

"NO one gets involved in politics overnight. They get ready for it over their entire life," according to Bakytzhan Zhumagulov.

Educationist, scientist and author, he is the acting chairman of "Otan" (fatherland), the largest political party in Kazakhstan.

"I grew up an activist. I was a strict mathematician, but had a lot of patriotism and feelings for the welfare of others. So, I was always in societies, communities and youth organisations during my school days.

"And it was only natural that I got involved in politics after completing my studies," he told the *New Straits Times*.

The 53-year-old created the Republican Labor political party in 1993. Nine years later, it merged with Otan, led by President Nursultan Nazarbayev.

The author of more than 300 scientific works, Zhumagulov is still very much in touch with his science research and education.

"The party takes up a lot of my time now. But, I was always a man of science, and always will be. The development of the country is now a responsibility that I have to undertake and I'm more than proud to do just that."

In July, at the Otan Party Congress, Nazarbayev identified the party's priorities.

These include improving and consolidating party management; promoting the role of Otan's Political Council and intra-party democracy; development of the party's human capital; enrolment of talented youth and political figures.

Over the last three months,

Otan has increased its domestic political profile, merging recently with Asar Party.

At the same time, Nazarbayev took part in the seventh Congress of the Civilian Party of Kazakhstan. The congress' participants also made the decision to unite the Civilian Party with Otan.

Zhumagulov said: "Malaysia and Kazakhstan have a lot in common. We are, among others, a multi-ethnic, and politically stable community.

"With all this to share, we are not only here for governmental discussions on the higher level, but also to establish a concrete but friendly co-operation between the two parties.

"We have always admired Malaysia's model of development and we are trying to explore and learn about it: The culture, the people and their understanding. Also, the political and economic development here.

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*Otan acting chairman
Bakytzhan Zhumagulov*



"While you have your Vision 2020, Kazakhstan wants to be developed by 2030. Economically, we want to follow the Malaysian model of development. We want to establish a

mixture of our own governmental system based on international political ways and experience."

Things have certainly been looking up for the nation of

Admiration for Malaysia's growth

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15.1 million people since independence in 1991 following the fall of the Soviet Union.

The country has one of the world's richest reserves of oil and gas, with up to 22 billion barrels of crude reserves.

Kazakhstan possesses all the will and resources to address the social dimension of progress and translate economic achievement into equitable human development, improving the well-being and expanding opportunities for all citizens.

"Our country's stability is a tribute to economic achievements, balanced state policies and responsible behaviour of the nation's elite," said Zhumagulov.

"One of our priorities is to promote ICT (information communication technology) development among our people. A lot has to be done in this field, and Kazakhstan is looking forward to receiving assistance from Malaysia," he said.

"Biotechnological advancements in Malaysia are also of interest to us," he added, having visited Technology Park Malaysia on Monday.

The World Bank and International Monetary Fund have acknowledged Kazakhstan as one of the fastest developing economies in the world, and this led to Nazarbayev's recent pronouncement that the republic would become one of the 50 most-developed countries in the world in the next seven years, and be among the top 10 oil exporters.

Zhumagulov and a delegation from Otan are in Kuala Lumpur to participate in the Umno general assembly.

There was a signing ceremony for the Protocol on Co-operation between Otan and Umno yesterday.

The ceremony was attended by Prime Minister and Umno president Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and the Umno supreme council.