More Kazakhstan students heading for S’pore universities

KAZAKHSTAN regularly sends students to Singapore to study under its Bolashak Scholarship which sponsors students for overseas study. They study at leading Singapore universities such as National University of Singapore (NUS) and Nanyang Technological University (NTU). Overall, within the programme young people in Kazakhstan are given the opportunity to study in about 630 leading universities in 32 countries.

The majority of Kazakhstan students studying in Singapore are here on the Bolashak Scholarship, although some have taken up local scholarships as well. Their numbers have risen from 20 in 2006 to about 60 currently. The most popular fields of study are for bachelor’s degrees in IT and computer engineering and the bulk of the students are at NTU with a much smaller number going to NUS.

The students have gained much from their experiences here. “In four years of studying, I experienced what it’s like to study in a well-known international university,” said Nurgozha Yermurat who is a computer engineering undergraduate. “No secret that this system was new to me. It is always interesting to face a new culture and tradition.”

For civil engineering student Saginayev Rakhymzhan it has been “a tremendous experience to study in such a competitive environment”.

“One tends to push the limits when he can see the competitors studying day and night,” he says, adding that he found it very beneficial in terms of academic as well as personal development. In fact, he’s even made local friends who are eager to visit Kazakhstan.

Meanwhile, for NTU computer engineering student Daniyar Abilaissov studying in Singapore is “very tough and stressful”. While he does feel the stress of competing with the best students from all over the world, he is also glad to study in NTU, since the university is ranked among the world’s top 100 and he feels privileged to have been selected to study there.

And finally, one Kazakhstan student who has benefited from the scholarship and returned home, also shares her comments. When Assel Mussagaliyeva first came to Singapore in July 2006 she was the first Bolashak scholarship master’s student in Singapore and was different from the others in that she did policy studies at NUS’ Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy.

Recollecting her experience, she says: “I found it amazing to be the first from the CIS, Central Asia and particularly Kazakhstan to study at the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy. I have grown up so much in those two years.”

Her masters course had over 60 students from Asia, Australia, the US and Poland. Among her treasured experiences was the opportunity to listen to and interact with people who made history, such as former Singapore prime minister Lee Kuan Yew, former British premier Tony Blair and economist Muhammad Yunus.

On her impression of Singapore, she says it’s “comfortable, safe and warm”. She adds: “But what I like most about this city-state is its variety, colours, sea breeze, lots of sunshine and greenery. From a public policy perspective, it is definitely good governance and public service reforms that make Singapore unique in the region and the world. Before coming here I studied European politics and worked in its institutions.”

“However, after almost two years here, I am grateful to Singapore and LKYSP for transforming me into a cosmopolitan citizen preserving a deep love for my country – Kazakhstan,” she concludes. – VINCENT WEE