its secrets would not reach the destination. Here we must remember that Mauro's map for some unknown reason is drawn upside down, as if in a mirror. It also reflects the political and cultural perception of the world by the Venetians, or is an attempt to, so that others are not able to decipher its secret meaning.

Here are a few interesting points for studying the history of Kazakhstan. The map could have a lot of secrets and information and shed light on the history of the economic and political relations of Venice and Western Europe with the Kazakh khans. First, it is the history of economic relations and trade on the Silk Road in the second half of the 15th century. It is striking that the Venetians were confident that there was intensive trade in the region and that the great Silk Road continued to exist – this is illustrated by numerous drawing carts on the map. Second, the map can serve as a source for the study of the economic and financial condition of residence in the territory of the Kazakh tribes. It is striking that Mauro

and the Venetians did not consider the Kazakh steppe as a desert area and placed a lot of different settlements in its territory (although geographically they are not always reflected in the correct location). Third, the Venetians believed that the Chagatai Dynasty had played a great role in the political organisation of the region in this period – the map contains the individual entries on its political role. That might be an illustration that perhaps Mauro consulted with some individuals from this region. By analogy with the Ottoman and Timurid dynasties and others, we know that the Turkic khans and sultans tried to give their children a good education, including allowing them to travel.

International diplomacy and Kazakh State

This map along with other documents allows us to study the external conditions and prerequisites of the creation of Kazakh statehood and diplomatic relations of the era.

In fact, the theory of state and of government suggests that in order to create a state there should be both internal and external conditions and prerequisites. In this context, we can say that the Mappo Mundo prepared by Mauro in the context of many other materials makes it possible to research about the international background and conditions of the establishment of Kazakh statehood.

The author is a researcher.



EURASIA&WORLD

WEDNESDAY, JULY 29, 2015

Swiss Embassy Celebrated its National Day in Astana, Switzerland Enjoys Solid Relations with Kazakhstan

By Dmitry Lee

ASTANA – Switzerland, one of the first countries to confirm its participation in EXPO 2017, enjoys durable relations with Kazakhstan. As members of the same voting group since 2010, the two nations cooperate within the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. Their Central Banks have close ties, emphasised by the visit to Almaty earlier this year by Swiss National Bank President Thomas Jordan in order to meet his counterpart Kairat Kelimbetov.

Switzerland and Kazakhstan are recognised worldwide for adhering to neutral foreign policy. “Kazakhstan refers to it as ‘multi-vector policy,’ in Switzerland it is called ‘armed-neutrality,’ but it is a strong parallel between our two countries,” Swiss Ambassador to Kazakhstan Mauro Reina told The Astana Times in an exclusive interview. “If you take a closer look, there are plenty of similarities in both countries’ foreign relations. Switzerland maintains good relations with its neighbours and follows an important role not only bilaterally but also multilaterally. For instance, as it is well-known Kazakhstan has twice held the P5+1 Iran talks in 2013 and Switzerland has also hosted similar Iran talks on numerous occasions, the last one in Lausanne in early April. We are also supporting Kazakhstan in the bid for the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) non-permanent seat in 2017-2018. Furthermore, we seek more cooperation within such organizations like the United Nations and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), which Kazakhstan chaired in 2010 and we chaired last year.”

Switzerland is the third largest foreign investor in the Kazakh economy after the U.S. and the Netherlands. “Kazakhstan has been recognised as Switzerland’s main partner in the Central Asian



Mauro Reina

region,” said Reina. He added that Switzerland is grateful to Kazakhstan for the visa waiver for up to 15 days since July 16 because this is very important for doing business. Current statistics have estimated \$13.5 billion in Swiss direct investments into the country from 2005 until the first quarter of 2015. The data shows the trade turnover in 2014 totalled \$4.7 billion, with Kazakh exports at \$4.5 billion, 95.7 percent consisting of energy inputs and products. Imports totalled \$188 million, including pharmaceuticals and chemicals (36.5 percent), watches (12 percent), agricultural products (10.7 percent), precious stones and jewellery (10.6 percent), machinery and equipment (7.5 percent), electronics (6.2 percent), fertilizers (4.2 percent) and optics (3.9 percent).

(*Kazakhstan National Bank / Swiss Customs data courtesy of the Swiss Embassy in Kazakhstan and Tajikistan).

The ambassador also spoke about how his country contributes to the development of the service sector in Kazakhstan. One concrete example is the cooperation between Zurich Airport and the company KTZ Express for the management and development of public airports in Kazakhstan. “Also the new terminal of Astana Airport is being constructed by a Swiss company Mabetex”, Ambassador Reina mentioned. “In view of the upcoming EXPO 2017, the standards of



Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan Alexey Volkov (L) congratulates Swiss officials on their country's national day.

construction will be very high, up to the international level.”

A business delegation of Swiss Global Enterprise (S-GE) will visit Kazakhstan on Sept. 7-10. An equivalent to KAZNEX INVEST, S-GE works under the authority of the Swiss Government, and the purpose of its business trip is to help and promote small and medium-sized companies from Switzerland and the Principality of Liechtenstein to develop business relations with the Kazakh business community.

On a personal note, Reina wants to bring the best of Switzerland to Kazakhstan. Despite the geographic distance, he noted the importance of the two nations becoming

more familiar with one another. Switzerland is a popular destination for Kazakhs who travel there for reasons of business, study or health care or as tourists to explore the beautiful country sides.

“My Embassy is also active on the cultural exchange and thus has organised various cultural events in the past. Among other projects a Swiss Jazz Band from the French part gave live concerts and offered master classes in Almaty, Astana and Ust-Kamenogorsk. For now, together with the National Museum of Kazakhstan, we are planning an exhibition with the photographic works of one of Switzerland’s contemporary photographer next spring,” he said.

“This year, I felt that celebrating the Swiss National Day in Kazakhstan was something we needed to do. With the sponsorship of 21 Swiss companies and local businesses representing Swiss brands in Kazakhstan, we hosted the Swiss National Day in Astana on July 20. We showcased Swiss cuisine, wines and music, and with the nice weather on our side, our guests enjoyed a very pleasant evening in the garden of the Hotel Rixos President,” said the ambassador.

Reina noted how impressed he was with Kazakhstan. “It was my first time when I came to Kazakhstan two and a half years ago and I must say it was a learning process

for me. I am still amazed about the achievements of this country. I have travelled quite extensively through Kazakhstan during my stay here and I have been always received in a warm and exquisite way. The deep-rooted hospitality is some of the best in this country. Moreover, I am impressed about the well-educated Kazakh youth. The Bolashak Scholarship and the establishment of the Nazarbayev University have been the right priorities set by your farsighted President. They build a strong base for developing and diversifying the capabilities of the young Kazakh people. I hope that they will have good opportunities to further develop Kazakhstan,” he ended.

Kazakhstan, UN Sign Partnership Framework for Development

By Malika Rustem

ASTANA – On July 22, Kazakhstan’s Deputy Foreign Minister Yerzhan Ashikbayev and UN Resident Coordinator in the country Stephen Tull signed a Partnership Framework for Development for 2016-2020 (PFD), reported the press service of the Kazakh Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The document was also signed by representatives of 21 UN entities, including ILO, OHCHR, UNAIDS, UNCTAD, UNDP, UN-DPI, UNECE, UNEP, UNESCAP, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNIDO, UNISDR, UN-ODC, UNOPS, UNRCCA, UNV, UN Women and WHO.

The ministry considers the signing of the PFD an important step “to further development of cooperation between Kazakhstan and the UN, especially in terms

of the stable socioeconomic development of Kazakhstan and determination of the main courses of the organisation’s activities within the country in the next five years,” according to its press release.

According to the press release, the document “is guided by the country’s aspirations under the Kazakhstan 2050 Strategy, five institutional reforms announced by President Nursultan Nazarbayev [and the] new economic policy Nurly Zhol (Path to the Future).” The PFD has three pillars of action: reducing disparities and improving human development, creating innovative public institutions and strengthening international and regional cooperation.

Since becoming a UN member in March 1992, Kazakhstan has been cooperating with organisations of the United Nations family. With the country’s solid economic

progress, in recent years the sides began paying more attention to helping Kazakhstan build up institutional capacities for external development aid. Within this framework, Kazakhstan and the United Nations Development Programme have worked together on preparations for a launch of Kazakhstan’s Official Development Assistance (ODA) programme, under the provisional brand KazAID.

The country’s ambition to contribute more to global security and development also led to Kazakhstan announcing its first bid for a non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council for 2017-2018. The motto of Kazakhstan’s campaign to reach that goal is “United for Global Security,” with four priority action areas designated as food, water, energy and nuclear security.

The foreign ministry also announced that from July 13 to 16, a

Kazakh delegation participated at the United Nations Third International Conference on Financing for Development in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

During the visit, the delegation led by Ambassador-at-Large Askar Tazhiyev, spoke at a number of side events of the conference related to Astana’s initiatives in a number of fields, including green and renewable energy, transport connection issues of landlocked countries, agriculture, food and energy security.

As a result of the conference, a final document was adopted titled the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, which defines sources of financing for projects on fighting poverty and diseases, promoting economic progress and environmental protection. The Action Plan was recommended for approval by the 69th session of the UN General Assembly in New York.

Kyrgyzstan Requests Changes to 800 Metres of Shared Border

By Kamila Zhumbabayeva

ASTANA – Kyrgyzstan has asked Kazakhstan to deal with an 800-metre stretch of the border between the two countries in the Chu region, zakon.kz said on its website with reference to informburo.kz on July 20. During a bilateral meeting with Kazakhstan’s Prime Minister Karim Massimov, Kyrgyzstan’s Prime

Minister Temir Sariyev offered an agreement to find a solution to managing this short stretch of the state border that runs by the Chu region.

“We have a road that crosses the border of Kazakhstan when going to Issyk-Kul Lake from Bishkek and the motorway crosses the border [back] after 800 metres again. We propose to adopt a separate agreement on the use of this border area by Kyrgyzstan,” Sariyev

said. He noted that the Kyrgyz side will be maintaining that part of the road in case of a signed agreement while also mentioning Kyrgyzstan’s entry to the Eurasian Economic Union in the near future, the website reported.

The 800-metre road near the town of Tokmok, of the Bishkek-Naryn-Torugart motorway leading to Issyk-Kul, transits through the territory of Kazakhstan.

The prime ministers of both

countries agreed to build a by-pass channel along the Chu River. Sariyev said 60 percent of the volume from the 500-million-cubic-metre Orto-Tokoi Reservoir goes to Kazakhstan, according to Kyrgyz news sources.

Massimov, during his July 19 meeting with Sariyev, suggested quickening construction of the approximately 250-kilometre Almaty – Cholpon-Ata highway, Kazakh news agencies report.

Japanese EXPO 2017 Delegation Pays Scouting Visit to Astana

By Dmitry Lee

ASTANA – A Japanese delegation headed by Deputy Director of International Exhibitions Promotion Office of the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry of Japan Koki Otsuka recently visited Astana to “observe and analyse.”

“The purpose of our visit today is to gather information about Kazakhstan in general, the people who live here, about the country’s society and we want to take into account Kazakhstan’s situation,” Otsuka told The Astana Times in an exclusive interview.

According to Otsuka, the Future Energy theme of the upcoming EXPO 2017 is relevant for Japan.

“Japan has already received a strong message from the Kazakh side. In March 2014, EXPO 2017 Commissioner Rapil Zhoshybayev paid a visit to our country to discuss Japan’s participation in the global exhibition. As you well know, both the Japanese and Kazakh pavilions are very popular currently at Milan’s EXPO 2015, [hence the EXPO society has been formed] and we want to expand our leadership for EXPO 2017. We have a lot of experience in advanced technology and we are very concerned about energy security [that’s why the theme of the Future Energy is very relevant for Japan]. We also want to show our experience and history during EXPO 2017,” he said.

The participation of the Japanese side had been already confirmed and Japan has a clear strategy on the further steps.

“The Japanese government decided to participate in EXPO 2017 last February. Our next step will be appointing our EXPO commis-



Koki Otsuka

sioner, developing the pavilion’s concept.”

Although the visit lasted only a couple of days, the delegation was shown examples of EXPO 2017 construction.

“Fortunately, I have visited the EXPO 2017 construction site and I was informed about the current work and my first impression was that construction is going well and smoothly, the EXPO 2017 company’s work is convincing,” he said.

On a personal note Otsuka was also impressed by Kazakhstan and its people.

“This is my first visit to Kazakhstan and it is very short, but I have good impressions about Astana and Kazakhstan on the whole. Kazakhs are very sincere and very honest people and are very responsible. First of all, I would like to say that I appreciate the Kazakh people and this cooperation between Kazakhstan’s government and the Kazakh embassy in Japan. Kazakh high officials [treat] us very well and I believe it was a fruitful visit. We are not the last delegation. There are more Japanese delegations who will visit Kazakhstan and I look forward to the continued good relations with Kazakhstan.”

Nation & Capital

WEDNESDAY, JULY 29, 2015

CULTURE

Argentinean Artist Creates Giant Mural in Almaty

B3

SOCIETY

Almaty Zoo to be Reconstructed by End of Year

B5

SPORTS

FC Astana, Kairat Almaty to Meet Finnish, Scottish Clubs in European Cups

B7

Yoga's Popularity Grows in Kazakhstan



Ambassador of South Africa to Kazakhstan Shirish M. Soni (top centre) and Swami Brahmatej (lower centre) together with studio students and teachers.

By Kamila Zhumabayeva

It would be early to rate the popularity of yoga in Kazakhstan from five years ago, since the idea of this ancient practice was not welcomed very well in 2010. The practice of yoga has begun to grow and the major reasons for starting it are fitness and general rehabilitation. Eight percent of Astana's population was practicing yoga in 2013, according to a sociological study initiated by the city's department of tourism, physical education and sports. Interest in this ancient Indian

physical, mental and spiritual practice continues to increase among the people in Kazakhstan, especially in major urban areas of the country. Astana is a city of government employees, students and many other busy and hard-working individuals who are involved at different levels in events, projects, conferences or other important business.

South African Ambassador to Kazakhstan Shirish M. Soni was glad to offer a special programme at the yoga centre in Astana with his former teacher and long-time volun-

teer at The Art of Living (AOLF), Swami Brahmatej. Students of Californication Beauty Yoga & Spa had a chance to experience a meditation session which Brahmatej led. In the session, the teacher shared how breathing can be extremely effective in relieving stress and being joyful in life. After conducting simple breathing techniques, he led the gathering in a relaxing meditation.

In an interview with The Astana Times, the ambassador said that yoga helps him to be energetic, cope with daily work and achieve

big goals. Breathing and meditation techniques with Brahmatej helped him to keep a calm and contemplated mind during difficult years as a freedom fighter in his country.

"In any situation when you can have your body, mind and soul aligned, you will be more dynamic," said Soni.

For more than two decades, Brahmatej has been teaching advanced meditation programmes within AOLF, one of world's largest non-profit organisations.

Continued on Page B5

Individual, Group Charity Has Deep Roots in Kazakhstan, Needs New Legal Foundation

By Botagoz Tanatova

ASTANA – Kazakhstan has seen an increase in the last 10 years in aid organisations working to upgrade the law on charity. The country also recently announced itself as a donor to foreign countries in need. The phenomenon of charity, however, is quite specific in Kazakhstan. The society is formed by the influence of the Soviet Union and local and Islamic traditions, so it has its own concept of donating.

"We like to share," said Gulmira Torkyrova, a nurse in the city's Oncological Hospital, in a July 17 interview.

Torkyrova rents an apartment and works 40 hours per week.

"I am not able to give money or spare clothes to poorer people, but I love to share my time and sometimes food with them. I do extra work for free during the weekends by taking care of our hospital patients and trying to help them as much as I can," she added. Torkyrova is not familiar with

the term "volunteering," but she actually does it.

"I was brought up like this; the idea of helping each other was a trend at Soviet schools. We were taking care of older people, working in the fields during holidays and even had obligations to do homework with students from your class who were not good at some subjects, for example math," she said.

During the talk, Torkyrova mentioned the name of God several times. Religious reasons are also important for her, but she does not do it to get a place in Heaven.

"The person's smile is the best appreciation for me," she said.

If Torkyrova calls it "sharing," Madina Urazmbetova calls it "the habit to give help." She is a volunteer and believes that Kazakh people have strong traditions of helping others.

"As you know, Kazakh people used to live in yurts and moved from one place to another. At that time, help from your neighbours was essential.

Continued on Page B5

Airports, Trains and Train Stations to Become Accessible for Disabled

By Julia Rutz

Kazakh airports, trains and train stations will soon become accessible for people with disabilities, according to Minister of Health and Social Development Tamara Duysenovna. The bill on Amendments and Additions to Some Legislative Acts of Kazakhstan on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, presented at the Mazhilis plenary session earlier in July and approved by the deputies, focuses mainly on helping citizens move freely around the country, as reported by zakon.kz. "Firstly, we have ascertained that there are ramps and extra wheelchairs in airports, so that even now disabled people can travel by plane. We consider this measure as a necessary option every air company is

obliged to offer. Some train stations have also constructed ramps, but we need to provide additional facilities in order to help disabled passengers entering a wagon," said Duysenovna.

Those who violate the freedom of movement of persons with disabilities will be obliged to pay fines. Talking about the current position of citizens with disabilities, the minister mentioned that more than 100,000 people have a permanent work place.

"Many of these people have their own transport, but they can't park cars together with other vehicles. There are special disabled persons parking spaces, which are free of charge. Most of them are provided around administrative buildings and local executive bodies," she added. The deputies also discussed the

introduction of a new regulation that would allow people with disabilities to secure apartments exclusively on the first two floors to ease their movement inside the house. A line item of 10 billion tenge (US\$53.5 million) would be allocated in the state's budget for the needs of the disabled part of the population. A portion of this amount would be used to purchase speech processors for children who received cochlear implants, said Duysenovna.

Approximately 600,000 people in Kazakhstan have disabilities and the Jan. 20 ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was one of the most important recent steps undertaken to improve their lives. The convention is aimed at providing employment possibilities for individuals with dis-

abilities and progress in this area has also been achieved in the regions. The governor of the East Kazakhstan region, for example, has decided to provide training courses for children with physical disabilities in the hope they will be able to choose their future career and find suitable work.

"We need to educate these children and help them to find a profession which is of high demand on the labour market, such as an accountant or manager in centres for servicing the population. Children with disabilities should feel the support of the state," said Akim (Governor) Daniyal Akhmetov.

The regional administration is currently deciding what occupations should be included in the list and how to efficiently put this idea into practice.

Shumenov Captures WBA Title

By Kamila Zhumabayeva

ASTANA – Kazakh professional boxer Beibut Shumenov defeated American B.J. Flores to become an interim world champion under the WBA. The fight, held in Las Vegas, lasted 12 rounds. Shumenov claimed the title by unanimous decision, scoring 116:112 on all three judges' cards, said the Las Vegas Review-Journal.

The Kazakh boxer believed he earned his victory in the fight, reported sports.kz, Kazakhstan's sports portal.

"He's a strong guy but always lunges, whilst I score points. I am still learning and felt comfortable in the first cruiserweight title fight," reported the sports portal referencing Shumenov's interview with Boxing Scene. "Boxing is art and I used my skills to win. I followed instructions and believe I won the fight."

The 31-year-old Kazakh boxer has earned 16 wins in his professional career (including 10 knockouts) and endured two defeats compared to the 36-year-old Flores, who has 31 victories (20 knockouts), two defeats and one



draw, according to Tengrinews. His fight with the American boxer was postponed due to a shoulder injury he sustained a month ago, reported the news agency.

The Kazakh boxer entered the top 10 ranking of the International Boxing Federation (IBF) in May and holds sixth place in the updated

IBF rating, according to the news agency. Shumenov made his debut in the first cruiserweight title fight by beating American Bobby Thomas Jr. ahead of schedule in December and said he would be happy to hold a fight in Kazakhstan in 2015.

According to sports.kz, Shumenov's main goal is Russian

boxer Denis Lebedev, who intends to hold a fight in October or November. The Kazakh boxer said he wants to fight with all the best fighters of his weight class, too. The victory has made Shumenov a mandatory contender for the WBA championship belt that Lebedev owns as well, said sports.kz.

Bolashak Association Launches Business Startup Contest

By Zhazira Dyussebekova

ASTANA – The Bolashak Fellows Association, the international scholarship launched by Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev in 1993, announced the beginning of a startup contest for entrepreneurs aged 18 to 29. The information was released July 20 during a Central Communication Service press conference.

The winners will receive cash grants to implement their projects – 7 million tenge (US\$37,403) for first place, 5 million tenge (US\$26,716) for second and 3 million tenge (US\$16,029) for third. They will also be supported by the Damu Fund, which will provide bank guarantees. BI Group head Aidyn Rakhimbayev said his construction firm will of-

fer an additional 10 million tenge (US\$53,433) in grants for the winners.

"Our company will provide support to participants of Startup Bolashak in the fields of information technology and marketing. We want good projects not to remain just a business plan; we want them to bring money to young entrepreneurs. Therefore, we will sign real contracts with them; we will work together," he said, adding the most interesting projects will get additional contracts even if they are not among the winners.

The contest is open to all young people in the country, regardless of whether they are Bolashak scholarship recipients, said Bolashak alumni association head Kuandyk Bishimbayev.

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THINGS TO WATCH & PLACES TO GO

RIXOS PRESIDENT ASTANA

July 31 at 8 p.m. Fryday Astana, networking event

PALACE OF SCHOOLCHILDREN

August 2 at 8:45 a.m. Morning jogs

KOKTAL 13

August 2 from 12 p.m. Extreme ropejumping

SARY ARKA CINEMA

August 4 at 7:30 p.m. Private Lives, Spectacle

PEOPLE

WEDNESDAY, JULY 29, 2015



A painting of Edigu, a top military commander and the founder of the Nogai Horde, by Alibek Koylakayev.

Young Artist Brings Turkic Culture to the World

By Zhazira Dyussebekova

ASTANA – Alibek Koylakayev, a leading designer-artist in one of the Astana souvenir companies, has been in Kazakhstan for only two years, but in that time has made a name for himself among local artists through his savvy use of the Internet and his willingness to adapt to changing circumstances.

Born in Russia, Koylakayev found himself drawn to portraying Turkic cultures on paper and canvas, particularly Turkic historical figures. “If the historical person inspires me, I want to draw him. If a lot of people talk about a person, I always wonder why?” the artist said in a recent interview with The Astana Times. “And I start reading about that figure, and why he received his glory. I try not to see other artists’ illustration of that person. I always draw my characters my way, how I feel they looked like.”

Koylakayev has drawn Genghis Khan, Tamerlane, Tomiris, Alexander Nevsky, Alexander the Great, Ivan the Terrible and others.

Koylakayev was born in Nogaisky district, Dagestan, Russia, and started painting when he was three or four years old. His mother and teachers recognised his abilities at an early age, and from six years old, his family supported him by letting him make his ‘messy’ sculptures at home and providing him with necessary materials.

The young artist spent his high school years as the Djemal Art School in Makhachkala, graduating with a first degree diploma. In 2002, at a new stage of his life, Koylakayev left Makhachkala and

entered Krasnodar University of Culture and Arts.

The artists in Krasnodar were much more developed than back in Makhachkala, Koylakayev said. He struggled to catch up; some professors thought that his drawing skills were poor. He switched from focusing on graphic design to doing book illustration. In the end, his final work, ‘Nogai steppes,’ was assessed with praise.

It was after that that Koylakayev began to show interest for historical events and great names of history. He came home after graduation, imagining that he would become an art teacher. He also began participating in regional youth forums. Later, he participated in International Youth Forum Seliger. “During those events, I presented my historical works to presidents of republics in Russia. And the feedback was always great. I understood that it is something that is in demand right now,” he said.

“I have been travelling for two years from one forum or exhibition to another. Of course, I wanted my paintings to be sold. I wanted to earn money. At that time I got married and needed to feed my family,” Koylakayev explained. Organising exhibitions and selling work in Moscow was very challenging, and he found no jobs that would offer him a liveable salary as an artist.

He and his wife moved to Kabardino-Balkaria, where they lived for almost a year. Koylakayev travelled to nearby villages and towns to present his art, and earned money copying them and selling them at cheaper prices than original ones. An artist has got to be flexible if he wants to earn a living, Koylakayev said.

He has also never underestimated the power of Internet, and posts work all the time through social networks and other web services. One day, one of the managers of a Kazakh souvenir-making company saw his works and contacted young talent. She asked him to come to Astana.

Now, two years later, Koylakayev works in another Kazakh souvenir company. During this period he has worked in the Turkic Academy as well. And what is the most important – he is happy. “People recognise me here, my artwork is quite popular, I sell them here, I am accepted here,” the artist said.

“This is my life,” Koylakayev said. “I cannot imagine myself doing something else. To tell the truth, I want to make my own brand, I want to promote Turkic culture through clothes and accessories.”

But he remembers when he struggled, not so long ago. “It is very hard to be a young artist both in Russia and Kazakhstan,” Koylakayev said. He thinks that artists should be supported through special national programmes for gifted people. “A lot of artists cannot earn money with their talent. Arts are dying, but they are necessary for people,” he said.

In the end, the artist’s advice to young artists of Kazakhstan and Russia was, “Never doubt yourself. Don’t be shy to show your work. It does not matter whether they are for sale or not. You are showing your time, and someone will understand it. When you do something, do it for your soul, not for money. As for me, the main thing is your inner wealth. When you have it, you can be happy eating only bread and drinking only water.”

Karaganda Professor Makes Pilgrimage to Grave of Chronicler of Kazakh Khanate

By Michelle Witte

ASTANA – Teacher of Kazakh history Olga Kovtun’s favourite era to help students discover is the birth of the Kazakh state in the mid-15th century. But she also knows that the printed page is sometimes not enough to kindle a flame of interest – so instead, she took a trip in January to see and touch the grave of the Mogul historian who captured the events of that period for history and for her students today.

“Just dry history, it does not touch your heart,” Kovtun, who teaches at Karaganda Medical University, said in a July 23 interview. “But if you can see, if you visit, if you have the opportunities to go, [this can make history feel alive]. And if you are able to share your emotions and your interest, you are able to touch the hearts of your audience.”

In January, Kovtun travelled to Sringar, Kashmir, to see the grave of Mirza Muhammad Haidar Dughlat (Dulati), the Mogul general, statesman and writer who described the foundation of the Kazakh state in his work “Tarikh-i-Rashidi” (“Rashidi’s History”).

“He is the single historian who has given us the date of the [foundation of] the Kazakh Khanate – 1465, 1466, according to his description,” she said. Dughlat described how Khans Janibek and Kerei, the founders of the Kazakh state, left the union of Central Asian tribes created by Abul-Khair Khan and founded their own independent khanate in a corner of modern-day south-east Kazakhstan, on the banks of the Zhetysu River. Some 50 years later, Dughlat was travelling in the region, which was at that time on the border of the

Mogul Empire, Kovtun said. He met the Kazakh Khan Kassym and took down the history of the then-fledgling state.

Kovtun knew that the grave was in Kashmir from historian and former Chairman of the Spiritual Administration of the Muslims of Kazakhstan Absatar Derbisali, who visited the grave a decade or so ago and has translated its inscription. Not speaking Farsi herself, Kovtun couldn’t tell which of the tombs belonged to the historian so significant to Kazakh history, so she said, she took pictures of every old grave that looked to be inscribed in that language. When she sent her photos to Derbisali, he identified the correct one.

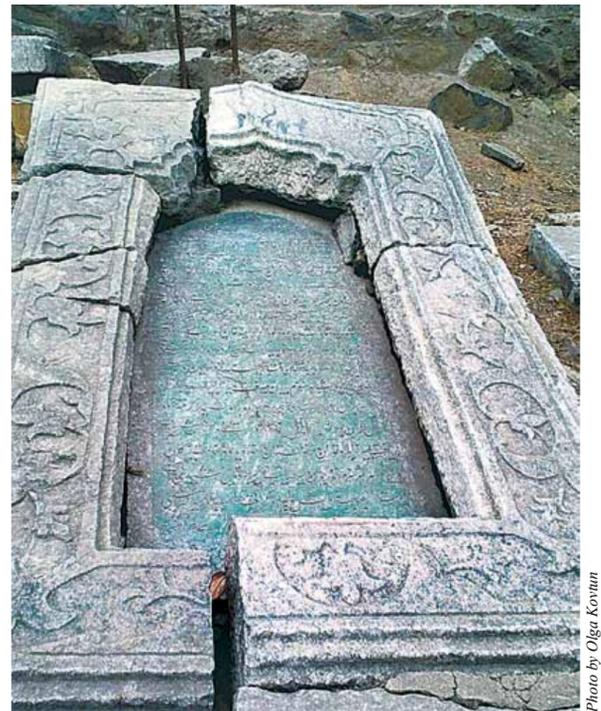
The cemetery is a tourist destination, but while guides show other visitors to some of the famous graves there, the first chronicler of the Kazakh state

is not well-known. “People in Kashmir don’t know who this historian is, generally. His grave is a not a major destination,” she said. Kovtun may be one of only a few Kazakh citizens ever to visit the site, an idea that makes the professor laugh.

As for Kashmir, “Kashmir is paradise,” she said. “It’s true. It’s too beautiful. If you have a chance to visit, go right away.”

Kovtun herself combined her historical pilgrimage with a trip to the Taj Mahal, which she said she had always wanted to see. She also said her students get more excited when she is able to tell them about history she has seen and walked through.

“I try to make history not just dry facts,” Kovtun said. “We have the opportunities to touch history with these short trips, with real conversations.”



The grave of Mirza Muhammad Haidar Dughlat (Dulati).

Photo by Olga Kovtun

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WEDNESDAY, JULY 29, 2015

Argentinean Artist Creates Giant Mural in Almaty



Marina Zumi and her little helpers.

By Zhazira Dyussebekova

ASTANA – Argentinean artist Marina Zumi has created an amazing artwork on the walls of Kasteev's School of Fine Arts and Technical Design in Almaty with the support of Tikkurila, the Finnish manufacturer of paints and lacquers. The building is decorated with the first and biggest mural in Central Asia. Named "Bright

Childhood," the artwork covers an area of more than 900 square metres.

"I am overwhelmed by the reception of my work in Kazakhstan. I never expected that this would get so big. I am surprised," said Zumi in a recent interview with The Astana Times.

The artist was contacted by Tikkurila about the project and location via social media. The company

indicated there was a possibility of creating a large project and asked if she was interested.

"We started negotiations in April. It took a while to decide which school would participate in the project and organisers had to agree with the city administration. Finally, Kasteev's School of Art was chosen. The director is such an open person, she supported the whole idea, so I came to Kazakh-

stan in the beginning of July," said Zumi.

She and the organisers had the idea of painting a little genius, a figure who would inspire young children. After considering Albert Einstein, they decided they wanted someone from the arts and instead chose Salvador Dali.

"I am a huge fan of his. My work portrays Salvador Dali playing in the forest, blowing the seeds of a dandelion. So the seeds make a lot of sacred geometry in the form of spheres and they pass all the colour gradients, the rainbow. All three walls of the art school form a whole art work. You can imagine a canoe with Salvador on the one side. The seeds of the dandelion bring the pieces of the magical world of childhood to the world. We wanted to say that every child has a talent and the adults have to help them reveal their abilities," said the artist.

Zumi started her work July 6, taking nearly 14 days, 530 litres and 300 spray cans to finish the whole wall. She said the team slept only three-four hours per day. The main problem for them was the weather, as it was extremely hot in Almaty during those weeks.

The artist had three local assistants, Dima Sdvig, Alisher Dammit and Darion Shabbash, whom she characterised as amazing graffiti artists and personally chose based on their portfolios. Zumi expressed deep gratitude to them.

The Argentinean artist said she

was amazed by Kazakhstan. In her opinion, in some aspects Kazakh and Latin people are alike in their way of life. She was surprised by the diversity of ethnic groups living in the country.

One of the Zumi's famous projects is a massive 800-square metre mural in Halle, Germany, named "Honeycomb of Life." It took the artist 12 days to complete the rainbow work, which features mini landscapes and is layered with bees.

Zumi, who studied fashion design at Universidad de Buenos Aires, Argentina, is also the founder of the A7MA Gallery in Sao Paulo. She is currently an independent artist, working without an agent as she travels around the world. Her projects are known in many coun-

tries and she is recognised for using different vivid colours, sacred geometry and bioluminescent effects. Zumi prefers to incorporate bright colours in her works, which she says shows the behaviour of the person through her images. A resident of Brazil, she plans to return to Almaty in October for an exhibition and master class for children from different countries.

Street art is becoming more and more popular in cities around the world. Initially, street art was perceived by society as an act of pure vandalism, similar to the way graffiti was associated with communication between street gangs. Graffiti, however, is viewed as a separate form of art and street art has become a tool of communication between artists and society.



The "Bright Childhood" mural in Almaty.

First Kazakh Rap Music Film to Be Presented in Almaty



By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – "Detective Johnny," the first rap music film shot in the territory of the former Soviet Union, will premier July 31 in Almaty. Directed by Miras Toleukhanov, the movie features some of the city's well-known rap singers.

The film focuses on the title character's investigation into the murder of a girl named Jess. He meets different people as he conducts his inquiry, many of whom are portrayed by the local rap artists. Each bit of dialogue with the characters turns into a recitative accompanied by rhythmical rap music.

"This idea and its realisation were very interesting for me as a director. The actions of the movie occur in the 1930s, in the times of Chicago gangsters. I created the corresponding scenario and used correspond-

ing stylistics," said Toleukhanov, according to the Bnews website.

The costumes, style, scenery and decor reflect the times, showing the spirit of Prohibition in the U.S. when gangsters ruled many cities.

Rap singers such as Big Som, Sedrik Nemacho, Tanir (Da Gudda Jazz), Kicha, Timon, Piro, Al'Nasr (G-Had Otbas) and Kai Piki were included in the movie. The director felt the main target of the film was to unite rap singers of different generations.

"The rap musical film is a low-cost project and its creators had to pay for everything by themselves, but our team worked not for the sake of money. We worked to create. I wrote a scenario and my friends helped me with the dialogue. Jazz-rap tracks were created by actors-rap singers. The only thing I did concerning the movie's music and songs

– I gave direction to the rap singers, because their songs and music had to correspond with the scenario.

"All the songs are absolutely new. Nobody has heard them. Kemal Alisabri, our very talented friend, provided the music and backing tracks. Vitaliy Kichatov, well-known as Kicha, provided tracks and music for us, too," said Toleukhanov.

"Detective Johnny" was filmed in 2014 and its opening night was originally scheduled in March. The creators had problems, however, pushing the premiere to later this month in Event City Hall.

The film is not Toleukhanov's first venture into movieland. "Petlya," a low-cost, full-length flick, became a very successful and popular project especially on YouTube, where it had more than 12 million views.

Two Young Kazakh Singers Win International Competitions

Staff Report

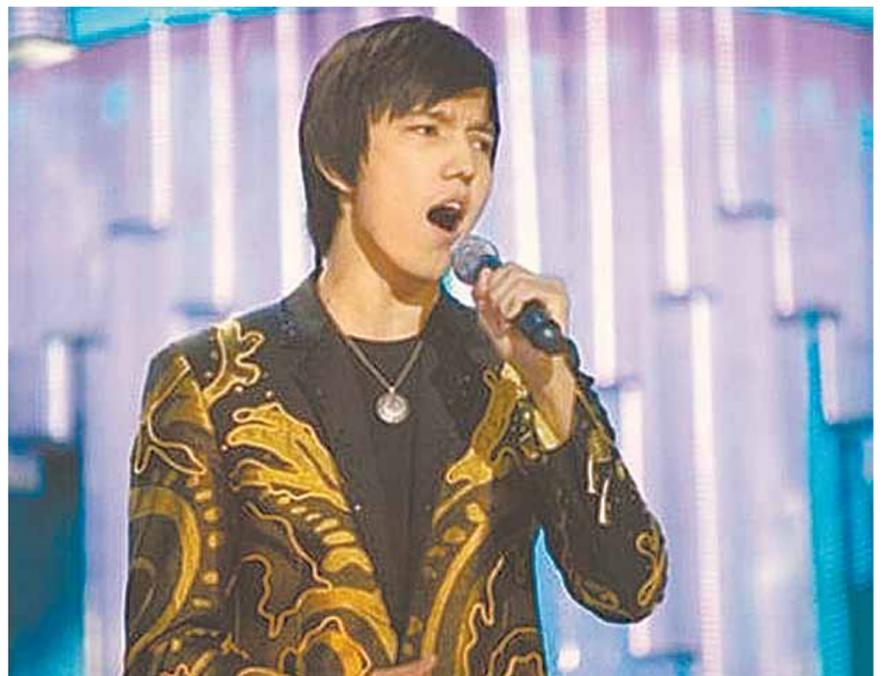
Kazakh singer Dimash Kudaibergen won the 24th International Art Festival Slavic Bazaar 2015 organised in Vitebsk, Russia. He also received a special Lira prize for his performance. The winner was announced at the closing ceremony of the competition on July 13.

Already in the semifinal, Kudaibergen was marked as a favourite and after the two-day final concert, the singer scored 175 points, which is the highest possible score at the competition. He is not the only Kazakh singer that impressed the Russian public.

Kazakh Louise Nurkuatova also won the Grand Prix at the Thir-

teenth International Children's Music Contest Vitebsk 2015.

The pop song contest Vitebsk 2015 was attended by representatives of 21 countries. During the July 10 semifinal, an international jury, chaired by People's Artist of Azerbaijan Polad Bulbuloglu, selected 15 participants who took part in the final.



Dimash Kudaibergen



Kazakh Quartet Becomes Laureate of International Contest

By Dmitry Lee

Almaty-based quartet Qazaq Quartet was named a laureate of the June 14-21 International Contest Award in Padua, Italy, liter.kz reported.

The young musicians, Timur Talanov (violin), Eldar Aitbekov (cello), Adilet Abdrakhmanova (violin) and Zarina Sugurova (viola), have been guided by Kurmangazy Kazakh National Conservatory Associate Professor Gulzhan Sapargaliyeva.

"We have been playing a quartet since February. The idea of a quartet popped up because of the international competition in Italy. Professionals were invited to join. This is the first award in a serious competition for our young team. I believe that's a start. This trip has brought us together, inspired us to go further to new victories," Talanov told local media in an interview.

The quartet performed a piece by Georgian composer Sulchan

Tsintsadze dedicated to Dmitry Shostakovich called Quartet No. 9. In the final, the Qazaq Quartet faced bands from Hungary and Italy and took overall third place.

The quartet found sponsors before the trip by making a deal to represent art organisation Beibitshilik Alemi.

The contest included young talents from Italy, Germany, France, the Czech Republic, Russia, South Korea, China and Singapore.

NATION&CAPITAL
COUNTRY

WEDNESDAY, JULY 29, 2015

UAE Falcons Released into Their Natural Kazakh Habitat

By Michelle Witte

ASTANA – This May saw another release of falcons from the United Arab Emirates into their natural habitat in western Kazakhstan, thanks to the Sheikh Zayed Falcon Release Programme, the International Fund for Houdara Conservation and the Kazakh government. This year, 55 falcons were released: eight female saker falcons, 41 female peregrines and six male peregrines, according to UAE news source The National.

“The falcons are being released in Kazakhstan as this has been identified as the optimal environment for them to survive in after being released,” Mohammed Al Baidani, director general at the International Fund for Houdara Conservation, told The Astana Times July 7. “The mountains and plains are situated within the falcons’ migration and breeding range, and there is plenty of prey that allow them to live and to grow in numbers.”

The Sheikh Zayed Falcon Release Programme has been active for 21 years and in Kazakhstan for seven, Al Baidani said. The programme is overseen by the Abu Dhabi Falcon Hospital. The falcons are released back into the wild as part of a research programme investigating whether migratory birds, such as peregrine and saker falcons, will maintain



Falcons from the UAE are released in western Kazakhstan.

the same migration routes after they have been used for falconry, according to the Abu Dhabi Falcon Hospital’s website. It also provides information on how to select and prepare rehabilitated falcons to survive in the wild.

The International Fund for Houdara Conservation has a breeding centre in Kazakhstan that cooperates with the falcon release pro-

gramme, providing ecological, logistical and technical support, Al Baidani explained. Houdaras are a type of bustard native to North Africa whose migration route extends to Kazakhstan. They are often hunted with falcons. The houdara breeding centre also cooperates with Kazakhstan to breed and release thousands of houdaras in the country every year, as the country

is a natural part of their migratory path, Al Baidani said.

“We believe it is important to preserve a healthy ecosystem of migratory birds in the wild, and it’s great to be able to contribute to the release of more birds into their natural habitat,” Al Baidani said.

The houdara fund and the falcon release programme also cooperate with the Ministry of Agriculture

and its Forestry and Hunting Reserve Committee. “Protecting wild species and respecting cultural values by protecting the heritage status of falconry and conserving the Asian Houdara is a multifaceted task and we are happy to have such a strong cooperative agreement with authorities in Kazakhstan to support ecological diversity,” Al Baidani said.

Most of the falcons are either donated to the programme or have been confiscated by authorities, Al Baidani said, but they also take in falcons that are found injured in the wild or taken in anti-smuggling operations. They also received a number of birds after the UAE signed the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora in 2001. Following that, “the wild falcons that UAE residents used to be able to keep were given to the Abu Dhabi Falcon Hospital for care and release,” Al Baidani said.

Kazakhstan sits at the crossroads of three major bird migration routes, and hundreds of species use the Korgalzhyn nature reserve in the Akmo-la region as a refuge and breeding ground every spring, which is when the falcons are released in the country. The release also coincides with the traditional end of falcon hunting season, Al Baidani said. “Initially, the effort served to release falcons back into the wild after the hunting season ended during spring. Maintaining this longstanding tradition

is a good way of strengthening the wild population of both peregrine and saker falcons around the world, enabling them to breed in the wild, while showing appreciation for our heritage.”

The release programme also tracks falcon behaviour after release. “Each bird is fitted with a microchip and an identification ring, so that analysts can monitor survival rates and flight patterns. Some of the released birds of prey (five sakers and five peregrine falcons respectively) are also fitted with satellite transmitters to monitor their flight paths and provide data about the survival rates of the released falcons in the wild,” Al Baidani explained.

Some falcons travel thousands of kilometres as part of their annual migration, he said, including one peregrine that travelled nearly 12,000 km in fewer than seven months, from the Arctic Circle to Iraq. And, happily, data from monitoring indicates that survival rates of rehabilitated falcons at a minimum match the survival rates of those falcons born in the wild, Al Baidani said. Survival rates of wild-born falcons are low, he said, with mortality especially high in the first few months after hatching.

“Conservation is an area that is very close to the hearts of UAE leadership,” Al Baidani said. “We think it is of the utmost importance to preserve and protect natural ecosystems.”

Drop Irrigation Technology to Develop Kazakh Farms

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – The Kazakh Fund for Financial Support of Agriculture (FFSA) started recently implementing a drop irrigation programme under the Agro-business-2020 state branch programme. Equipment for 40 projects in a territory of 440 hectares will be installed this year.

“Kazakhstan has a large area which is suitable for farming and drop irrigation technology can help increase the volume of agricultural production several times. The drop irrigation technology solves the main problem of farming in the state – arid climate,” said head of the FFSA press service Aliya Ensebayeva in a July 21 interview.

As of July 16, the fund has already financed 24 projects in the amount of 135.8 million tenge (US\$726,200), which enables the installation of drop irrigation equipment on 300 hectares. Thirteen requests for installation of

drop irrigation equipment on 100 hectares are also currently being considered and three contracts for installation of the equipment on the remaining 40 hectares will be registered soon.

“In 2015, the fund plans to spend 675 million tenge (SUS3.6 million). The programme operates in all regions of Kazakhstan and all farmers who want to use drop irrigation can approach the offices of the fund, which are situated in every region of the state,” said Ensebayeva.

The issue of water and the difficulty and expense of acquiring it was reviewed by Kenzhetai farm head Gulnara Saramsakova. The farm raises vegetables and the need to pump water from a river using three or four engines which consume a lot of fuel is a costly proposition.

“We haven’t used drop irrigation technology yet, but I am sure that this technology will help us. The equipment is very expensive and I thought for a long time before I made the decision to install

it. I visited other farms which use the technology. I spoke to farmers and experts, saw the results of their work and I made the corresponding conclusion for myself,” she said in a July 20 interview.

Saramsakova considers this technology to be perfect for Kazakh farmers, because the crop is several times higher and water consumption is several times lower. Kazakh banks don’t give such loans, because they don’t accept farms as pledged assets, but the fund does. As a result, farmers have the opportunity to get a loan.

Saramsakova is one of the fund’s first loan debtors under the drop irrigation programme.

“Drop irrigation enables us to provide water directly to a plant’s roots constantly using special tubes with microscopic holes. Such plants get water only to the necessary place drop by drop. As a result, the soil around the roots isn’t too wet and isn’t too dry. It has air access. All the above-mentioned factors create optimum conditions for the life activ-

ity of plants and saves water,” she said.

Saramsakova secured a five-year FFSA loan in the amount of 4.45 million tenge (US\$23,739) with 14 percent interest. As such, the annual interest rate is not higher than 16.32 percent.

The equipment is being installed in Shariptogai village in the Kokpekty district, East Kazakhstan region. The farm has all the necessary equipment and tools, a heat-insulated warehouse and refrigeration system for long-term crop storage.

Saramsakova plans to create five new work places at her farm and is sure implementing the new technology will make her life easier and her business more profitable. She has a very ambitious development plan.

Kazakh Military Pilots Intend to Take Prize at Aviadarts 2015

By Talgat Issenov

Pilots of the Air Forces of Kazakhstan are planning to win the coming international competition Aviadarts 2015.

“Kazakh pilots will participate in this competition for the first time, so we will do our best to represent our country on a decent level. Our pilots are in a good, cheerful mood, looking forward to

winning,” said Lieutenant Colonel Zhandos Nurimbetov.

The Kazakh Defense Ministry announced that the selection of flight crews for the competition began more than a month ago. The Kazakh Air Force will present airplanes and helicopters, such as the MiG-29, Su-25, Su-27 and Mi-8 at the show.

“The aircrew has been intensively preparing for the contest.

An engineering staff and specialists for ground support missions are always in full readiness at our aerodromes. We check the state of engines and aircraft equipment on a daily basis,” reported the defense ministry.

The international competition Aviadarts 2015 will begin July 26 and will continue until Aug. 16 at the Russian military airfields of Ryazan and Lipetsk.



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SOCIETY

WEDNESDAY, JULY 29, 2015

Translated American Novel Presented in Almaty

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

"Drums, Girls & Dangerous Pie," a book aimed at children and young teenagers by American author Jordan Sonnenblick, was presented in the Sapargali Begalin State Children's Library in Almaty, according to Today website.

"We will estimate readers' reaction to American literature. It would be great if Kazakh novels, tales and other pieces of art are translated to English," said U.S. Consulate General Public Affairs Officer Charles Martin. As he greeted visitors to the event, Martin noted the importance of such cultural exchanges between the two peoples.

An English teacher and former student of author Frank McCourt, Sonnenblick was inspired to write the novel by the real-life story of one of his pupils. The book is about 13-year-old Steven, who has a totally normal life: he plays drums in jazz band, has a crush on the hottest girl in his school and is

constantly annoyed by his 5-year-old brother, Jeffrey. But Steven's world is turned upside down when Jeffrey is diagnosed with leukemia. He is forced to deal with his brother's illness and his parents' attempts to keep the family in one piece. "Drums, Girls & Dangerous Pie" contains humour and devastating realities and narrates a year in the life of the family in hard times, according to Amazon's website.

Kazakh actor and protagonist of the movie "Reketir" Sayat Issembayev read some parts of the book, containing funny and tragic moments.

Book translator, international journalist and politologist Mukhtar Sengirbai spoke about the time he discussed the future translation of the book with children's library director Sofiya Rayeva. He noted she was interested in his family. Sengirbai mentioned that Rayeva considered only a man with children could accurately translate this book.

"It is necessary to know chil-

ren's psychology, to know the problems in his life and understand who helps him in hard times," she said.

Sengirbai discussed Jeffrey's victory over cancer, both biological and psychological, and the issues in Steven's life, who has a lot of dilemmas like many thousands of other teenagers. He also spoke about the illness, feelings and great trial for the whole family. He added it was very difficult to translate slang terms from English to Kazakh.

Three girls, Adelina, Yana and Aigerim, talked about the book after reading it in English. They explained that the story is not only very interesting for children and teenagers, but it is very useful for their parents, too, because it helps to understand the inward kid. The girls felt the story described a lot of typical teenage problems, such as looking after younger children, the requirements of parents to act as adults and others.

The U.S. Consulate General book translation project has ex-



Potential readers at the launch of "Drums, Girls & Dangerous Pie" in Almaty.

isted for five years and five stories by famous American writers have

already been transcribed. Martin stated he hopes one more book

will be translated into Kazakh in the next year.

Individual, Group Charity Has Deep Roots, Needs New Legal Foundation

Continued from Page B1

The folk started to practice free-will initiative by gathering together and helping each other. This tradition is called Asar and it was an actual act of volunteering at that period of time," she explained in a July 20 interview.

In order to create a link with modern life, Urazmbetova spoke about her recent experience of Asar in Karaganda. In the spring, a big flood occurred in the Karaganda region, where three people died and approximately 1,800 houses were destroyed. The freewill initiative to help people in that region has quickly spread via social media. People collected money, food, clothes and medication. The hashtag #SOS_KARAGANDA got to the top of KazNet, the Kazakh Internet.

"People were working days and nights and we even collected more aid facilities than were actually needed," said Urazmbetova.

In her words, volunteering is spontaneous in Kazakhstan.

"People help each other when a big problem happens and the help is urgently needed. Unfortunately, they do not understand that help needs to be done every day, not only when a big fire or flood happens. Children and sick people wait for money and care daily. Nevertheless, there are several voluntary service organisations and several initiative groups which are working here, but most of the Kazakh people prefer not to be part of them," said Urazmbetova.

In 2014, Kazakhstan was ranked 101st among 135 countries in the World Giving Index.

"It is evidence that charity as a form of official giving has a weak basis in Kazakhstan," said Baurzhan charity fund President Zhuldyz Omarbekova in a July 16 interview. She noted the ranking does not mean people refuse to give help, but quite the opposite; they want to donate but do not trust charity organisations. She added the country's legislation is not conducive to developing this area of focus.

"Eighty percent of the money people donate in Kazakhstan goes for mosque building. We ask why donors do not build schools, kindergartens or hospitals. And the answer is simple: there is no need for documents when you build a mosque. For other types of building, you have to undergo a full process of submission," Omarbekova explained.

The charity law is in the Kazakh Parliament and will soon be upgrad-

ed. The main changes will apply to the tax policy and the definitions of "funder" and "benefactor" will be legalised.

"The law on charity has been declined several times within six years. Before, the government was not ready to provide tax breaks for all businesses that do charity. Now we can afford these changes and after the law gets parliamentary and presidential enactments, entrepreneurs would apply to get no more than a 10-percent break in federal corporate income tax," Mazhilis member Nikolai Kuzmin said in a March 12 interview.

Saltanat Murzalinova-Yakovleva, social adviser of the Miloserdie charity fund, believes Kazakh society is moving towards smart charity.

"There are less-seasonal acts of kindness nowadays. People are changing their mentality and becoming open to such organisations as ours," she said in a July 20 interview.

As Murzalinova-Yakovleva noticed, people give fewer alms to beggars on the street and prefer to know how their money will be used.

"We have a new generation of people who want to make the changes, not only 'give help for good and forget,'" she added.

The actions apply not only inside the country, but outside. In addition to upgrading the charity law, the Kazakh government is changing the policy about aid giving. Last year, the law was passed providing for the establishment of the Kazakhstan Agency for International Development (KazAID). In the last seven-nine years, Kazakhstan has provided aid to countries such as Kyrgyzstan and Afghanistan and now has an official basis for such work.

Leila Bozykova, 67, a patient of the Oncological Hospital in Astana, is under Torkyrova's care. She recalled her ancestors' introduction to Kazakh charity.

"I am Ingush and I was born and lived all my life in Kazakhstan. My grandparents were deported here in the 1920s. They came here in cattle trucks, whipped and hungry. The soldiers forced them into a cattle chute and they stayed there in cold and fear. Suddenly, Kazakh people came and started to throw white stones at them. My grandparents and other exiled people got angry; they already were put down. But then they realised that these white stones were *kurt*, a kind of Kazakh food: a dried piece of sour cream. From that time, my grandparents, parents and I have always gotten support from the Kazakh people," said Bozykova in a July 17 interview.

Bolashak Association Launches Business Startup Contest

Continued from Page B1

He added the business-supporting initiative belongs to the president of the country and is part of his 100 Concrete Steps programme.

"Young entrepreneurs will have an opportunity to receive consultations on how to build and grow business and how to organise sales. All of the courses will be

conducted at Bolashak Corporate University," he added.

The contest will last three-four months and is expected to be presented as a TV reality show premiering in December.

"One of the national television channels will broadcast Startup Bolashak in a reality show format. Millions of Kazakhstan's citizens will find out about the projects; the ideas will get the support of com-

patriots and will be able to attract potential investors," said Kanysh Tuleushin, managing director of Baiterek National Holding.

The competition will not only support existing business projects, but will also promote entrepreneurship among youth, said Damu Fund board chair Lyazzat Ibragimova.

"A significant part of Kazakhstan's population is young people

aged up to 25 years. Each of them has an active lifestyle and wants to have his own business. In this regard, our country has a great potential to create a large number of entrepreneurs," she said.

The submission period for applications will end Sept. 20, with the winners to be announced Nov. 21 during the business plans marathon.

Almaty Zoo to be Reconstructed by End of Year

By Julia Rutz

The Almaty Zoo will undergo a 483 million tenge (US\$2.6 million) facelift beginning in December, according to Almaty TV. Part of the funding will come from zoo patrons.

The zoo administration and zoo community board consisting of science, culture and business representatives decided to renovate the facility in advance of its 80th anniversary next year.

The greatest part of the budget will replace and retrofit open-air cages for elephants, leopards, bears and others that need new enclosures.

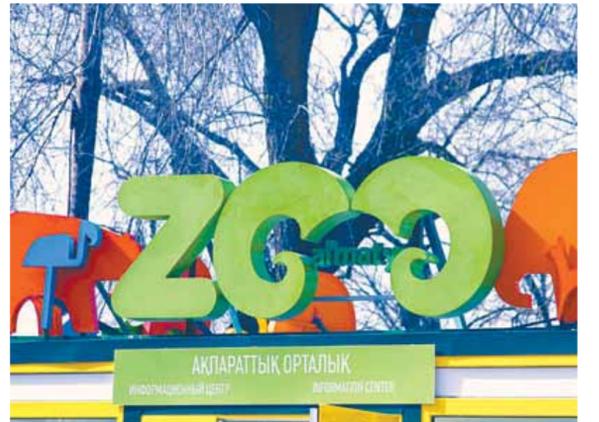
"The zoo hasn't been reconstructed for many years, so we have a great work ahead. We may need additional funds to cover all the costs, some of which will be allocated from the city budget as

well," said the administration of the zoo.

The zoo has been fully supported with state funds, but a portion of that responsibility will be shifted to revenue generated from zoo patrons. During Soviet times the zoo received one million guests per year. Currently it receives half that number. However, recent attendance has increased by 16 percent following the creation of the community board.

"The main task is to invite people to the zoo. Our animals are all clean and well maintained. We also offer a game quest and a rope park, as additional entertainment options, so that visitors could not only watch the animals, but also have some fun here," said Almaty Zoo Manager Murat Muturganov.

Among the most beloved animals are bear brothers Umka and Bimka, rare blue sheep, newborn



zebras and the oldest inhabitant of the zoo, a 40-year-old Abyssinian bush crow.

"During all these years he has never come close to a person. It's a quiet and intelligent bird, which doesn't attack. This crow reminds me of a true gentleman," said the press secretary of

the Almaty zoo Michael Sorokoumov.

It is planned to involve experienced foreign specialists in the reconstruction process that may last five to 15 years. Nevertheless, the zoo will work in accordance with its usual hours, except for several specially closed zones.

Yoga's Popularity Grows in Kazakhstan

Continued from Page B1

He has trained thousands of teachers from all over the world and established the AOLP education wing, which runs more than 200 schools in India and operates in 152 countries worldwide.

Many yoga studios have opened in Astana and instructors who conduct sessions for office workers talked about the corporate practice of yoga in the city. Dinara Karshalova, an instructor at Californication Beauty, noted people these days realise they don't want to use medication, alcohol, coffee or energy drinks when they can achieve more with yoga and come to practice because they are concerned about quality of life and longevity. The New York-originated air yoga is already being taught at her studio, along with Ashtanga, Hatha, yoga for kids, pregnant women

and couples and many other styles which her clients enjoy.

"It's pleasing that people are not afraid to experiment and like to try new things," she said. "Some even manage to train in mornings for a better work performance essential to a metropolitan life."

Karshalova stressed that there is still a need for a simpler way to convey knowledge and awareness about yoga in Kazakhstan.

"It is not just putting fancy clothes on, sitting down on a mat and stretching in a lotus pose," she said.

Aigul, one of her pupils, added yoga is a state of mind.

"A person does not simply start practicing yoga out of the blue, but comes to it consciously," she said.

For most people outside India and the Eastern world, yoga means they have to twist their bodies into difficult positions, Brahmatej shared in

his interview. He explained that yoga's physical training helps to keep the body fit, flexible and strong, while the spiritual and mental practice helps the person connect with his or her inner self.

"Yoga does not only affect the body, but impacts the mind. We encourage people to take yoga as a journey that brings peace, happiness, love, joy and enthusiasm to life," he said.

Brahmatej advised beginners to start with basic breathing and stretching techniques that are simple and enjoyable to perform, while suggesting advanced users continue practicing classical yoga. Basic breathing techniques can be done anywhere, anytime, such as on airplanes or before important events and meetings, and train a person to remain calm, have self-control, throw away self-doubt or overcome obstacles.

"Every religion wants to make people happy, loving and content in life. Our foundation has a volunteer from every race, religion and language of the world," he added.

In December, the UN General Assembly declared June 21 as International Day of Yoga. Over 40 Muslim countries joined the worldwide celebration this year, proving that yoga does not have to interfere with religion; on the contrary, it helps to be at peace, respect one another and keep away from many problems. Kazakhstan participated with more than 190 countries for the first time and nearly 800 yoga enthusiasts in Almaty grabbed their mats and conducted various exercises. In Astana, more than 400 yoga lovers and practitioners gathered near Astana Opera Theatre to engage in yoga practices.

NATION&CAPITAL

TOURISM

WEDNESDAY, JULY 29, 2015

Round-the-World Cyclist Arrives in Kazakhstan, Hopes to Raise Money for Elder Charity

By Michelle Witte

ASTANA – Shayl Majithia is one of the most recent in a long line of travellers to pass from Europe to Asia via Kazakhstan's great landmass. Like his earliest predecessors, Majithia's journey is self-propelled; unlike them, he comes not for trade or other gain, but for charity. Plus, he's got a sweet bike.

"I am cycling to see the world, to experience different cultures and also to raise some money for AgeUK," Majithia, 28, told The Astana Times in an email interview on July 13. "I have chosen this charity because old age affects almost everyone, with people suffering from illnesses, not having enough money or simply not having anyone to look after them in their old age; it is becoming more and more important for elderly people to have support."

His planned route, from his website www.offonmybike.com, began in the U.K. and continued through Europe, then via Georgia and Azerbaijan to Kazakhstan, which he first reached via ferry on July 8. He'll cycle through much of Central Asia, then to China, then Southeast Asia and across the Atlantic to South America. It's a long, long trip.

In Kazakhstan, Majithia was to see the Mangystau and Al-



Shayl Majithia

maty oblasts. "The reason to cycle [through Mangystau] is for the challenge of the winds, heat and my interest in spending time in a sparsely populated, isolated

and peaceful part of the world," he wrote. "The area has more than lived up to the expectations, particularly the challenging road quality and weather conditions

and the beautiful scenery of the Kazakh Steppe, particularly the region after Shetpe." Aktau was also a surprise, he said. "I did not expect such a beautiful beach and I even went for a quick swim in the Caspian Sea, a highlight not only of Kazakhstan, but of my entire journey."

In his other life, the one back in Oxfordshire, Majithia is a maths teacher at a secondary school and sixth form in Oxford. He's been granted a sabbatical for his round-the-world cycling trip, he said.

An active Twitter user, Majithia has been using social media to keep track of news from the countries on his route. A question and answer session with Kazakh Minister of Foreign Affairs Erlan Idrissov came at an ideal time for the traveller, who used the #ASKMFAKZ hashtag to learn if Kazakhstan's visa-free programme for U.K. citizens would still be in effect when he arrived. "The Q&A session solved my problems and questions which couldn't be answered through any of the government websites of the U.K. or Kazakhstan," he wrote. It was also invaluable when he ended up on his way to Tbilisi just behind the June floods that so damaged the city.

Being armed with information was helpful when Majithia arrived in Kazakhstan by cargo ship from

the Caspian, an unusual entry route into the country. "Crossing the border into Kazakhstan was quite an interesting experience," he wrote. "Arriving into the port was a strange process where security was tight but there was definitely confusion on what correct procedure was and how to deal with cyclists. Documents that don't exist were asked for and what should have been a fairly straightforward passport and customs check took an hour, despite there only being seven travellers."

Most of Majithia's information on travelling in Kazakhstan comes from the blogs of other travellers – because that's about all there is. "Kazakhstan is definitely not known in the West as a tourist destination and is more common associated with the history of the Silk Road or the oil industry. I myself knew very little of the country until arriving," he wrote.

He was warned to beware of attempted shakedowns by port and other officials, which he said he witnessed. Having done his research, including being one of the few foreigners to participate in the MFA Twitter session, he was able to stand his ground and refuse to pay for unnecessary services. That experience, and having equipment stolen from his bike outside a tea house, have not been highlights of his time here.

However, those events are only part of a larger story, Majithia wrote. "Despite the negative things, I still love Kazakhstan. The people are generally friendly, welcoming and interested in tourists; they often want to help you find somewhere to stay, although there are never any prices anywhere so I never know whether I'm being helped or conned."

The traveller has noticed the treatment of the elderly on his journey. "When I was in Georgia, I stayed with an imam in Batumi and a bishop in Tbilisi. Both had their mothers living with them; they said that generally this was the case in the Caucasus region," he said. "This is a contrast to the U.K., where most families would not be able to afford or have space for their elderly relatives, which means that they are left to look after themselves."

The Poverty Site, a U.K. website providing statistics on poverty, says that around 20,000 more people aged 65 or over in England and Wales die in winter months than in other months. This would be reduced if the elderly had better support networks, Majithia said. "I also noticed that there were a lot of elderly people begging in the Caucasus. Clearly growing old is difficult everywhere in the world."

Almaty 2022 Bid Confirms Readiness of Accommodations

By Aiman Turebekova

ASTANA – As a lead-in to the July 31 vote in Kuala Lumpur, where the International Olympic Committee (IOC) will select the host city for the 2022 Winter Games, the Almaty 2022 bid organisers commented on the city's readiness to welcome guests from around the world.

In recent years, Kazakhstan's largest metropolis has seen a rapid rise in its tourism sector with annual increases in hotel rooms of almost 11 percent, according to the bid committee press service.

"Tourist arrivals to Almaty have been steadily growing over the past years. Besides housing for the city's growing population, the demand for hotels across all cat-

commission report, Almaty 2022 would need to construct more than 16,000 new two to five star rooms to meet the need for 24,200 rooms. The additional accommodations would include 3,000 hotel rooms, a 6,000-room media village, 2,000 rooms planned for the 2017 Winter Universiade, a 3,000-room temporary workforce village and 2,000 rooms in apartments.

Almaty has secured legally-binding guarantees from hotel owners, real estate developers and city authorities for an excess of 31,000 rooms, the bid committee confirmed.

The city's real accommodation plan includes 10,580 rooms in dedicated villages for the Olympic family, 15,475 rooms in newly-built serviced apartments, including IF and NOC serviced apart-

mean by 'Keeping It Real' and we are excited to share this vision with the Olympic movement and the world," said Almaty 2022 bid committee Vice Chairman Andrey Kryukov.

Furthermore, the city will draw

on Kazakhstan's experience of hosting major events to ensure the successful delivery of its accommodation plan. In 2017, the nation will host a Future Energy-themed EXPO in Astana and the 28th Winter Universiade in Almaty. Beyond

attracting visitors from around the world, these events will also ensure the adoption of the latest building techniques in Kazakhstan's construction industry.

By holding these events, Kazakhstan is expected to attract

more attention from tourists not only by exposing its picturesque landscapes, but also by offering a more-developed infrastructure and better choice of accommodations where the country's guests can feel at home.

KRYUKOV: "Our guarantees and strong track record of delivering major events is further proof that Almaty is ready to host the 2022 Winter Olympics."

egories is rising. The Almaty 2022 games accommodation plan is in line with our long-term city development plan," said Kazakhstan Tourism Association President Roza Assanbayeva.

The city attracts international visitors due to its close proximity to excellent ski and entertainment resorts, picturesque mountains and vibrant culture. In addition, Almaty continues to benefit from increased tourism through the hosting of major international winter sports events such as the 2011 Asian Winter Games, as well as a number of major international competitions in cross-country skiing and speed-skating.

Consistent with the growth in its tourism sector, Almaty has developed a robust accommodation plan to meet the needs of its many guests and fast-growing domestic population, according to the press release. The committee has worked closely with the city to ensure that Almaty's bid to host the 2022 Winter Olympics fits perfectly with the city's continuing objectives.

Almaty faced a degree of criticism from the IOC evaluation commission at the beginning of the year, however, for alleged lack of appropriate accommodations for the thousands of visitors expected if it wins the bid.

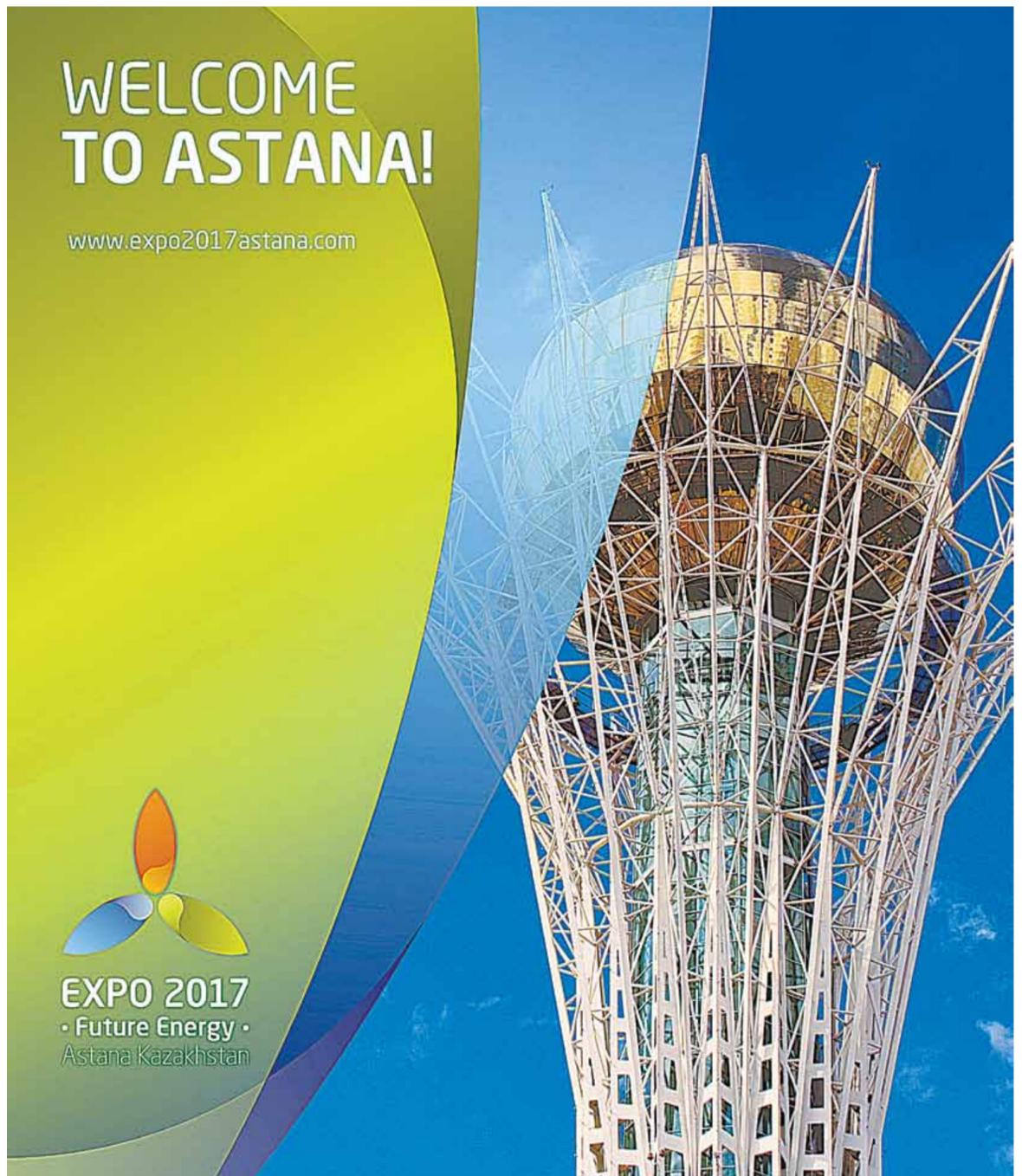
According to the 2022 evaluation

ments, and 5,175 rooms in existing hotels and wellness resorts in all categories, including the 1,000 rooms in the IOC hotels in the Olympic city, according to the press release.

"Almaty's guarantees exceed all IOC requirements. All client groups will find comfortable accommodations in our city across all categories – from five-star hotels to university residences for low-budget visitors. All rooms are already built, under construction, planned or guaranteed by individual contracts," said Almaty Akim (Mayor) Akhmetzhan Yessimov.

The three Olympic villages are well located in relation to the venues. Almaty offers an array of choices from the 25,000 options that are either existing or guaranteed by individual contracts, including rooms in current and planned hotels and resorts, nearly 7,500 guaranteed university residences for economy-minded guests and guaranteed apartment hotels that will be used for residential housing after the games, the bid committee noted.

"Our guarantees and strong track record of delivering major events is further proof that Almaty is ready to host the 2022 Winter Olympics. It also proves that our vision for a sensible, affordable and sustainable winter games is real. This is just another example of what we



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Astana Pro Team, Captain Nibali Finish Fourth Overall at Tour de France

By Dmitry Lee

ASTANA – The Astana Pro cycling team and its captain Italian Vincenzo Nibali finished the July 4-26 Tour de France fourth overall. After 21 stages of one of the most prestigious road cycling competitions, team Astana finished fourth overall in the team standings. This year team Astana was a heavy favourite after the win last year. However, the Kazakhstan-based team only managed to win one stage during the nearly three-week endeavour. Team General Manager and 2012 Olympic Champion Alexandre Vinokourov rated the team's Tour de France performance as C plus in an interview with a local media news agency. "After the victory at the Tour [de France] last year and a memo-

orable Giro d'Italia, we certainly wanted more," Vinokourov told vesti.kz. "This year our performance can be rated C plus, but it's sports. We trained as last year. We will analyse the situation and try and understand what we lacked later. Next year we will change some plans and perhaps we will start training earlier, perhaps we will train on mountainous terrain. [This year] we [have to settle] for the 'wood medal' both in team standings and in individual. It is a little disappointing. If only there was one more place on the podium..." "The top three were very close until stage 20," he continued. "But luck was not on our side, everybody saw that Nibali had his tire deflated. We weren't lucky from the very beginning and it stuck to the very end. But, fortunately we still got one stage, we tuned Nibali

in and the whole team. It wasn't easy but we all believed in our capability. We saw the last day that everyone tried their best. Kangert, Fuglsang and Grivko kept getting away from the pack. But there was no luck. As they say, the fortune favours the strong. This time it was [Christopher] Froome." After nine flat, three hill, seven mountain and five altitude stages along with one individual time-trial and one team time-trial, Brit Christopher Froome of team SKY was 1.12 minutes ahead of Columbian Rojas Quintana of MOVIE-STAR and 5.12 ahead of Spaniard Belmonte Valverde. Nibali finished 8.36 minutes behind the leader. The rest of team Astana finished as follows: Tanel Kangert 22nd, Jakob Fuglsang 23rd, Michele Scarponi 41st, Andriy Grivko 64th, Lieuwe Westra 77th and Dmitry Gruzdev 131st.



FC Astana, Kairat Almaty to Meet Finnish, Scottish Clubs in European Cups

By Galiaskar Seitghan

ASTANA – After a 0-1 away defeat July 15 and an impressive 3-1 victory at Astana Arena a week later despite being a player down for the last half-hour of the tie, FC Astana overcame opposition from Slovenian FC Maribor in its debut round in the UEFA Champions League. Thirteen years ago, another club from the capital city, FC Zhenis, gave way to Moldovan champions Sheriff Tiraspol in the first-ever

participation of Kazakh clubs in European football competitions. Kairat Almaty, another remaining representative of Kazakhstan's Premier League in Europe, progressed to the third round of the UEFA Europe League following a 4-2 aggregate victory over Armenian FC Alashkert. The playoffs included a confident 3-0 win at home. FC Astana will now travel to Finland to meet the HJK local club. To date, the Helsinki club is the only representative of its country to play in

the UEFA Champions League group stage when it defeated France's FC Metz 2-1 in the 1998-1999 elimination. The club then played in one group with famous European clubs – beating Benfica Lisbon once, drawing Kaiserslautern twice and losing both matches to PSV Eindhoven. In recent years, HJK has won six national championship titles in a row. Last season, HJK reached the Europa League's group stage where it placed third in Group B behind Belgium's Brugge KV and Italy's FC Torino.

FC Astana faces a serious challenge this week despite Finland's relatively-weak credentials in European football. Inspired by a triumph over the previous tie's favourites from Slovenia, however, many local fans predict that the current quality squad featuring both home-grown players and strong contracted foreigners stands a good chance to progress to the Champions League third round. If that is the case, the Astana side led by a popular Bulgarian coach Stanimir Stoilov would at the least repeat Shakhter Karaganda's success of two years ago and guarantee a spot in the Europa League group stage.

The tie's first match will be played in Helsinki on July 29, with the return leg scheduled Aug. 6 in Astana Arena. Kairat FC will in turn serve as host at Almaty's Central Stadium July 30 to visitors from Scotland, a country with a history of modern football second only to England. They will again face the club that has previously won a European trophy. In 1983, Aberdeen FC won the European Cup Winners' Cup and the UEFA Supercup. The North Scottish side was coached at the time by Alex Ferguson, who later reached further glory as a manager of Manchester United for almost three decades. The return leg in Aberdeen's Pittodrie Stadium is scheduled for Aug. 7.



Almaty 2022 Bid Set for Historic Vote in Malaysia

Continued from Page A1

In fact, Almaty's winter climate provides ideal competitive conditions for successful Winter Olympics. The city and region have plenty of snow and plenty of water. "The city's mountain venues average between 120-150 cm of fresh, natural snow coverage during the proposed Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games periods and the annual accumulated snowfall adds up to eight metres. Any man-made snow requirements will be easily met using Almaty's numerous mountain lakes and rivers with no impact to the existing water needs of the region," stated the bid committee. According to Almaty 2022 Bid Vice-Chairman Andrey Kryukov, a "sensible, affordable and sustainable Games plan is based on real venues, real winter sports hosting experience and real snow and winter ambience." "Almaty can prove that a nation does not need to be a superpower or spend tens of billions of dollars to host a Winter Games. Consistent with the goals of IOC's Olympic Agenda 2020 reforms, Almaty 2022's planning for the Winter Games utilises our existing resources and is directly linked to our city's long-term goals. Rather

than changing our city to fit the Games, we adapted the Games plan to fit our city's needs. This is real change of the Winter Games and exactly what we mean by 'Keeping it Real,'" he said. Finally, Almaty 2022's budget is prudent and the government, represented by Prime Minister Karim Massimov at a June 9 technical presentation for the IOC members in Lausanne, presented the necessary guarantees of sufficient state support if needed. The Games projected total budget is \$4.5 billion. The bid committee argues that this reflects "moderate, sensible" spending. According to Almaty Akim (Mayor) Akhmetzhan Yessimov, "Almaty is a vibrant and cosmopolitan city full of young and passionate winter sport enthusiasts who passionately want to bring the Games to our city. Almaty 2022 is fully supported by our government and we have the financial strength necessary to deliver a great Games experience for the athletes and participants. To be ready for 2022, Almaty has been investing in winter sports facilities and experience for over a decade and on July 31 we hope to earn the opportunity to showcase to the world the tremendous progress our country has made."

Australia Defeats Kazakhstan in Davis Cup Quarter Finals

By Zhazira Dyussebekova

ASTANA – Despite leading 2-0 the first day, the Kazakhstan national tennis team was unable to reach the Davis Cup semi-finals, losing 3-2 to host country Australia. The event was held July 17-19. The opening match on day one saw Mikhail Kukushkin beat Thanasi Kokkinakis in straight sets, 6-4, 6-3, 6-3. Aleksandr Nedovyesov then defeated Nick Kyrgios 7-6 (7-5), 6-7 (7-2), 7-6 (7-5), 6-4. "It is another fantastic day for us. We do understand that there is a lot of work to do ahead of us. We just – I am saying just but it means a lot, a lot – we just need one more win, but it is just one point at a time for us. We had really good preparation here in Darwin. We had a little advantage over the Aussie guys coming into Darwin a little bit earlier," said Nedovyesov in an interview posted on the official Davis Cup website. Australian pair Sam Groth and Lleyton Hewitt returned the straight set favour to begin the second day, besting Kazakhstan's Andrey Golubev and Nedovyesov 6-4, 7-6 (7-4), 6-2. The Kazakh team at that point retained a 2-1 lead. "The Australians put on a dominant display in the third set, breaking the Kazakhs three times, in-



cluding for match point," reported abc.net.au. Groth then defeated Kukushkin, 6-4, 7-6 (8-6), 4-6, 7-6 (8-6). Nedovyesov, who was asked to play for the third day in a row, could not withstand Hewitt, 7-6 (2), 6-2, 6-3. "Obviously it is disappointing because we were so close to making history for our country, to be

in the Davis Cup semi-final, but I have to congratulate the Aussie team. They believed until the end that they could turn this match around and they stuck with their experienced players. It was a great comeback," said Kazakh captain Dias Doskarayev. The Davis Cup website put the win into historical perspective.

"It is first time in 76 years that Australia has come back from brink to win a tie from 0-2 down and the first time all four nominated players have played singles in live rubbers," stated davis.cup.com. The Australian team will meet Great Britain Sept. 18-20 in the semi-finals.



Mikhail Kukushkin

CAPITAL

WEDNESDAY, JULY 29, 2015

Country's Capital Launches 'Smart' City Projects

By Meruert Nurgazinova

Astana Mayor Adilbek Dzhakysbekov was recently briefed on several city smart projects, such as smart clinic, smart school, smart street lighting, smart payments as well as with current work in the Intelligent Contact Centre of the city akimat (administration).

The smart clinic project has been realised by public health clinic No. 4. The project makes online terminals available where patients can book a doctor's appointment online. The project also improves



Astana Mayor Adilbek Dzhakysbekov (C) is shown the new project online.

the working places in the health centre.

According to the mayor's press service, the smart school project is already operating in two schools in Astana: school No. 3 and school No. 15. It provides e-canteens, e-library, video surveillance and security systems, as well as digital educational resources.

The mayor also learned about the smart payment project, which introduces a new mechanism of payment for utility services in an electronic format available on the web portal smart.astana.kz. This service allows customers to pay

bills for water supply, gas, municipal waste removal, housing operational expenses, electricity, heating and telecommunications services.

The smart street lighting project is going to be implemented along the Enbekshiler Street located in the Yessil district. The press service mentioned that the project will remove old lighting and install new LED-lamps, which will increase the energy efficiency of the street lighting network.

The pilot project of the Intelligent Contact Centre is aimed at improving the quality of public

services provided by the city akimat.

At the end of the briefing, Dzhakysbekov officially launched the start of the practical implementation of the demonstrated projects.

As part of the Smart Astana concept, the Astana Innovations company is implementing smart projects to create the infrastructure necessary for Astana to be included among the world's 50 "smartest" cities.

All of the projects are being funded through private investment and do not involve state funds.

Astana Hosts Biggest Ever Traditional Music Council



By Michelle Witte and Kamila Zhumabayeva

ASTANA – The Kazakh National University of Arts in Astana hosted the World Conference of the International Council for Traditional Music (ICTM), the first time the event has been hosted in Central Asia or the Commonwealth of Independent States. The July 16-22 conference attracted an unprecedented number of delegates, ICTM Secretary General Svanibor Pettan said at the conference's opening session.

"This conference is a historical event. This is the first time the ICTM holds a scholarly conference in a Central Asian country, where different cultures, languages, music, dance and scholarly traditions emerge," ICTM President Salwa El-Shawan Castelo-Branco said in her opening address to the conference. "We are also looking forward to learning about the rich and varied traditions of this country and of so many neighbouring countries."

Kazakhstan had the greatest number of delegates to the event, which featured among its panels sessions on traditional Kazakh instruments and songs in a contemporary context; Kazakh epic tradition; Kazakh music in

Soviet times; music and dance in Kazakh ceremonies and celebrations; musical education in Kazakhstan; Kazakh song letters during World War II; and workshops on Kazakh music, among other sessions on music in Central Asia and Turkic-speaking countries, in addition to an exhaustive list of global offerings.

Kazakh Deputy Prime Minister Berdibek Saparbayev also addressed the council, saying, "The place of music in the life of our people is so important, because music gives us strength." He also called music "an ambassador of peace," noting it brought representatives of 70 countries to Kazakhstan.

"The conference initiated by ICTM carries a very big meaning to the science and culture of Kazakhstan," said Gulnara Kuzbakova, professor in art history and musicologist of arts faculty at the Kazakh National University of Arts (KazNUA).

According to her, the council was first founded in Europe, to preserve traditional music and dance in the context of urbanisation, globalisation, information and technology development, and from those years on it had a constant interest to expand, making Kazakhstan its choice in 2013.

"Kazakh traditional culture is unknown to the global community, and its traditional music containing thousands of songs and kuys is yet to be explored," Kuzbakova stressed. Initial sources about Kazakh traditional music, composers and singers were either destroyed or archived. They are available in foreign languages and sources but because Kazakhstan lacks specialists who are focused on traditional music who could study and bring it back to the country there is no access now, the professor said. "A lot of data describing Kazakh traditions could be found on radio, in a newspaper or at a private collection somewhere in France," she said.

Kuzbakova noted that Kazakh traditional music, arts and culture provoke huge interest in the global community and many foreign delegates and guests attended Kazakh traditional and contemporary arts presentations during the conference. "The whole culture is showcased through music and ICTM that has almost all countries as its members, attracts the attention of global community to the problems of cultural heritage."

The event was highly important not solely for cultural reasons but for Kazakh musicology and culture being introduced at a wide scale for the first time, said Kuzbakova. "This is new research in traditional music and dance, theoretical, political and economic aspects of traditional arts, its development and preservation raises new questions," she noted.

The professor also stressed that the conference has a special interest for EXPO 2017, that the economics and politics of the country implement itself through the culture. "Culture promotes Kazakhstan's development in the international arena and the discovery of Kazakhstan's culture is a key value of the ICTM 2015 conference," she said.

President Seeks More Efficient EXPO 2017 Preparation

By Talgat Issenov

President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev recently proposed to appoint a special representative of the Government, who will take responsibility for the EXPO 2017 preparation process.

"It is already evident that there is no proper interaction between all

the institutions involved in the process. The government showed its inability to coordinate the preparation work. Everyone is responsible only for its special set of tasks, without efficiently consolidating with others. Therefore, I ask the prime minister to make a proposal to choose a responsible person in the government, who will be able to fulfill this

task and conduct EXPO 2017," said the President during a recent meeting on the progress of preparations for the coming exhibition.

He also noted that the key issue is to create a positive international image of the country, especially relevant in view of EXPO 2017.

"There is not much time left before the exhibition. We need our governmental bodies to work efficiently and coordinated. I instruct the government and all the participants of the meeting to fulfill the assigned tasks. We must hold an exhibition at a decent level. I know that we can do it. It is not an easy period we are experiencing right now. We allocate funding from the National Fund and each tenge should be spent usefully. Therefore, it is necessary to work together for the good of our country," said the President.



Astana Introduces New Bus Vehicles, Routes

By Zhazira Dyussebekova

ASTANA – Twenty-six busses in Kazakhstan's capital changed their itinerary and more than 200 new passenger vehicles were put into operation on the existing city routes, according to astana.gov.kz, the city administration's official website.

The actions, taken to reduce the congestion of public transport, are part of the modernisation of the city's transportation system. The new vehicles are equipped with air conditioning and video surveillance, with the updates completed by the capital's passenger transport and automobile roads department.

Of the city's 52 routes, 26 were changed, including seven routes divided into two parts.

"The new scheme of public transport will contribute to the improvement of the quality of passenger service and transport control service will be introduced," stated the akimat's report.

The concept of renovating the route network was developed with the participation of international consultants. The experts analysed the current system and passenger flow and conducted a survey involving more than 35,000 people. The new network is expected to satisfy the needs of 85 percent of the city population.



As a result of the study, the modernisation process was divided into three stages, reported bnews.kz. The first phase is the introduction of the new, more efficient routes implemented by the passenger transport and automobile roads department. Deputy head Abdykhamit Tamabayev said the department is completing comprehensive measures to improve the situation in areas such as reorganisation of the route network, a rolling stock update, training of drivers and check-takers, implementation of an electronic fare collection system, electronic dispatch system, electronic information system and transport control service.

Although 214 new busses were

introduced July 11, the city still has a transportation shortage of 958 vehicles, said Beibit Yeszhanov, head of the passenger transport department of Astana LRT. Plans are underway to put 358 new busses into operation this year, 200-250 in 2016 and 350 in 2017.

By the end of this year, 55 new closed heated bus stops will be installed in country's capital, according to information released July 13 by the city akimat. All the bus stops will be equipped with video surveillance cameras connected to the city's common system and other sensors and air exchange inside the bus shelters will be conducted by natural ventilation.

