

THE ASTANA TIMES

EDITORIAL

A New Vision Lays Groundwork for Future

2012 was one of the most fruitful years in the history of Kazakhstan in almost every sphere.

A successful start was made by an event that was historic in its scale for the young Republic. In the beginning of the year, a multi-party Parliament was elected as a new step towards a more developed and representative democracy. Since then, Kazakhstan's Parliament has included representation from three parties, including the ruling Nur Otan Party, the Ak Zhol Democratic Party and the Communist People's Party.

In 2012, the nation's law enforcement agencies completed their re-certification process, after which one-third of their senior staff was replaced.

Last July, President Nursultan Nazarbayev introduced the "20 Steps Towards a Society of Universal Labour" programme, based on the principles of social justice. The programme was designed to motivate citizens of the country to work for the common good of the society.

In the summer of 2012, Kazakhstan's surgeons became the first in Central Asia to carry out a successful heart transplant. Earlier artificial hearts had been implanted.

At the end of July and August, the nation eagerly watched its athletes compete in the Summer Olympic Games in London. It was a moment of unprecedented triumph and revelation as the national Olympic team took 12th place overall with 7 gold medals. Celebrations were held nationwide and united the people of Kazakhstan.

The year's chain of remarkable events were capped at the end of the year when the International Exhibitions Bureau (BIE) in Paris approved Astana's bid to host EXPO 2017 over the Belgium city of Liege by a majority of votes. EXPO 2017 will be the first expo held in Central Asia. Preparations for it are already underway and its theme of "Future Energy" is expected to positively influence the socio-economic, scientific and technological development of the region and beyond.

The year ended on a high note when President Nazarbayev outlined the new "Kazakhstan 2050" strategy. In his annual state-of-the-nation address on December 14, the president announced a series of reforms and laid out a new long term strategy for the country. He called for the improvement of governance, welfare, the economy and development of the national infrastructure. The strategy will shape the direction of the country's development for the coming decades and will build on the results of the "Kazakhstan 2030" strategy.

The "Kazakhstan 2030" strategy was aimed at including the country in the top 50 most developed states of the world and that goal has almost been achieved as the country now ranks No. 51. President Nazarbayev said Kazakhstan should next strive to be listed among the top 30 nations around the world by 2050. This long-term goal is comprised of smaller segmented aims and success in reaching them will advance the nation's overall development.

Since gaining its independence, Kazakhstan has introduced a number of strategic programmes covering a wide range of issues. The Bolashak programme provides scholarships for students to study abroad. The State Programme for Accelerated Industrial and Innovative Development and the 2020 Business Road Map are major programmes that are stimulating great industrial development and wealth creation around the country.

The global financial and economic crisis of 2008-9 had a negative impact on the economy of Kazakhstan. In order to overcome the crisis, the government introduced a number of amendments in economic policy allowing it to intervene in economic affairs. In 2009, the President of Kazakhstan said adjustments were made to adapt to changes in external economic circumstances. But he underlined that these changes did not alter the strategic development of the country.

In 1997, President Nazarbayev addressed the people of Kazakhstan and presented them with the ambitious strategy "Kazakhstan 2030." At that time, its successful implementation appeared doubtful. By that moment, the country had only recovered from the collapse of the Soviet Union and from the failure of the old Soviet economic system and the survival of the state was still in question. Kazakhstan, like most former Soviet republics, was suffering from overall shortages, as well as high levels of unemployment and instability.

Nevertheless, setting defined goals and matching available resources with the strategic course of the country's development allowed Kazakhstan to reach the phase of stable economic growth. Then the "Kazakhstan 2030" strategy was introduced in 1997 and although its target date for fulfillment was 2030, it could be said that the majority of its goals have been achieved already today.

In his December address to the nation, President Nazarbayev recalled the uncertainty and instability of the early days of sovereignty following the declaration of independence in 1991, and reviewed the achievements reached already under the "Kazakhstan 2030" strategy over the past 15 years.

The new "Strategy-2050" long-term development programme takes into account the realities of modern world civilization, and finds support among the general public in Kazakhstan and abroad.

President Nazarbayev noted the central features of modern state development, especially the need of countries to adequately and timely respond to the new challenges of a rapidly changing world. He, therefore, identified in his address the following 10 challenges on the global agenda:

1. Acceleration of historical time.
2. Global demographic imbalance.
3. Threat to global food security.
4. Acute water shortage.
5. Global energy security.
6. Exhaustible natural resources.
7. The third industrial revolution.

8. Increasing social instability.
9. The crisis of the values of our civilization.
10. The threat of a new global destabilization.

The new economic course that the president announced is based on comprehensive economic pragmatism and on the principles of economic feasibility to develop the global competitiveness of Kazakhstan.

As part of a radical liberalization of the economic system, state participation will be reduced to a minimum in the regulation of business and the role of the private sector in all spheres of activity will be increased.

The head of state announced a transition to new personnel, budgetary, fiscal and monetary policies and to new ways to manage the public external debt. This will seek to create the best conditions for foreign investment across Eurasia. The development of mineral resources and their export to world markets will be accelerated in exchange for access to advanced technologies and the creation of new industries within our country.

The president also tasked the government with increasing the contribution of agriculture to the country's GDP by 500 percent by 2050 through a series of measures, including government stimulus packages.

Kazakhstan, as before, will be an active participant in regional economic integration, which should be based on the principles of mutual benefit and common solutions for pressing social and economic problems. A special programme called "Global Infrastructure Integration" will be developed in the frames of this strategy.

Great attention will be given to the development of innovation in national infrastructure. An important element of innovation should be the development of alternative energy sources with a focus on sustainability.

As part of social security policy and in line with the principle of personal responsibility, every citizen will be guaranteed minimum social standards of quality of life, health and education. The president defined key measuring marks of modern systems of education, training and re-training, knowledge and skills. He said a major task in this area was involving the self-employed, the unemployed and low-income citizens in active forms of employment. The "Employment Programme - 2020" will be implemented to achieve these goals.

The president also stressed the importance of paying more attention to protecting mothers and children and to supporting large families.

The fostering of a strong and proud patriotism is fundamental to the success of the country's multi-ethnic and multi-religious society, the president said. He said the country's children and grandchildren should prefer life at home because it is much better than in a foreign country.

Kazakhstan is firmly committed to the further progressive development of democracy with a focus on decentralization, anti-corruption, and gender equality.

The president has also approved sweeping government reforms. They will include a massive civil service reform, the decentralization of management, the introduction of new local government systems and the election of district mayors of cities and rural districts. Starting in 2013, 2,533 village and town mayors, or 91 percent of all mayors, will be elected. The new system of government will be based on the principle of public-private partnership.

Kazakhstan should become a model of increased tolerance and stability. Any ethnic group living in the territory of Kazakhstan is and will continue to be regarded as an integral part of the Kazakh nation. However, the preservation of the secular state with full respect for the great world religions remains a major challenge for our society. Kazakhstan will also move forward with the switching of the Kazakh language from the Cyrillic to the Latin alphabet before 2025.

Kazakhstan's foreign policy will continue to be founded on the principles of balance, consistency and predictability. Kazakhstan is fully aware of its responsibility for regional security and intends to contribute actively to the strengthening of security in Central Asia and beyond. President Nazarbayev pledged to support "progressive international initiatives," including political reconciliation in Afghanistan and reconstruction programmes in that country. The president emphasized twice in his speech that the country's political sovereignty will not be infringed by the creation of a Eurasian Economic Union.

Kazakhstan remains committed to maintaining global stability and will be in the forefront of efforts to strengthen the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, promote the principles of ethnic and religious tolerance and combat extremism and terrorism around the world.

Great importance in the implementation of strategic priorities is given to the international partners of Kazakhstan. The country counts on them for support and cooperation in the implementation of these tasks, which will foster further cooperation between our countries and peoples.

By the year of 2013, Kazakhstan has become a globally recognized state and a dynamically developing nation that contributes to shaping global. Its young capital Astana serves as the meeting place for prominent experts at such major international events as the nuclear disarmament conference, the Congress of World and Traditional Religions, the Astana Economic Forum, the Eurasian Media Forum and other major annual and regularly-held events. Kazakhstan is recognized as a modern, forward-looking and confident nation and responsible partner in the international arena.

The country is seeking to become one of the world's 30 most developed and prosperous nations by 2050, and its main national goal is to continue radically improving the quality and standard of living of its people.

In President Nazarbayev, his new strategy Kazakhstan-2050 and the new generation of citizens of a 21-year-young country, Kazakhstan has a leader, a vision and a people in order to achieve these high goals.

Reshuffle Marks Transition to Gradual Change

By Daniyar Ashimbayev

First, it should be noted that the current reorganization of the government and related personnel changes demonstrate the new style of presidential politics. Its essence lies in the rejection of the "revolutionary change" and demonstrates the transition to a gradual restructuring of the governmental apparatus.

The change of government in Kazakhstan in the fall of 2012 was surprisingly smooth and was not accompanied by an upheaval of ministries and their responsibilities. It was obvious that the new prime minister, Serik Akhmetov, with the support of the head of state, chose to work some time with the old structure and team in order to understand shortcomings and to find a new formula. This is what happened now.

A new Ministry of Regional Development was established, which aims to strengthen the control of the centre for the implementation of economic and administrative reforms in the country. As is known, for various reasons, 14 Kazakh regions are at quite different levels of economic and social development. For comparison, according to the government, the difference in per capita income between certain regions is almost four times!

Coordination of the work aimed at addressing these and other issues will be conducted by a new ministry headed by experienced civil servant Bakhytzhan Sagintayev, who will also hold the rank of the first deputy prime minister of the country. Powers of the Ministry of Economy (Minister - Yerbolat Dossayev) and the Ministry of the Environment (minister - Nurlan Ka-

pparov) were strengthened. Both officials are experienced managers, with know-how both in government and in the business.

The appointment of Marat Tazhin as Secretary of State seems to be to strengthen the level of implementation of the new state programme "Kazakhstan-2050". Tazhin repeatedly served as Deputy Head of the Presidential Administration and Secretary of the Security Council. Nevertheless, he is known primarily as a leading strategist of the presidential team. Moreover, his new role suggests that Nursultan Nazarbayev intends to seriously raise the level of implementation of his recently announced programme.

With regards to the former Deputy Prime Minister Kymbek Kuserbayev and former Secretary of State Mukhtar Kul-Muhammed, their new positions can be considered a demotion in name only. Kuserbayev now heads the Kyzyl Orda region, a region with great potential, including a major oil production, but one which is in the doldrums, and Kul-Muhammed again became Minister of Culture and Information, which has an important role in the implementation of the new political course. It comes as a new model for the formation of Kazakhstan patriotism, and also the transfer of the Kazakh language to the Latin script. It appears that President Nursultan Nazarbayev has dropped and threw his old allies on a new front, where their expertise will be extremely demanded.

The author is a political scientist and the editor and publisher of Who Is Who in Kazakhstan.

Unified Professional Sports Club Will Seek More Victories

By Aidar Makhmetov

The Samruk-Kazyna National Welfare Fund has long funded various sports projects. This funding has been provided either directly by the Fund, such as the funding of the Astana cycling team, and through the national companies included in the structure of the Fund, such as when Kazakhstan Temir Zholy has financed the Barys hockey club and the Astana football club, and when KazMunaiGas and Samruk-Energo has financed the Astana Arlans boxing club, etc.

Since the Fund is a strong supporter of the corporate governance practices, as well as due to changes in the policy of sponsorship and charity fund provision, and within the decision to streamline financial flows directed at financing professional sports projects, it was decided to create the Astana Presidential Professional Sports Club (PPSC).

This initiative was supported by the President.

Ten most successful sports projects financed by the group of the Samruk Kazyna companies such as the Astana cycling team, the Barys hockey club, the Astana football club, the Astana water polo team, the Kazakhstan Barys project on the development of the Kazakh Kuresi wrestling, the Astana Dakar Team, the Astana Arlans boxing club etc. were brought under the roof of the Astana Presidential Professional Sports Club. As the special project, the club included the Foundation of Ilya Ilyin, who had become the Olympic champion in weightlifting twice and. His foundation has received the support from the Fund for the implementation of systematic preparation for the Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro.

Management of these projects will be among the functions of the Astana PPSC, which will ensure professional sports management.

All funds allocated for the clubs will be distributed through the Astana PPSC. Image making policies, currently implemented by each club individually, will also be streamlined. Management of the PPSC will make decisions on key management positions of the clubs.

The work of the Astana PPSC will focus on the best practices of corporate governance in sports. The best examples for this are well-known world clubs like Spanish Real and Barcelona, Bayern in Germany. These clubs bring together football, basketball, handball, water polo, etc.

The management of the PPSC consists of a president, who will provide overall management of the club and a general manager, whose functions will include operational management.

The author is the general manager of the Astana Presidential Professional Sports Club.

Kazakh National University and Ural Federal University Join Forces

By Aliya Bekalava

Two leading universities in Kazakhstan and Russia have joined forces to upgrade their facilities and programmes to become global leaders. This is an ambitious task set by the management of Al-Farabi Kazakh National University (KazNU) and Yeltsin Ural Federal University (UrFU).

The heads of the two institutions met after the cross border cooperation forum between Russia and Kazakhstan, which took place in September 2012 in Pavlodar city. UrFU Rector Viktor Koksharov said his university had chosen KazNU as its partner on the recommendation of the QS International Ranking Agency in Britain and by taking into account the achievements of the university.

"Al-Farabi Kazakh National University is one of the leading universities within the former Soviet space and it occupies 390th place in the ranking of world universities according to the QS Agency. The university demonstrates a confident and very dynamic growth," Koksharov said.

Over the past two years, KazNU has made spectacular progress, rising 250 positions in the QS World University rankings to enter the list of 400 best universities in the world in 2012. In some disciplines, the university already ranks among the top 200. It is the only university in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and the Central Asian region to receive a three-star excellence rating from QS.

KazNU officials have presented their experience in modernizing and building a research university recently at three international conferences in Taipei, Prague and Bali. They received positive responses from global research and education institutions and rating agencies.

KazNU is the only higher education institution of

Kazakhstan included in the UN Academic Impact programme that was established at the initiative of UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. The university was the only institution in the CIS countries with departments especially devoted to Global Energy-Ecological Development Strategy and the Green Bridge that were presented at the Global Summit on Sustainable Development in Rio de Janeiro.

KazNU launched its new MDP Global Classroom, a Master's degree programme in 2011 with the support of Columbia University in New York City. In 2012, the Hewlett-Packard Company from the United States opened its first research and education centre in Central Asia at the university.

Reaching Global Standards

President Nazarbayev has set the goal of having two of Kazakhstan's universities entering the ratings list of the world's leading universities by 2020. Five Russian universities are expected to enter the top 100 world by then.

"Our university has been ranked among the QS just recently," Koksharov said. "We now occupy global positions between numbers 450 to 500. The experience of cooperating with neighbouring friendly universities in other countries is very important and valuable for us."

"Our president and the government have set us the task of making our institution the best university not only in the country, but also internationally. In other words, we have to become a world-class university," he said.

Full article is available at www.astanatimes.kz

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