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ForMin Visits Washington, Brussels to Strengthen Dialogue with US, Europe



US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton welcomes Kazakh Foreign Minister Yerzhan Kazykhanov and other officials on January 31 in Washington.

Photo by Foreign Ministry

Kazakhstan’s Foreign Minister Yerzhan Kazykhanov visited Washington, DC, and Brussels this week for talks with high level officials on ways to expand and strengthen the country’s multi-faceted relationships with the United States and Europe.

Nonproliferation of nuclear weapons, stabilization of the situation in Afghanistan, and simplification of the visa regime were among the many issues Yerzhan Kazykhanov and U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton discussed at a bilateral meeting in Washington on February 1. The meeting took place as part of Kazykhanov’s first official visit to the U.S. as the Kazakh foreign minister, which began on January 30.

Prior to the meeting, both Kazykhanov and Clinton expressed satisfaction with the progress achieved by the two countries in recent years in strengthening the bilateral strategic partnership.

“Kazakhstan and the United States have covered a lot of ground in the first 20 years of cooperation and we look forward to even stronger relationship in the future. Our two countries share commitments to fundamental values and principles of freedom and opportunity, peace and cooperation, dialogue and understanding,” Kazykhanov said before the meeting.

“I’m delighted to welcome my colleague, the Foreign Minister of Kazakhstan, a country with whom we have very friendly relations and work together on a whole range of issues, both bilaterally and regionally and globally,” Clinton said. “Kazakhstan has served in recent years as the chair of the OSCE, the chair of OIC, and has been very helpful in our efforts to stabilize Afghanistan. So I am pleased to have this opportunity to discuss at length some of the issues that we’re working on together,” she said before they proceeded for a meeting behind closed doors.

During the talks, Minister Kazykhanov conveyed a reply message from President Nursultan Nazarbayev to President Barack Obama from last December, which expressed gratitude for the warm words of congratulations on Kazakhstan’s twentieth anniversary.

Looking ahead to the Second Summit on Nuclear Security in Seoul, Kazykhanov and Clinton discussed joint Kazakhstan – U.S. efforts to ensure global and regional security. They also agreed that President Nazarbayev and President Obama will have a meeting at the Summit. “We believe this meeting will be a milestone in cooperation between our countries,” Kazykhanov said following the talks.

To further facilitate travel between the two countries, the sides agreed to exchange, at the earliest, diplomatic notes on treaties to issue five-year visas and unify visa fees.

In addition, Kazykhanov and Clinton decided to transform the mechanism of bilateral political consultations into the “Kazakhstan – U.S. Commission on Strategic Partnership,” as it was defined most suitable for the increasing level and content of the interaction between the two countries.

Kazykhanov: Kazakhstan and the United States have covered a lot of ground in the first 20 years of cooperation and we look forward to even stronger relationship in the future.

The two officials also reaffirmed their commitment to strengthen dialogues on Afghanistan, democratization, and cooperation in security and nonproliferation, as well as energy, trade and investment. The United States will continue to remain among Kazakhstan’s major investors and trade partners, it was said.

Kazykhanov and Clinton also exchanged views on democratic developments in Kazakhstan. The sides agreed the recent election for the Majilis of the Parliament of Kazakhstan on January 15 which resulted in the creation of a multi-party polity, was an important step forward in Kazakhstan’s political development. Hillary Clinton also praised Nursultan Nazarbayev’s decision to hold elections in Zhanaozen despite its being under the emergency rule at the time, as well as the country’s commitment to an open and transparent investigation of the tragic events of December 2011.

Finally, the Foreign Minister and the Secretary of State discussed how to further expand educational ties and scientific and technological cooperation between the universities and research institutes of both countries.

As part of his visit, Yerzhan Kazykhanov also participated in the Atlantic Council Conference on January 31 dedicated to the twentieth anniversary of Kazakhstan’s independence and Kazakhstan-US relations.

In his remarks, Kazykhanov went over Kazakhstan’s achievements in economy, politics, and foreign relations over the past 20 years. “Kazakhstan especially treasures its close and warm alliance with the United States. Our partnership is wide and deep. The U.S. was the first nation to recognize the new Republic of Kazakhstan 20 years ago. And in September 2010, the Department of State said, “Kazakhstan is the only country in Central Asia, with which the US has such a vast and saturated agenda of bilateral cooperation.” That’s still true today,” he said.

“Kazakhstan shares many of the same foreign policy goals as the United States. Like you, we are interested in nuclear non-proliferation, combating extremism and terrorism, and achieving energy security. We both also endorse the “New Silk Road” initiative that will make economic and roadway connections between South- and Central Asia and Afghanistan – very much like the Great Silk Road of ancient times,” Kazykhanov added.

He also highlighted common achievements in economic cooperation. “Trade is booming between our two countries. In the first 10 months of 2011, commodity sales between us rose 27 percent to \$2.2 billion. Since 1993, direct investment by U.S. into Kazakhstan has totalled \$20 billion. And there is plenty of potential for more.”

As part of the visit, during a special ceremony held in Kazakhstan’s Embassy in Washington, Kazykhanov presented state awards, dedicated to the 20th anniversary of independence, to prominent Americans who have contributed significantly to the strengthening of the Kazakhstan – American ties.

During the European leg of his trip, Minister Kazykhanov held a meeting with EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission Catherine Ashton in Brussels on Feb. 2.

“It is important to note that in 2011 the foreign trade turnover between the European Union and Kazakhstan has reached USD 50 billion,” Kazykhanov noted after the meeting, as he shared details on the discussions. These touched upon negotiations on a new enhanced partnership and cooperation agreement between Kazakhstan and the EU to replace the one from 1999. The Minister also called for the mutual simplification of visa regimes as mutually beneficial.



Yerzhan Kazykhanov shakes hands with Catherine Ashton on February 2 in Brussels.

Photo by Foreign Ministry

Baroness Ashton issued her own statement after the meeting, saying, “Kazakhstan is an important partner for the EU in Central Asia and the EU has good relations and dialogue with Kazakhstan, which are important to maintain for exchanging our views and concerns. My meeting with Foreign Minister Kazykhanov today provided for this opportunity.”

“We discussed recent developments over the last months in Kazakhstan. I recalled my concerns about violent clashes of December 2011 between striking workers and the police, and the ensuing arrests. I repeated my call for objective and transparent investigation of the events. We also discussed the recent Parliamentary elections. I encouraged Kazakhstan to maintain its aspiration to build an open and democratic society respectful of the fundamental rights and freedoms of its population. The EU stands ready to support

Kazakhstan in this work,” Catherine Ashton said.

“We also discussed international issues, notably Syria and Iran, and Kazakhstan’s role as Chairmanship of the Organisation of Islamic Co-operation. The EU is committed to strengthen its relations with Kazakhstan through the negotiations or a new enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement,” she said adding that progress in these negotiations will depend on progress on political reforms in Kazakhstan.

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Kazakhstan and Belgium, Competitors for EXPO 2017, Meet in Paris



Logo of Kazakhstan's bid for EXPO 2017

The delegations from Kazakhstan and Belgium, which are bidding for the right to host the International specialized exhibition EXPO 2017, held a friendly meeting at the headquarters of the Bureau International des Expositions (BIE) on February 2.

Rapil Zhoshybayev, Kazakhstan foreign ministry's executive secretary and the national coordinator of EXPO 2017 project led the Kazakhstan delegation.

During the meeting, representatives of the Bureau International des Expositions (BIE) briefly informed the participants about the results of the November's 2011 150th session of the General Assembly of the BIE, as well as introduced the rules and organizational issues for conducting the 151st session of the BIE GA in June this year. During the 151st Session, Kazakhstan will present its detailed "Astana-2017" presentation.

Energy of the Future, the theme proposed for the expo by Astana, reflects the country's philosophy that sees energy as an integral part of its future growth and new green and clean technologies as a vital part for the world to look at and share with each other for the benefit of the mankind.

The development of alternative energy, despite the rich natural resources, is one of the priorities of the country. Kazakhstan's potential in the fields of renewable wind and solar energy is very high. To date, in the frameworks of the State Programme of Accelerated Industrial-Innovational Development (PAIID) the development indicators are set for renewable energy. According to these indicators, by 2014, more than one billion kilowatt hours of electricity should be produced from renewable energy resources.

As reported previously, in accordance with the established regulations of the Bureau on the eve of the national coordinators' meeting Kazakh Ambassador to France and Head of the Permanent Delegation of Kazakhstan to the BIE Nurlan Danenov presented the Secretary General of the organisation Vicente Gonzales Loscertales with the "Astana-2017" bid dossier, prepared by the bodies of the Kazakhstan government in charge of the bid.

The head of the BIE highly evaluated the quality of the prepared dossier, assuring that he would review its content more particularly prior to submission to the members of the executive committee of the Bureau.

Loscertales also reported on the preparation of the group of BIE experts, who will arrive to Astana in March to review and get acquainted with the progress of the preparatory works on promotion of Astana's EXPO 2017 bid. The group of experts will meet representatives of the Kazakhstan ministries, departments and Astana Mayor's office to discuss the issues on agenda.

During his visit to Astana last November, Secretary General met President Nursultan Nazarbayev, ex-First Deputy Prime Minister Umirzak Shukeyev, the then Minister for economic development

and trade Kairat Kelimbetov, and Imangali Tasmagambetov, the Mayor of Astana. They discussed prospects of cooperation between Kazakhstan and the BIE, Kazakhstan's bid and the country's profile to be presented at the 151st session of the BIE General Assembly this year and reviewed the

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city' s readiness to hold a large-scale event of this kind.

During the visit, Los c ertales was rather impressed with Kazakhstan' s readiness and dossier. "I have looked through the country' s dossier. It is prepared in an efficient and professional manner and in accordance with the rules of the organisation," he said.

Earlier in January this year Kazakhstan's Ministry of Economic Development and Trade with the support of the Bureau International des Expositions (BIE) opened "Travelling Exhibition" EXPO of EXPOs in Astana. The exhibition is on view from January 11 to March 10, 2012. During two months, the residents and visitors of Astana will have an opportunity to experience the atmosphere of the past EXPOs.

The decision on the venue for the 2017 exhibition will be taken through a secret vote by all 160 member states of the BIE at its General Assembly in December 2012 (*until this year there were 157 states but three more countries officially became members of the organisation now*). Astana's only competitor for the 2017 expo is Belgian city of Liege which has proposed connectivity as the theme for its bid.

More information on Astana's bid for EXPO 2017 is available at www.expo2017astana.com.

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Transport and Comms Ministry Reviews Work Done, Future Prospects

This week, the Ministry of Transport and Communications held an enlarged session of the board chaired by First Deputy Prime Serik Akhmetov where participants discussed the work undertaken and set the new tasks for this year. The meeting took place in furtherance of the 2012 state of the nation address of President Nursultan Nazarbayev at the end of February.

In his report, the newly appointed Minister of Transport and Communication Askar Zhumagaliyev noted a stable growth of the main indicators of the transport and communications system.

Over the last year, 5,304 km of roads were repaired including 2,254 km of the national road network and 3,050 km of local roads. The ministry's main task in 2011 set by President Nazarbayev was to reconstruct the international transit corridor 'Western Europe – Western China'.

In 2010, the new highway's first part of 417 km was built while last year another 780 km were built. In 2012, it is planned to build and reconstruct 1,080 km of roads including 771 km of the "Western Europe – Western China" corridor. Besides, it is also planned to repair 1,245 km of the national road network and 3,073 km of local roads.

During his speech, Minister Zhumagaliyev touched upon the issue of motor technical inspection, noting that starting this year, the service is being rendered by private companies.

"Currently, we have 126 lines operating in 53 service centres. Out of 3.4 million, 2.8 million vehicles will undergo technical inspection this year. Therefore, we plan to arrange 400 lines in 200 centers in order to ensure 100 per cent coverage of all vehicles subject to technical inspection," the minister said.



First Deputy Prime Serik Akhmetov (L) chairs the session of the board of the Ministry of Transport and Communications as Ministry's newly appointed head Askar Zhumagaliyev delivers a report.

Photo from *Inform.kz*

In order to simplify the process of inclusion into the list of the centres of technical inspection the Ministry is to introduce the standards of technical inspection services, launch single notarial information system “E-notariate”, and integrate it into the database of the Traffic Police Committee of Kazakhstan.

As for the railway transport service, it shipped 279.6 million tons of cargo and carried 20.6 million passengers in 2011. The first parts of the “Zhetygen - Korgas” and the “Uzen - State border with Turkmenistan” railroad projects were launched last year. The end of their construction is planned for this year. The ‘Talgo’ rail cars assembly plant was already launched last December.

According to Zhumagaliyev, President Nazarbayev in his address set the task to construct the new railway lines “Beineu - Zhezkazgan” and “Arkalyk - Shubarkul”. Besides, it is planned to complete the construction of the electric locomotive plant in Astana by the end of this year.

“The importance and relevance of such projects is very high both on the country and regional level which will connect the central part with the western part of Kazakhstan, and form a single national rail network”, Serik Akhmetov said.

The issues of renewal of the fleet of aircraft, opening of new air routes, and improvement of flight regularity were also raised during the session.

“The ministry will give great attention to quality of services, particularly, the regularity and punctuality of flights. Each delay may initiate an official investigation,” Zhumagaliyev said.

Regarding sea transportation, the Aktau port is planned to be expanded which will increase its capacity to 16 million tons of cargo by 2015.



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The second part of the Kazakh Minister’s report was devoted to discussion of the work done and future prospects in the sphere of information and communication sector. According to him, last year the number of the Internet users increased to 53% of the population. In 2011, the wholesale rates for the

Internet and mobile services were reduced by 2.2 times, the speed of the most popular tariff plans underwent two-fold increase without a rise in the subscription fee.

“In 2011, mobile network operators introduced per-second billing and canceled the charge for connection, while the costs for inside the network calls were also reduced by 33% and the rates for interconnect by 20%,” Zhumagaliyev noted.

Within the Road Map Programme implementation, the ministry carried out work on developing wireless network technologies on EV-DO basis in Almaty, Zhambyl, Kostanay, South Kazakhstan, Aktobe Oblasts as well as on introducing 3G service and fixed access networks using FTTH and FTTB technologies. The launch of the 4G network in a pilot mode is planned to be carried out in 2012.

In 2011, 3G networks were introduced in all regional centres. At the same time, 3G services will become available in district centres with more than 50,000 residents in 2012.

In 2011, a special attention was paid to the development of ‘e-government’ and automation of the public services. As of today, 15% of socially important public services are available in electronic format. As a result of work done in 2011, 8,349,502 (1,652,306 in 2010) electronic receipts have been issued through www.egov.kz portal and the number of registered users of the portal increased to 95,000 people (from 26,337 in 2010).

In order to optimize and automate the public services, 28 Public Service Centres (PSC) were modernized in 2011 and 228 more PSCs are to be modernized in 2012. For residents of rural areas 14 mobile PSCs were launched. In 2012, it is planned to launch in pilot mode four specialized PSCs for rendering services regarding vehicle registration and issuance of driver licenses (in Almaty, Astana, Karaganda, and Aktau cities). In all other regional centres the launch of such PSCs is planned in 2013-2014.

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Unemployment Down to 5.4 % As New Jobs and Training Are Provided



Minister of Labour and Social Protection Gulshara Abdykhalikova says unemployment rate decreased to 5,4 percent in her speech on February 1 in Astana.

Photo from *Inform.kz*

it possible to significantly improve the living standards in Kazakhstan,” Minister of Labour and Social Protection Gulshara Abdykhalikova stressed in her speech.

According to preliminary data by the country’s Agency for Statistics, the unemployment level has declined from 5.8 percent in 2010 to 5.4 percent last December. During the same period the number of employed people increased up to 8,466,000 million.

On the whole, 235,000 people were provided with jobs in Kazakhstan last year, while 274,800 new jobs were created with 128,200 of them in rural areas.

In 2011, a wide range of measures to develop social partnership were taken. The government continued its work to improve labour legislation and expand collective bargaining relationship so as to make the system cover more enterprises. Collective bargaining agreements embraced 53,800 enterprises as of January 1, 2012.

In addition, Kazakhstan continues taking steps to increase well-being of its people. Since July 1, 2011, the salaries of public sector employees have been raised by 30 percent, which affected more than 1.3 million people. The average salary of employees working for the government has increased from 52,000 tenge to 61,500 tenge.

The government has also raised pensions by 30 percent. Today, the average salary in Kazakhstan is around 36,000. The average size of state social benefits and allowances has grown by 9 percent.

According to Kazakhstan’s Agency for Statistics, in the third quarter of 2011, the number of people living for less than a minimum wage accounted for 5 percent, having reduced by 1.9 percent as compared to the corresponding period of 2010.

In 2011, targeted social assistance was rendered to 139,300 people with income below poverty level. Over the nine months of the year 2011, 125,000 families were provided with housing assistance for an overall amount of 2 billion tenge.

To implement the instructions from President Nazarbayev, a national programme “Employment-2020” has been developed aiming to increase people’s income through the assistance in productive employment. More than 58,000 people agreed to participate in the programme, having signed social contracts.

In line with the programme’s first dimension, 69,200 people have been retrained and received vocational education. More than 4,600 people completed courses in fundamentals of entrepreneurship; other 1,435 participants of the programme took microcredit loans. The average amount of microcredit loan amounted to 1,862 tenge.

The third dimension of the programme

An enlarged board meeting of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection took place in Astana on February 1 under the chairmanship of First Deputy Prime Minister Yerbol Orynbayev. The meeting tallied the results of measures taken to improve people’s welfare last year, and outlined major tasks for the year 2012 with due attention to President Nazarbayev’s address to the people of Kazakhstan on January 27.

The meeting addressed a wide range of various social and economic problems, including providing employment and improving the livelihoods of people in Kazakhstan.

“Rapid economic growth and active social policy pursued over the last few years have made

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stipulated the construction of 212 houses and 13 apartment houses.

Launched in 2011, “Employment-2020” has been successfully implemented further strengthening social support rendered by the government to the people of Kazakhstan.

“Following the instruction of President Nazarbayev, we will be starting an active phase of the programme this year,” Yerbol Orynbayev concluded, adjourning the meeting.

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New Minister of Culture and Information Presents Results, Priorities



An expanded session of the board of the Ministry of Culture and Information, devoted to the results of work of the sector in 2011 and tasks for the forthcoming period, took place on February 2.

State Secretary Mukhtar Kul-Muhammed, MPs, representatives of the Presidential Administration, Office of the Prime Minister, heads of cultural institutions, non-governmental organizations and the media attended the meeting.

The newly appointed Minister of Culture and Information Darkhan Mynbai presented a report on the results of the Ministry’s work in 2011 and tasks for 2012. The newly appointed Minister of Culture and Information Darkhan Mynbai (L) presents a report on the results of the Ministry’s work in 2011 and tasks for 2012 as Secretary of State Mukhtar Kul-Muhammed looks on.

Photo from *Inform.kz*

The newly appointed Minister of Culture and Information Darkhan Mynbai presented a report on the results of the Ministry’s work in 2011 and tasks for 2012.

According to the Minister, last year, another stage of implementation of the national strategic project “Madeni Mura” was completed. A total of 73 historical and cultural monuments were restored. More

than 30 scientific and 40 archaeological studies were completed that enriched science with thousands of artifacts and ideas providing perspectives on the national history.

Projects were also successfully implemented abroad. The Sultan Beybarys mausoleum was completely restored in Damascus. It is also planned to build cultural and historical mausoleum of Al-Farabi in Damascus.

In 2011, the unique project “Kazaktin batyrlyk zhyrlary” was completed.

The “Kazakhfilm” studios produced more than 20 documentary films about the national cultural heritage.

In 2011, the information portal “Madeni Mura - Cultural Heritage” was upgraded. The information about the unique monuments of archeology, history and culture, as well as archaeological excavations are located in an easily searchable format, on a virtual map of the cultural heritage of Kazakhstan in accordance with the geographic coordinates of towns and monuments.

In recent years, as part of the domestic film industry development, JSC “Kazakhfilm” was fully modernized. Today, it is a full-fledged film production complex, which has the most advanced technology and the best creative forces.

Each year, there are more than 100 motion pictures of various genres and formats in the production. These developments provide positive dynamics of the domestic films in the national box office. Today, Kazakhstan’s films make up 6% of all the movies shown in the cinemas of the country or more than 20 films a year.

Over the past three years, 102 Kazakhstan film products participated in 158 film festivals and film screenings in 50 countries. Last year, five films have won nine special prizes and awards.

In case of the national theaters, each year they perform more than 1,000 performances, including 40 premieres.

Kazakhstan's artists work with leading choreographers and world-class ballet masters. Domestic soloists undergo internships at the Academy of La Scala, Vienna State Opera, the Mariinsky Theatre, School of Italian opera in Bologna and other world centres.

The year of 2011 was the first year of implementing the State programme of development and functioning of languages in 2011-2020.

Revisions of standards of language competence have started together with the introduction of level assessment system to improve standards of teaching the state language.

More than two hundred items of printed products, such as manuals and textbooks were designed and produced. Among the issued products was a 15-volume Dictionary of Kazakh Literary Language, a valuable lexicographical work that meets the scientific and theoretical requirements. Also produced were a 15-volume series of books for children "Alem balalar Adebietinin inzhu-marzhandary", a 25-volume edition of the classic literature "Alemdik classica" (World Classics), audio books, innovative training and teaching programmes, etc.

Under the coordination of the Ministry the Concept of Civil Society Development for 2006-2011 was implemented.

The widespread involvement of NGOs in drafting the laws, programmes, conducting public hearings on major issues of development became a common practice.

As part of the so called social procurement in 2011, more than two hundred socially significant projects of NGOs in various areas of public life were implemented.

Speaking of the media sphere, Minister Mynbai said the country now has over 2,500 media outlets, of which 84% (2,301) are non-state media, and 16% (439) are owned by the state.

A major achievement of the 2011 was the launch of a national digital satellite network that has provided public access to domestic television throughout the territory of Kazakhstan, including the most remote and inaccessible villages.

The work has been done on reformatting and creating new thematic channels. From the 1st September of 2011, national TV channel "Kazakhstan" has started broadcasting entirely in Kazakh.

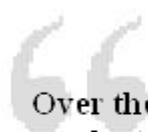
In 2012, two new channels, "Bilim" (Knowledge) and News 24, are scheduled to open.

The Baq.kz website was launched as an aggregator with consolidated online resources. There are about 40 Kazakh language newspapers and magazines, some 30 information resources, 13 TV channels and 10 radio stations.

The event of the year was the opening of the Television and Radio "Kazmedia ortalagy" in Astana. The law "On Broadcasting", which defines the legal conditions regulating the relations of all subjects of TV and radio market and the transition to digital broadcasting, was adopted.

In the field of publishing, in the past year 467 titles of socially important literature pieces were published with a circulation of about two million copies.

In 2011, the National Archive Fund was replenished with new documents. The archives received more than 693,000 units of storage documents on various mediums. As a result, from January 1, 2012, the state archives of Kazakhstan hold more than 25 million units of storage. In 2011, the archival institutions have provided public service to 203,000 clients.



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Also in the News:

- Kazakhstan's Minister of Oil and Gas Sauat Mynbayev announced at a board meeting of the Ministry on Feb. 2 that according to akimats (regional administrations) 12 billion cubic metres of commercial gas is to be delivered to the population, industrial, municipal and social enterprises in Kazakhstan. He also noted that Kazakhstan has increased transportation of gas by 18% in 2011. The increase was achieved mainly due to the transit of the Turkmen gas to China.
- Kazakhstan's Minister of Healthcare Salidat Kairbekova announced at a board meeting of the Ministry on Feb. 3 that a three year budget of healthcare for 2012-2014 makes KZT 1.315 trillion. According to her, in 2011 more than KZT 631 billion was spent for development of the healthcare system. The Minister also noted there were 123 new high technologies introduced in the medical sphere in 2011, 37 out of them are successfully used in the regions. Kazakhstan is the first in the post-Soviet space to have joined the top 22 countries of the world which implant the so called artificial heart, or a ventricular assist device.
- Chairman of Kazakhstan's Sports and Physical Culture Agency Talgat Yermegiyev announced at a board meeting of the Agency on Feb. 1 that 117 Kazakhstan's athletes will compete for the London 2012 Olympic Games licenses. "Last year Kazakhstan sportsmen have already obtained 46 Olympic licenses. We plan to win about 100 licenses and show better results at summer Olympic Games in London as compared to the Beijing Olympic Games," Yermegiyev said. "Income from tourism industry of Kazakhstan reached KZT 82.3 billion for the past nine months of 2011 against KZT 78.2 billion for the same period of 2010," he also added.
- Kazakhstan's bandy team beat Finland at the Bandy World Championship held in Almaty from Jan. 29 till Feb. 5. Kazakhstan's team for the first time in their history was able to beat last year's finalists Finland. Earlier Kazakhstan team played four matches in the Championship. Aleksey Nikishov's team flattened the Norway and American teams, but yielded the victory to Swedish and Russian teams. Kazakhstan is through to the semi-final where it will play Sweden on Feb. 4 while Russia will play Finland for the spot in the final. The final and the third place match will be played on February 5.
- US Ambassador to Kazakhstan Kenneth Fairfax addressed students and faculty of the Kazakhstan Institute of Management, Economics and Strategic Research (KIMEP) on US – Kazakhstan relations and his diplomatic career in Almaty on Feb. 2. The Ambassador's speech was followed by a Q&A session, during which he answered questions about elections in Kazakhstan and the United States, the situation in Syria, and lessons he learned from his life.

Things to watch:

- The Third International Exhibition and Conference "Nuclear Energy and Industry" will take place in Astana on Apr. 4-6. The exhibition will display the produce by international and Kazakhstan's leading manufacturers of nuclear industry equipment and materials, as well enterprises engaged in geological exploration.

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Please send your requests and questions to pressa@mfa.kz