

Celebrating Czech Independence Day in Ulaanbaatar

Ruth Allerstorfer

On October 27, the Czech Embassy in Ulaanbaatar celebrated Czech National Independence Day in the Kempinski Hotel. This year, the event was celebrated one day early in a reciprocal arrangement with the Turkish embassy as the two countries share the same National Holiday.

The invitation-only event featured a host of prominent guests, including First Deputy Prime Minister, N. Altankhuyag; Minister of Foreign Affairs, G. Zandanshatar; and Minister for Natural Resources and Energy, D. Zorig; as well as prominent Members

of Parliament: S. Oyun; D. Baldan-Ochir and D. Lundeeljantsan.

Many international Ambassadors also attended, including those from Canada; China; France; Germany; Great Britain; India; Kazakhstan; Kuwait; Lao PDR; the Republic of Korea; the Russian Federation; Turkey; and the USA.

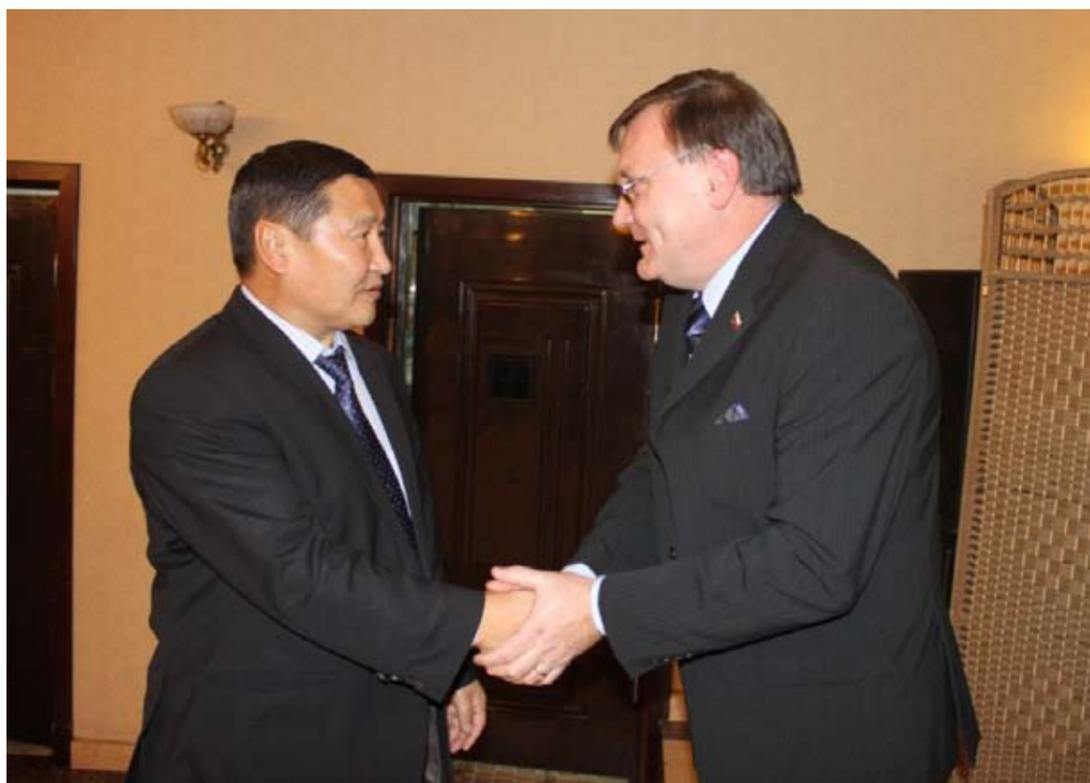
Czech Ambassador Mr. V. Jilek welcomed all guests at the door to traditional Czech music playing in the background. Once the majority of high-profile guests had arrived, the Czech national anthem was played, signalling the start of the evening's events.



Foreign Affairs Minister G. Zandanshatar shares a toast with dignitaries



MP S. Oyun greeted by Ambassador V. Jilek



First Deputy Prime Minister, N. Altankhuyag and Czech Ambassador V. Jilek

Ambassador Jilek then gave a short speech concerning the history of Czech Independence Day, which goes back 93 years to the formation of the Czechoslovak State under Thomas Masaryk.

He went on to note the numerous political regimes which have engulfed the Czech Republic in the last 90 years and his country's current position in the international system, striving to play a connecting role in the global political regime.

The Ambassador then observed the similarities between the Czech Republic and Mongolia, and the strong links between the two nations which are not just alive, but well connected. The largest Mongolian Diaspora community in Europe lives in the Czech Republic, a close link recognized by the fact that the Czech Republic is one of only 5 European countries to have a residential embassy in Ulaanbaatar.

He concluded by stating that the National Holiday is an occasion to celebrate this growing friendship, and



Historical exhibit featuring Czech leader Thomas Masaryk

toasted the health and future of both the individuals' present and bilateral relations in general.

The speech was followed by a buffet featuring traditional Czech food and deserts as well as a drinks reception

which included original Budweiser. Guests also had an opportunity to peruse a graphic display highlighting the life and achievements of Masaryk, a Czech National Hero and globally respected politician.

Prague Zoo contributes 2 trucks for Gobi B activities

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On October 26, the Czech embassy in Ulaanbaatar witnessed the presenting of two new trucks to the Gobi-B Strictly Protected Area by Mr. M. Bobek, Director of the Prague Zoo as part of a continuing development project. Also present at the event were Czech Ambassador Mr. V. Jilek; the director of Gobi-B, Mr. O. Ganbaatar, Mr. E Namtar, a representative of the International Takhi Group (ITG) Mongolia, and other prominent officials including representatives

from the Ministry of Environment and Nature.

The official presentation began with a short welcome by Ambassador Jilek, before Mr. Bobek gave a speech outlining cooperation between the Prague Zoo and Mongolia, which is focused around the zoo's important role in the conservation of the Przewalski (Takhi) horse. This was followed by the formal presentation of the vehicles to Mr. Ganbaatar and Mr. Namtar — and a champagne toast "to the horses!"

The presentation of these two



O. Ganbaatar takes possession of a new truck to be used in Gobi B



O. Ganbaatar Director of Gobi-B (L), M. Bobek, Director of the Prague Zoo (C) and Czech Ambassador V. Jilek (R)

trucks was part of a wider project to celebrate the Zoo's 80th anniversary, which began with the reintroduction of 4 Przewalski horses this summer. Prague Zoo is very proud of its role in the preservation of the Przewalski horse, and is looking to further its contributions in this field.

However, the Zoo does not only want to bring takhis to Mongolia; it is looking for a wider and more complex

presence in the country as well as supporting nature conservation areas in practical ways.

The two cars that were presented represent one such project as these fully-equipped vehicles are now at the disposal of rangers in Gobi-B. Other initiatives include the construction of ranger cabins in various areas favoured by the Takhi, and plans for a garage and radio station to be built in the Park.

Assistance is not limited to Gobi-B however, as the Zoo also provides ongoing support in the form of hay or petrol as required for Khomin Tal, the reserve where the first group of takhis were introduced this summer.

Both the Zoo and the Czech government are keen to continue strengthening successful bilateral relations.