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From 29 November to 2 December in Azerbaijan capital city Baku hosted Azerbaijan International Telecommunications and Information Technologies Exhibition and Conference, Bakutel 2016 officially launching the ICT Week. Every year for over 20 years, Bakutel, the largest exhibition in the region, has been bringing together leading players of the communications market.

As the main arena for presenting IT products and services, Bakutel had acquired status as the main business platform where new contacts and businesses are created.

The Ministry of Communications and HighTechnologies of the Republic of Azerbaijan has provided invaluable support to Bakutel. The show is also respected globally and is supported by institutions, such as the United Nations, the International Telecommunication Union, the Regional Commonwealth in the field of Communications (RCC) and the Global Association of the Exhibition Industry. The organisers of the event are Iteca Caspian and Caspian Event Organisers (CEO).

This year, Bakutel coincides with celebrations for the 135<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Communications in Azerbaijan. One hundred and thirty five years ago, the Nobel Brothers laid the first telephone line in Baku and, since then, Azerbaijan has had its own place in the history of the communications industry. Today, Azerbaijan's ICT industry growth rate ranks first in the non-oil sector of the economy, which can be seen at the exhibition

President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev and his spouse Mehriban Aliyeva had viewed BakuTel-2016, which brought together over 200 companies from 18 countries, with 40% of the total number of participants being returning exhibitors at Bakutel. Among the participants were leading ICT companies, mobile operators, telecom operators, internet service providers, system integrators, and distributors of world-famous brands. This year the Registration Sponsor of Bakutel was the Azerfon, and the Technology Sponsor was the Eurodesign company, which provided the entire exhibition area with free Wi-Fi for the duration of the exhibition.

With the exposition of the exhibition Bakutel 2016 familiarized VIP guests such as: Mr. Houlin Zhao – Secretary General, ITU, Mr. Ahmet Arslan – Minister of Transport, Maritime Affairs and Communications, Turkey, Mr. Mahmoud Vaezi – Minister of Communications and Information Technology, Iran, Mr. Sergey Popkov – Minister of Communications and Informatization, Belarus, Mr. Nurudin Mukhitdinov – Secretary General, RCC, Mr. Vitalie Cholak – Deputy Minister of Information Technology and Communications, Moldova, Mr. Jin Shubo – Deputy Minister of Industry and Information Technology, China.

This year the exhibition's debutants comprised 30% of the total number of exhibitors. Among those who were making their first appearance at the exhibition in Baku were the French company Vivaction, the Russian company Balt-Energo, the Belarusian government agency Beltelecom, Croatian companies Banksoft,

Sekom and Span, DELL EMC (USA), the Ukrainian company MUK, Chinese companies FEC and BBT Telecom, as well as local companies CBC sport TV, GSS, and many others.

The active participation of national pavilions organized with the support of the Ministry of Communications and High Technologies of the Republic of Azerbaijan, has already become a tradition at Bakutel. This year, 9 countries – Austria, Belarus, Croatia, France, Iran, Italy, the Netherlands, Slovenia, and Turkey presented at their national stands leading companies from their respective countries and innovative projects not only for Azerbaijan, but for the entire Caspian region, in addition to presenting various products and ICT services. Among the debutants to the national pavilions was the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

For the first time at the exhibition leading Azerbaijani state structures and ICT companies were represented on a single national stand, organised by the Ministry of Communications and High Technologies of the Republic of Azerbaijan. New developmental projects in the fields of communication, high technologies, mail projects, and e-Government, nanotechnology were presented at the stand. Presentations of such projects as “Sound library” for visually impaired people and “Digitalization of museums” were made at the event. Young professionals and entrepreneurs from Start-ups provided with an opportunity to tell potential investors about their inventions, programs and services.

Over the four days, the exhibition covered the following segments: telecommunications and networks, cable and wireless communications, satellite communications and technologies, IT and office technologies, 4-5G mobile technology, services in the field of fiber optic technology and cloud computing, E-government, information security, and space technology.

At the exhibition, the company Huawei presented the project “My Beautiful Azerbaijan”, and the company ZTE introduced the concept of Smart Cities to the exhibition’s guests.

The program of business events of ICT Week was also rich and varied. Under the framework of the exhibition the 4<sup>th</sup> meeting of the High Level Working Group on the Development of Information Society of the Regional Commonwealth in the field of Communications (RCC), the first meeting of the Working Group on the Development of ICT of the Cooperation Council of Turkic Speaking States, the Ministerial Meeting of the Cooperation Council of Turkic Speaking States were held. Also, the local Start-ups’ meeting were organised with Mr. Houlin Zhao, the Secretary General of the International Telecommunications Union (ITU).

The Internet of Things (IoT) theme took center stage at the Internet of Things Conference was held from the 29<sup>th</sup> to the 30<sup>th</sup> of November at the Hilton Baku Hotel. This conference was jointly organized by the Ministry of Communications and High Technologies of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the companies Caspian Event Organisers and Huawei, and was attended by both local and foreign representatives of leading companies in the field of ICT.

On the 30<sup>th</sup> of November at the Baku Expo Center was organised the workshop Your Strategic Advantage by the technology giant SAP.

The Closing Ceremony of "Youth Inc. Business Academy" Acceleration Program was held on December 1<sup>st</sup> at Baku Expo Center. The Organiser was "Debate in Civil Society" Public Union – "Youth Inc." Entrepreneurship Program. From 30 November to 1 December at the Baku Expo Center within the framework of the Bakutel

exhibition, a B2B meeting between participants and professional visitors had been planned by the company Pamukkale Technopark Turkey.

Another important ICT topic, namely ICT in education, how it will develop in Azerbaijan, and what we can expect in the near future, opened the Computer Science Education Conference, which took place on December 2<sup>nd</sup> at the Baku Expo Center. This conference was organised by the companies Azerbaijan ACM Chapter with participations Mr. Krassimir Manev – professor of the Department of Informatics at New Bulgarian University, the current IOI (International Olympiad in Informatics) President, and Mr. Eljakim Schrijvers – owner of Eljakim Information Technology, Netherlands IOI team leader, IOI organizing team member, ACM senior member, and Iteca Caspian and Caspian Event Organisers (CEO).

In addition to business meetings and negotiations, surprises, contests and quizzes using IT technologies awaited all visitors and exhibitors. A “Game Zone” with applications of the latest technology was opened to all visitors of the exhibition.

Games were developed under the “Made in Azerbaijan” brand by people engaged in start-ups and working at the Incubation Centre of the High Technologies Park having won a grant from the State Foundation for Information Technologies Development (SFITD). The Formula 1 VR Baku City Circuit game was developed on the basis of the latest VR technology. This virtual reality game simulates racing along a Formula 1 track in Baku City. Fatal Fight is a modern fighting game which has been downloaded for more than one million times worldwide. The Memory Limit game was introduced for the first time at Bakutel 2016, and exhibition participants could testing this game. The main characters of this game with a national theme developed on the basis of the Two Heroes 2D platform were characters from Azerbaijani fairy tales – Jirtdan and Malikmammad. 360 degrees’ photo and video shooting was also done at the stand.

Numerous other diversions had been prepared by the organizers of the exhibition. Visitors could experience virtual reality using special goggles, as well as create a unique item or object using 3D printing pen technology handles. In addition, for the first time in Azerbaijan, visitors of the Bakutel exhibition had the opportunity to participate in a Robot Battle with mini-robots, as well as communicate with an “Intelligent Robot”.

Additionally, all the participants of the exhibition were prepared to the meeting with the visitors and had scheduled surprises, quizzes and contests on their stands.

The organisers awarded certificates to sponsors, partners and exhibitors who stood out with their imaginative approaches to their work:

“Brand new design” – Ministry of telecommunications

“The Best Corporate Style” – Eurodesign

“The Best Stand Design” – Azercell

“The Best Performance” – ZTE

“The Best Shell Scheme” – Komtel

“The Best Customer Attraction” – Azerfon

“The Most Creative Stand” – Huawei

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“The Most Attended Stand” – Bakcell  
“The Best Debut” – CBC Sport  
“The Best Product Presentation” – Dell EMC  
“The Best Country Presentation” – National Pavilion of Holland  
“The Most Original Stand” – National Pavilion of Belarus  
“The Best Companies Presentation” – National Pavilion of Turkey  
“The Best Service Presentation” – ABV

According to the audit company UFI – Global Association of the Exhibition Industry, the number of visitors who visited the exhibition this year was 8155, which showed a great interest to the industry and exhibition.

Some of Iteca Caspian's partners in 2016 are SafeLife, security partner, Premier Tour, tour operator, Sheraton Hotel and Qafqaz Point Hotel, the official hotels and AzExpoMontage, the official stand builder.

In 2017 the Bakutel exhibition will take place on December 5–8 at Baku Expo Center.

**#Bakutel**