



## President's annual address seeks to digitise Kazakhstan, strengthen social protection

By Almasbek Zhumadilov

ASTANA – Kazakhstan President Nursultan Nazarbayev announced Jan. 9 the state-of-the-nation address “New opportunities under the Fourth Industrial Revolution,” which was published Jan. 10 in full.

The new address is based on such fundamental documents as the Kazakhstan 2050 Development Strategy, the 100 Concrete Steps Plan of the Nation, the Third Modernisation, the Industrialisation Programme, the Digital Kazakhstan, as well as the Strategic Development Plan up to 2025.

The head of state outlined that the world faces technological, economic and social changes in the era of the Fourth Industrial Revolution. The new technologies enter our lives significantly changing the way we work, exercising our civil rights and raising children.

President Nazarbayev highlighted Kazakhstan's non-permanent membership in the UN Security Council in 2017-2018 and the January presidency in this body, the suc-



Photo credit: Astana press service

cess during the EXPO 2017 international specialised exhibition, the GDP's 4 percent growth, industrial production's 7 percent raise, poverty's 13-fold decline and unemployment's decrease to 4.9 percent.

The emphasis was put on 40 percent growth of the processing sec-

tor of industry. “We should clearly realise that Kazakhstan's achievements are a reliable foundation, but not a guarantee of tomorrow's success. The era of ‘oil abundance’ is almost coming to an end. The country needs a new quality of development,” said the head of state.

In this regard Kazakhstan intends to broadly implement the Fourth Industrial Revolution elements, concentrated on the following objectives. Following is the gist of the presidential address.

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## Economy minister: inflation rate won't exceed 7 percent this year

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – Kazakh Minister of National Economy Timur Suleimenov said the inflation rate will stay within the projected corridor of 5-7 percent this year. He discussed the preventive measures to curb inflation which the government will take by the end of 2018.

Suleimenov noted the inflation rate was 7.1 percent in 2017, when it was supposed to stay within the 6-8 percent corridor. He answered journalists' questions about high prices for some types of fruits and vegetables in winter, saying Kazakhstan still has a problem with seasonal supply and demand.

“We can't provide the same volume of offers for vegetables and fruits in December, January, February and March as in July, August and September. Therefore, this particular seasonal surge has been observed in our country at all times,” he said.

At the same time, he noted the

Ministry of National Economy and the Ministry of Agriculture are actively engaged in expanding the supply of fruits and vegetables. In particular, a great deal of work is underway to increase inventories, the number of warehouses and wholesale centres and wholesale distribution and trade in all major cities and towns.

The Ministry of National Economy has also proposed reducing intermediary links, although Suleimenov emphasised there is no need to categorically dispose of all mediators.

“Trade intermediation is absolutely a normal economic activity, because not every farmer, not every peasant farm is able to deliver and produce its products on the shelves of bazaars and shopping centres at a distance of 100-200 kilometres. Mediation is just right for this,” he said.

The main thing, he noted, is that it does not become a dependent situation.

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## Full agenda, presidential appearance mark Kazakhstan's UNSC presidency

Special to the Astana Times by George Alan Baumgarten, United Nations Correspondent

NEW YORK – In what would be called a “double first,” Kazakh Ambassador to the United Nations Kairat Umarov has taken over the presidency of the United Nations Security Council, for the month of January. It was both Kazakhstan's first such presidency and the first for any Central Asian republic since the collapse of the Soviet Union more than 25 years ago.

Ambassador Umarov began his term of office with the customary Programme of Work briefing, in which he outlined the worldwide issues, problems and crises to be considered. Several African ongoing peacekeeping missions were to be discussed – with detailed briefings on each. The seemingly-intractable Israel-Palestine conflict was scheduled for its monthly discussion on the 25th of the month. And a previously unscheduled and unexpected review of the protests in Iran was held Jan. 5.

But the highlight of the monthly programme were expected to be an appearance, the first in several years, by Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev at a special briefing on “Non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction: confidence-building measures” on Jan. 18.

This is to be followed the next day by a debate on “Building a Regional Partnership in Afghanistan and Central Asia as a Model to Link Security and Development,” to be chaired by Foreign Minister Kairat Abdrakhmanov, until barely a year ago Kazakhstan's UN ambassador.

On Jan. 5, a previously-unscheduled attempt was made to come to grips with the rising protests throughout Iran. Taye-Brook Zerihoun, UN assistant secretary-general for political affairs, gave a briefing in which he detailed how the protests had started on Dec. 28, 2017 and escalated quickly. It was becoming difficult to verify many of the reports coming out of Iran.

U.S. Ambassador Nikki R. Haley said the world must take note of the protests, calling them a “fundamental expression of human rights, and a powerful expression of brave people.” Various other ambassadors concurred, suggesting it was a time for some action. Dutch Ambassador Karel Van Oosterom, in particular,

said the council “had a responsibility to act early and decisively when fundamental freedoms were under threat.”

Other members disagreed, however, or were unsure if any action should be taken. Kazakh Ambassador Umarov, speaking in his national capacity, said these developments were a domestic issue for Iran. Russian Ambassador Vasily Nebenzia said the U.S. was “abusing the platform of the Security Council,” in attempting to take any such action. And Iran's representative, Kholamali Khoshroo, said the U.S. was “abusing its power as a permanent member,” by even bringing the matter before the council. In the end, this entire debate produced no result.

On Jan. 9, the council held its scheduled debate on the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The D.R.C., which is one of Africa's largest countries, has been bedevilled by conflicts large and small, almost continuously since its independence in 1960. In recent years, these conflicts have centred on control of vast mineral deposits, especially in the provinces of North and South Kivu, in the country's Northeast.

The discussion on the D.R.C. began with a briefing by the U.N.'s new Under Secretary-General for Peacekeeping, Jean-Pierre Lacroix. Lacroix noted that former Assistant Secretary-General Dmitry Titov was investigating an attack in North Kivu that killed 15 Tanzanian peacekeepers and wounded 44 others. It was just the latest episode said to have been perpetrated by the so-called Allied Democratic Forces.

The D.R.C.'s own representative, Ignace Gata Mavita Wa Lufuta, noted the country's emphasis had been on preparations for coming elections, but that large demonstrations had been held, without proper authorisation. He also mentioned “confidence-building measures,” such as the release of some prisoners.

A special meeting was held Jan. 10 to take note of the situation on the Korean Peninsula and talks held during preceding days. Though these talks dealt initially only with the coming Pyeongchang Winter Olympics (to be held Feb. 9-25), it is hoped that the talks can be continued and lead to further progress toward the reduction of tensions in the Korean Peninsula, and perhaps

eventually to denuclearisation. Ambassador Olof Skoog of Sweden, who (with Poland) had requested the update on Korea, said “it is important that the Security Council remains active and united in its efforts to resolve the conflict.”

On the same day as the briefing on the Korea situation, the council held a formal meeting for the purpose of keeping up to date with the situation in Colombia. The South American country had recently signed an agreement with the former FARC (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia) rebels, and the council has received periodic updates on the situation there. Jean Arnault, who heads the verification mission there, told of a recent “upsurge in violence,” and of the need to deploy some 600 security forces, especially in vulnerable rural areas.

Most of the members of the Security Council made statements on the subject, all appearing to exhibit the attitude of “hopeful, but wary.” Exercising his right as president to speak last, Umarov said there was “still a long way ahead,” and that the recovery process was still evolving.

Oscar Adolfo Naranjo Trujillo, vice-president of Colombia, said that the agreement with the FARC rebels was “...the best news story of the last 50 years for its people and the world.” He also noted that his government had also been busy instituting many reforms and that 2017 had been “the least violent year in Colombia in the last 42 years.”

After the briefing on Colombia, the council held two more meetings in its first week of work in January, on the protracted war in Sudan's Darfur region and on the situation in West Africa and the Sahel. The peacekeeping operation in the Sudan is a joint operation between the UN and the African Union, which is known as UNAMID. It is meant to keep the peace in Darfur, a geographical designation that refers to three provinces in the West-Central part of the country. Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Jean-Pierre Lacroix once again briefed the council on this mission, telling of the current “forceful stage” of a weapons collection campaign, which has raised tensions somewhat. He noted, however, that there have not recently been any major clashes.

Various council members, including the African states of Ethio-

pia, Equatorial Guinea and Cote d'Ivoire, told how the situation in Darfur was showing significant progress. Ivorian Ambassador Bernard Tanoah-Boutchoue, in particular, said “Peace must include national reconciliation, a permanent cessation of hostilities and political dialogue.”

As the last speaker, Kazakhstan's Umarov welcomed the extension of the recent ceasefire to March 2018, and hoped it would lead to an inclusive peace process.

Sudan's Ambassador Omer Dahab Fadi Mohamed said that UN reports should cover a longer period than 80 days. The only remaining issues, he said, were ones of development, and that Sudan was in the process of implementing development projects.

On Jan. 11, the Security Council held the final meeting of the first full week of the Kazakhstan presidency, on the subject of security in West Africa and the Sahel. It heard a briefing from UN Special Representative for the Region Mohamed Ibn Chambas of Ghana. Ibn Chambas noted that while there had been a decline in attacks by the Muslim insurgency Boko Haram in the first half of 2017, recently there had been an “uptick” in such attacks. Despite this, he noted that “the trajectory of democratic elections across West Africa has continued.” He also noted the recent peaceful presidential election result in Liberia, and said that coming ones in Sierra Leone and Guinea should bear watching.

Ambassadors from several countries, including Cote d'Ivoire, which is from this region, noted the hopeful but highly precarious situation, and they particularly praised the efforts of the UN's Office for West Africa (UNOWAS). But Council President Umarov said efforts had become “more challenging” since the closure of UN Missions in Liberia (UNMIL) and Cote d'Ivoire (UNOCI). He expressed particular concern over crises of food insecurity and forced displacement.

In contrast to this, however, several council members welcomed the creation of two new UN efforts: the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) and the UN Integrated Strategy for the Sahel (UNISS).

Security Council members have also recently returned from a three-day “lightning visit” to Afghanistan Jan. 12-15 arranged by the Kazakh presidency. This will have been its first such visit to the country in seven years.

## Afghan student appeals to Nazarbayev ahead of U.S. visit

By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – Hafizullah Qaderi, an Afghan student studying in Kazakhstan, recently posted a video on his Facebook page asking Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev and U.S. President Donald Trump to step up efforts to find a solution to peace and stability in his homeland.

“My address aims solely at peace in Afghanistan. I do not want war. Our people became victims of war,” he said in the message.

Qaderi believes the war in Afghanistan means war in other Asian countries, stressing terrorism has no faith or religion.

“If the war in Afghanistan is not stopped, then the Asian nations might suffer as well. Terrorism will get closer to neighbouring countries and will spur smuggling in those countries,” he said.

“I survived in the Afghan war. I saw the tears of my closest people. I saw the tears of my father. It is horrible. I am scared to let my sister go to school, because she might never come back,” the 23-year-old Kabul native said in his message.

Qaderi noted he does not want revenge, adding he is only seeking stability and peace in Afghanistan.

“Here, in Kazakhstan, I am receiving a good education. I learned to live in peace with people of different ethnicities,” he said.

Qaderi believes his country could learn how to build peace from Kazakhstan's example. He stressed Nazarbayev's consistent efforts to serve as a mediator in settling the conflicts, including the Syrian peace talks that have been held in the Kazakh capital since January 2017.

While addressing Nazarbayev and Trump in particular, he urged all world leaders to galvanise efforts to stabilise the situation in Afghanistan. The request was posted in advance of Nazarbayev's much-anticipated official visit to the U.S., as the two leaders met at the White House Jan. 16.

“I learned from the news that you will soon meet Donald Trump and I ask you, Nursultan Abishevich,

to convey my words to him and begin peaceful negotiations in Kazakhstan,” he said.

Qaderi is a senior at Seifullin Kazakh Agrotechnical University majoring in engineering. He has been living in the capital for nearly five years.

“I really like Kazakhstan and I have learned a lot here, where people of different nations live in peace together and respect each other,” he said in an interview with The Astana Times.

Qaderi is among 1,000 Afghan students studying in Kazakh universities as part of Kazakhstan's \$50 million project launched in 2010 which seeks to educate as many as 1,000 Afghan students in its higher education institutes through 2020. As of September 2017, 564 students have graduated from Kazakh universities and technical and vocational education institutes, while more than 400 are continuing their studies.

Upon graduation, Afghan students are required to return to their native land and apply their experience and knowledge to rebuild their nation.

“After graduation, I want to continue my graduate studies. I want to study further. I believe Kazakhstan will teach me how to find peace in Afghanistan. I want to help my family,” he said.

In his post, Qaderi called upon young people to support his address, a plea which fellow engineering student Saber Rasuly said they have taken to heart.

“My friend made this video to address the President of Kazakhstan to achieve peace in Afghanistan. All of us, young people, support him,” he said.

Afghan students who come to Kazakhstan after finishing high school in Kabul complete ten months of Russian and Kazakh language training. The classes allow them to speak and understand local languages freely and immerse comfortably into the local environment.

Once he has completed his studies, Rasuly plans to return home to work and help his family and friends.

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# NATION

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 17, 2017

## Healthcare minister reports on new infrastructure development plan



Yelzhan Birtanov

By Meruyert Abugaliyeva

ASTANA – Minister of Healthcare Yelzhan Birtanov recently briefed the government on the Unified Healthcare Infrastructure Development Plan developed by the ministry and local executive authorities seeking to make the national healthcare system more compact and efficient.

“As a result of the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) Health Care Review, experts approved the methods designed to develop the infrastructure and gave particular recommendations, such as accelerating the consolidation of the healthcare sector and implementing a systematic approach to streamline new investments. Currently, we are working on altering the configuration of healthcare organisations,” he said.

In rural areas, where availability of medical services is a priority, the existing facilities will be modernised and medical care is to be provided on district and inter-district levels. Specialised medical help will be available at the district level depending on the demand in corresponding areas.

In the urban environment, medical care will be provided in outpatient clinics. Specialised clinics, such as cardiology, oncology and birth centres, are to be integrated into general hospitals and the locations will be used to provide nursing care, he added. Children’s

hospitals will continue to operate separately.

On the national level, the existing research institutes will be merged into university medical centres.

“The unified plan includes the national plan and 16 regional plans designed by local executive authorities for 2018-2025. Each of them takes into account corresponding demographic and epidemiological situations and the existing infrastructure. The plan is an effective management tool that addresses the issues of optimisation, privatisation, construction of new facilities and modernisation of existing ones,” added Birtanov.

According to the regional plans, outpatient clinic capacity is expected to increase by 12.5 percent by 2025. Urban hospital capacity will reach 424 beds, which is close to best international practice, whereas in rural areas this indicator will remain at 91 beds.

In previous years, significant investments in healthcare were part of the 100 Schools, 100 Hospitals and 350 family clinics programmes. Those investments have significantly decreased and the current aggregate investment demand is one billion tenge (US\$3 million) until 2025.

“Implementation of investment projects is to be executed through public-private partnership (PPP) using a standard financial model and affordable lending. Large PPP projects in 2018 should be financed by Asian and European development banks,” said Birtanov.

## Kazakhstan reconstructs 1,300 kilometres of highways in two years



Highways Committee Chair Mereke Pshembayev (C).

By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – Kazakhstan saw 1,300 kilometres of highways reconstructed in 2015-2016 within the nation’s large-scale Nurlı Zhol programme. Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev announced the programme in his annual state-of-the-nation address in 2014.

“Movement on Western European-Western China transit corridor, Astana-Temirtau, Almaty-Kapshagai, Kapshagai-Balpyk Bi, Beineu-Shetpe and Kokshetau-Petropavlovsk highways was fully opened. The construction of the Central Asia’s longest 12-kilometre bridge crossing in Pavlodar spanning the Irtysh River was finished as well,” said Highways Committee Chair Mereke Pshembayev during the Dec. 25 press briefing.

Pshembayev noted 1,300 kilometre of national highways were renovated as part of the Nurlı Zhol programme, a large-scale economic and development project that seeks turning Kazakhstan into a transport and logistics hub of Eurasia through modernisation of transport infrastructure, among other objectives.

Construction works continue on Temirtau-Karaganda, Astana-Pavlodar-Semei-Kalbatay, Beineu-Aktau, Aktobe-Atyrau, Kapshagai-Taldykorgan, Astana-Petropavlovsk and the Uralsk-Kamenka highways, he said.

The committee chair noted Kazakhstan plans to implement 12 more projects involving highways with a total length of more than 3,000 kilometres with leading foreign financial institutes to further boost the nation’s

transport potential and economic growth of its regions.

Other plans envisioned by the programme also include the introduction of toll charges along 6,500 kilometres of the renovated highways by 2020, said Pshembayev, with the expected capacity to generate nearly 30 billion tenge (US\$90.3 million) annually by 2020.

“In general, based on the results of the work that we have done so far, we plan to improve 90 percent of the national highways and increase the share of roads rated as first and second technical category to 50 percent. It will allow for a two-fold increase in the capacity of high traffic roads and freight traffic and 1.5-fold reduction in the time spent on the road,” he added.



## 26 years of independence: changing trends in Kazakhstan



By Dana Omirgazy

ASTANA – Kazakhstan celebrated its 26th anniversary of independence Dec. 16 2017. During the period, the country made the leap from the economic and political disruption of the early 1990s to a modern social state with a dynamically developing market economy, democratic system, political stability and ethno-confessional peace and accord. The prime minister’s press service released a report Dec. 17 reviewing the work which has been undertaken.

“Today, Kazakhstan is deeply integrated into the international

processes, has joined the main financial and economic institutions and attracted multibillion-dollar flows of foreign direct investment. EXPO 2017, the first OIC (Organisation of Islamic Cooperation) Summit on Science and Technology and other major forums were held in the country [during 2017],” it noted.

Kazakhstan has established diplomatic relations with 180 countries, presided at such authoritative international organisations as the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA), Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), Collective Security Treaty

Organisation (CSTO), OIC, Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) and the Turkic Council. The nation also hosts a regular congress of leaders of world and traditional religions, joined the World Trade Organisation (WTO), effectively mediated in resolving conflict situations, initiated the adoption of the UN General Assembly’s Universal Declaration for the Achievement of a Nuclear-Weapons-Free World and gained non-permanent membership on the UN Security Council for 2017-2018.

“Kazakhstan is becoming more attractive to foreign business. Approximately \$300 billion in direct investment was attracted to the country over the past 26 years. This is more than 70 percent of the total inflow to the countries of Central Asia. The largest investors are the Netherlands, the USA, Switzerland, France, Great Britain, Russia, Italy, Japan, Belgium and Canada,” said the report.

Back in the early 1990s, the country’s oil and gas industry started with 25 million tonnes of oil production, the Atyrau-Samara oil pipeline and a three-million tonne per year export quota to foreign countries. The lack of investments threatened a severe

crisis and production volume fell annually.

“A serious jump in oil reserves was made from 5.3 billion barrels in the 1990s to 30 billion barrels today. In 1991, oil exports were approximately 12 million tonnes to limited locations; today, exports have been increased by more than five times – over 66 million tonnes to 36 countries. In 2016, Kazakhstan launched the long-awaited Kashagan project, which is supposed to bring substantial revenues to the country,” according to the report.

The contribution of the oil and gas sector to the economy and social development of the regions is unique. Investments in Karachaganak, Kashagan and Tengiz fields exceeded \$121 billion, as their contribution to the economy reached \$155 billion.

Kazakhstan currently follows a course towards new industrialisation and production development, reducing the country’s dependence on raw materials. The manufacturing sector is becoming the main driver of industrial growth, facilitated by implementing the second five-year State Programme of Accelerated Industrial and Innovative Development.

In addition to the traditional metallurgy and food industries, the nation has 26 new manu-

facturing areas, including the automotive industry, railway engineering, titanium industry, medical equipment production and solar and wind power.

“The development of the country’s transport and logistics system is one of the most important priorities. Today, Kazakhstan has become a key element of the Euro-Asian transit system. In 2016, the President instructed developing the Nurlı Zher programme of housing construction. The programme is set to provide even more Kazakh families with affordable housing,” noted the review.

The nation also pays special attention to the social and labour spheres, promoting employment and developing health, education, culture and sports.

“The country is looking forward to large-scale modernisation of various spheres of Kazakh society. This work will be done under the national strategies and programmes of Kazakhstan 2050, the 100 Concrete Steps Plan of the Nation on the implementation of the five institutional reforms, Nurlı Zhol, third stage of Kazakhstan’s modernisation, Rukhani Janghyru (Modernisation of Kazakhstan’s Identity) and 2025 Strategic Development Plan of Kazakhstan,” according to the report.

### NATIONAL NEWS IN BRIEF

This year, the Civil Service Affairs and Anti-Corruption Agency will introduce fundamentally new types of mechanisms and new forms of work, head of the agency Alik Shpekbayev wrote on Facebook Jan. 10. The state body intends to organise a meeting of the board dedicated to the results of the year’s work and new priorities. “Effective state administration, the preventive fight against corruption and the rule of law are among the main tasks. There is a clear vision of what the path to these goals should be. 2018 will be decisive for us. [Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev’s] Address to the Nation covered such issues as the factor evaluation system, the digital transformation in state bodies, the consolidation of administrative resources and the population’s involvement in solving the problems facing society. It is necessary to implement these tasks,” he said. The meeting will be broadcast live for the first time.

The Astana city administration will monitor hashtags on Facebook to handle complaints properly, according to the administration’s press service. “We ask residents to tag City Monitoring and Operational Response Centre in your posts using #astana109 hashtag to promptly respond to messages and addresses of residents,” an akimat press release explained. The centre accepts appeals, coordinates the activities of municipal and operational services in solving accidents, creates policies of preventive measures and monitors the city’s video surveillance system. It works around the clock. The contact number is 109 and residents can also make contact via the Smart Astana mobile app.

Khabar reports that 150 units of medical equipment worth 1.7 billion tenge (US\$5.1 million) were provided for hospitals in the Kyzylorda region last year. A telecommunication operating system was installed at the regional perinatal centre. “A total of 80 million tenge was allocated for the full equipment of the hospital last year. An artificial lung ventilation device and an anaesthetic respiratory apparatus were purchased for the neonatal surgery department. We performed 1,980 operations, six of which were neurosurgery on newborns. Previously, we sent patients to the capital; now we can conduct operations here,” said deputy chief of the regional children’s hospital Kanat Medetbayev.

The Kazakh population’s level of satisfaction with quality of healthcare reached 54.4 percent according to the last year’s social survey, the Healthcare Ministry’s press service reported. “The greatest overall satisfaction with quality of healthcare is observed in Astana and the Karaganda and Kostanai regions. The west Kazakhstan region and Almaty showed the lowest level of satisfaction,” the ministry’s statement explained. The survey was conducted on a voluntary and anonymous basis. In total, 211,526 people were interviewed including 32,882 respondents in hospitals, research institutes and national centres and 178,644 people in outpatient health clinics. The survey provides an opportunity to identify the population’s level of satisfaction to guide operational and management decisions and, ultimately, to increase the availability and quality of medical services in medical organisations.

The Atyrau oil refinery has been fined about 22 million tenge (US\$67,320) for violating emissions regulations, reported 24.kz. The excess pollution occurred Dec. 11, 2017, when a fire broke out on a pipeline at the plant. High levels of carbonaceous soot, nitrogen dioxide and sulphur dioxide were observed. “The ecological damage caused during the fire is currently being calculated. The enterprise is to pay an administrative fine for damages,” said Ecology Department head Zholdaskali Telagysov. The incident will not affect the course of the plant’s modernisation.

# EURASIA&WORLD

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 17, 2017

## EXTERNAL NEWS IN BRIEF

Kazakhstan attracted more than \$15 billion in foreign direct investment in the first nine months of 2017. Kazakh Minister of National Economy Timur Suleimenov noted the volume of investments grew 5.3 percent compared to the same period in 2016. Investments from the Eurasian Economic Union member states – Armenia, Belarus, Kyrgyzstan and Russia – increased 40.8 percent, totalling \$935.1 million and accounting for 5.9 percent of the total amount of investments. Suleimenov said the growth demonstrates the presence of favourable conditions for doing business in Kazakhstan.

Ambassador of Kazakhstan to Switzerland Zhanar Aitzhanova took part in the annual reception given by the Pope of the Roman Catholic Church on New Year's Eve, during which the Kazakh diplomat conveyed warm greetings and wishes from Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev to Pope Francis and expressed gratitude for the Vatican's active participation in EXPO 2017, held this summer in Astana, and for its consistent support. Aitzhanova also noted the Vatican's comprehensive backing of Kazakhstan's global initiatives promoting tolerance, peace and accord. As part of the event, Aitzhanova also met with the Vatican Secretary of State Cardinal Pietro Parolin and Secretary for Relations with States within the Holy See's Secretariat of State Paul Richard Gallagher.

A new book about great Kazakh poet and founder of Kazakh written literature Abai Kunanbayev was published in Baku, Azerbaijan, Kazakh TV reports. The book examines similarities and differences between Kazakh and Azerbaijani literature through the lens of the poet's famous works and aphorisms, which are also featured in the work. One of the researchers on the project, Perikhanym Soltangyzy, believes Kunanbayev's literature is diverse, rich and crosses cultures. According to her, Kunanbayev is a "poet not only of the Kazakh people, but also the Azerbaijani people."

Trade between Kazakhstan and the U.S., one of the nation's key strategic partners, exceeded \$1,300 billion during the 10 months of 2017, reported Khabar TV. Economic ties between the two countries have grown throughout the years, with the U.S. investing nearly \$30 billion since 2005 primarily in the energy, transport and communication and mining sectors. U.S. capital backs more than 500 enterprises in Kazakhstan, including 140 joint projects with Kazakhstan.

Kazakhstan's work as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, begun last year, could serve as an example, according to representatives of the Indonesian UN mission that is bidding for a seat on the council for 2019-2020, reported Kazakh TV. The Indonesian diplomats noted Kazakhstan's effective performance at the UN. Permanent Representative of Indonesia to the UN Dian Triansyah Djani believes Kazakhstan plays an important role in the body and puts forward acute issues on the agenda, serving a "useful example" for them in the future.

Kazakhstan plans to increase gas exports to China to 10 billion cubic metres per year, as agreed by Kazakhstan's national gas and oil company KazMunayGas and Chinese National Oil and Gas Corporation in line with the agreement reached at the level of the heads of states. The sides stressed the need to further develop gas transport infrastructure and to modernise and expand the capacity of currently operating gas pipelines. KazMunayGas Vice President Kairat Sharipbayev noted the strategic importance of gas exports to China and assured the readiness of the nation's gas transport system to expand the export volumes. He said Chinese Belt and Road Initiative and Kazakhstan's Nuryly Zhol programme facilitate the progress in joint projects.

## Kazakhstan launches UNSC presidency with January programme, new flag raising ceremony

By Almasbek Zhumadilov

NEW YORK – For the first time in its history, Kazakhstan will assume the presidency of the United Nations Security Council in January as a non-permanent Security Council member for 2017-2018.

According to the country's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the priorities of Kazakhstan's non-permanent membership were outlined in President Nursultan Nazarbayev's policy address to the UNSC called "Kazakhstan's Concept and Vision for Sustaining Global Partnerships for a Secure, Just and Prosperous World." The document points out following priorities:

- achieving a world free of nuclear weapons;
- eliminating the threat of a global war and settling local conflicts;
- promoting the interests of Central Asia while strengthening regional security and cooperation;
- countering terrorism;
- peace and security in Africa;
- ensuring an inextricable link between security and sustainable development; and
- adapting the Security Council and the entire UN system to the threats and challenges of the 21st century.

The presidency coordinates the UNSC's activities and ensures continuity within the council's daily

work with the assistance of the UN Secretariat. Kazakhstan will make statements on behalf of the council in consultation with other members of the UNSC, as well as release press statements following discussions within informal consultations and whenever the Security Council reaches agreement on the text of a document.

The presidency of the UN Security Council has a significant international status, as the Security Council can make decisions regarding coercive measures, economic sanctions and collective military action. According to the UN Charter, the Security Council bears the primary responsibility for maintaining peace and international security, and all UN member states are obliged to help in implementing its decisions.

Kazakhstan began its month-long mission as UN Security Council President Jan. 1 presenting the council's January activity programme and organising a member-state working breakfast hosted by the UN Permanent Mission of Kazakhstan to discuss the plan.

The work plan was approved by the council and later presented to member states in a separate briefing by Permanent Representative of Kazakhstan Ambassador Kairat Umarov.

The delegations participating in the meeting congratulated Kazakh-

stan on its council presidency and wished the country success, the country's Foreign Minister said in a press release.

Russian Permanent Representative to the United Nations Vasily Nebenzya said: "Knowing Kazakhstan perfectly as no other member of the council," taking into account the historical factor and traditionally close relations, the Russian side "is confident in the success of the work of the Kazakh delegation as the President of the council."

The Russian diplomat also announced the participation of Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov in the council's high-level briefing with the participation of Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev on the topic "Non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction: confidence-building measures" on Jan. 18.

U.S. Ambassador Nikki Haley and other ambassadors on the council noted Kazakhstan's focus in the January work programme on non-proliferation through confidence-building measures and the inclusion of the ministerial-level debates on Central Asia and Afghanistan. Other countries noted the agenda included building a regional partnership in Afghanistan and Central Asia as a model for the interdependence of security and development.

The UN held for the first time at the initiative of Kazakhstan a solemn ceremony to raise the flags

of the six newly elected UNSC non-permanent members – Cote d'Ivoire, Equatorial Guinea, Kuwait, the Netherlands, Peru and Poland. Peruvian Foreign Minister Ricardo Luna and other member state, UN agency and NGO representatives and the media attended.

Some delegations noted the event was a symbolic beginning of the Kazakh UNSC presidency and the launching of a new tradition at the UN.

The initiative is now considered part of the legacy of Kazakhstan's UNSC presidency and Permanent Representative of Equatorial Guinea said his country would repeat the ceremony during its UNSC presidency next year.

Umarov held the traditional first day press conference, noting elements of the January work plan and Kazakhstan's priority as UNSC president.

Umarov fielded questions concerning Kazakhstan's hosting of a high-level event in the field of non-proliferation through confidence-building measures with the participation of the Kazakh President, the situation around North Korea, Iran, Palestine and the status of Jerusalem and Myanmar. The press also asked about Syria, the humanitarian situation in Yemen, climate change and Kazakh initiatives for green technology.

Press representatives included Al-Arabiya, Huffington Post, Asso-

ciated Press, Agence France Press, CBS, FOX News, Nikkei, Maimichi, Fiji TV, Tokyo Shimbun and NHK.

In addition to the UNSC thematic debates on non-proliferation and confidence-building measures, the council will hold a ministerial-level debate on the threats to international peace and security on Jan. 19 focusing on "Building a Regional Partnership in Afghanistan and Central Asia as a Model to Link Security and Development." It is expected that foreign ministers of Central Asian countries and Afghanistan, as well as heads of foreign policy establishments of the UNSC member states, will attend it.

The UNSC's quarterly open debate will be organised on Jan. 25 to discuss "the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question," which will focus on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Permanent representatives of UN member states will attend it.

As conducted every year, the Kazakhstan presidency in January will also host open and closed discussions of the council on the situations in Syria, Libya, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Central African Republic, the region of Darfur, West Africa and Sahel, South Sudan, Mali, Somalia, Cyprus and Colombia.

Several resolutions and presidential statements are scheduled to be adopted.

## UN official outlines expectations for Kazakhstan's UNSC presidency

By Elya Altynsarina

ASTANA – Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs of the United Nations Miroslav Jenca held a webinar with Kazakh journalists in Astana Jan. 11 to discuss the role of Kazakhstan as a non-permanent member and president of the UN Security Council.

Jenca said the presidency has a prominent role for the functioning of the council, as the president calls its meetings, approves the provisional agenda, and represents it in its capacity as an organ of the United Nations. According to the provisional agenda, there will be several important meetings, including on issues of nuclear non-proliferation and confidence-building measures with the participation of the President of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev, and a discussion concerning Central Asia and Afghanistan.

Alongside being the first non-permanent member of the council from Central Asia, Kazakhstan is contributing to the peaceful resolution of the situation in Syria. Jenca believes that today the country is using its track record of a peacemaker that has been built over many years on

initiatives of peace and stability in Central Asia and nuclear disarmament, to mediate in critical issues.

"It is now clear that the situation in Afghanistan cannot be solved by military means only – we have to focus on building the regional cooperation and infrastructure projects", the speaker said.

He recalled his experience of giving lectures at Almaty universities to students from Afghanistan during his term at the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia (UNRCCA) and pointed to the Kazakh practice of giving scholarships to Afghan youth as a concrete example of supporting the development of Afghanistan.

The procedures of the council provide that the Secretary-General, all states and organs of the United Nations communicate to bring the item to the UNSC agenda. Considering the complexity of items on the agenda, as well as Kazakhstan's ambitious initiatives, the presidency presents a leadership challenge for its holder, Jenca said. But sharing his insight from participating in the council's work, he commended the skillfulness of Kazakh diplomats in performing their duties.

"Members of both the council and the General Assembly highly appreciate the work of Kazakhstan," the diplomat said.

Talking of the work procedures of the council, its monthly programme is prepared well in advance. It includes topics scheduled beforehand according to the council resolutions, such as the situation in the Middle East, as well as the issues put on the table as things develop. An example can be the developments and the recent talks between the two Koreas which prompted a meeting of the Security Council.

The council's agenda reflects the situation in the world, Jenca said. It is no coincidence that the issue of nuclear disarmament, an important topic, has been brought up for discussion by a country which, among the few, voluntarily renounced its nuclear weapons and closed the test site, he noted.

Today, we see the nuclear tensions growing, making the risk of proliferation much higher. The UN official explained. The decision of President Nazarbayev to personally attend the UNSC meeting dedicated to non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction demonstrates the country's commitment to the issue, Jenca said.

Comparing to quite a traditional issue of nuclear non-proliferation, the upcoming discussions on Central Asia and Afghanistan is a relatively new topic for the Security Council. Although the council has been previously working on Afghanistan, Kazakhstan's emphasis on tying the situation in Afghanistan to Central Asia opens up a new sight to the issue. Jenca expects that this discussion will focus on security and conflict prevention in the greater region.

"Kazakhstan is active in other fields of the UN work, including the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and assisting the UN through measures of preventive diplomacy," he said. The country has also contributed to creating the UNRCCA Office in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan in 2007, thereby underlining the preventive diplomacy as its foreign policy tool and priority.

In this regard, the views of Secretary General Antonio Guterres to measures of conflict prevention align with those of Kazakhstan. It might be another reason for positive expectations from Kazakhstan's UNSC membership and presidency. UN Security Council high-level

debate on "Non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction: confidence-building measures" is scheduled on Jan. 19 with the participation of President Nazarbayev and UN Secretary-General Guterres. Other heads of state and top officials of the UNSC member states are expected to attend, too. According to Jenca, UN is interested in observing the confidence-building practices particularly in Asia as Kazakhstan already has experience advancing the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA).

Miroslav Jenca of Slovakia assumed the position of Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs on May 1, 2015, and is responsible, among other things, for overseeing the divisions in the Department of Political Affairs dealing with the Americas, Asia and the Pacific, Europe and the Middle East and West Asia, as well as the Decolonisation Unit and the Division for Palestinian Rights. He has served as the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia (UNRCCA) in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan, since 2008.

## Foreign ministry beefs up economic presence in Asia, FM tells parliament

By Aigerim Seisembayeva

ASTANA – Kazakh Foreign Minister Kairat Abdrakhmanov recently briefed participants at a government hour at Kazakhstan's Mazhilis (lower house of Parliament) on the country's foreign policy in Asia, saying the foreign ministry has strengthened its economic component in the region.

Speaking at the end of December 2017, Abdrakhmanov noted Asia's growing political and economic role in world affairs and predicted that role would grow further.

"In this regard, developing friendly relations and fruitful economic cooperation with Asian countries, big and small, corresponds to our national interests. ... As they say, 'when the wind blows, you build not a fence, but a mill.' It is a capacious market, which by 2030 will exceed 42 percent of the world's GDP (gross domestic product)," he said. "Kazakhstan's trade turnover with Asian countries grew 23 percent in January-September 2017 compared to the same period last year.



Kairat Abdrakhmanov

In monetary terms, it amounted to \$13.3 billion."

On strengthening the ministry's economic component in Asia, he said that investment advisors have been placed in China, South Korea, Japan, India, Iran and several other countries and that institutes of customs attachés have been created with the employees of the State Revenue Committee of Kazakhstan's Finance Ministry in Turkey, China and South Korea.

Abdrakhmanov also noted Kazakh Invest, the country's one-stop-shop institution for attracting and supporting foreign investors,

has established offices in Dubai, Istanbul, Beijing and is about to open one in Tehran. Kazakhstan's Honorary Consuls are present in 70 countries, he said.

He also specifically pointed out China's growing geopolitical influence, powerful economic potential and wide financial and technological capabilities.

"Having invested \$14 billion in ten years, Beijing has become one of the main foreign investors in Kazakhstan's economy," he said, noting the two states approved 51 joint industrial projects worth \$26 billion, five of which have already been implemented (\$158 million).

Abdrakhmanov also briefed parliament members on Kazakhstan's relations with Japan and South Korea, noting the joint statement on strategic partnership signed during President Nazarbayev's 2016 trip to Tokyo, as well as the Joint Declaration on Further Deepening of Strategic Partnership and 18 agreements worth \$640 million signed during Nazarbayev's visit to the Republic of Korea in 2016.

He also stressed that Mongolia plays an important role in Kazakh-

stan's foreign policy due to the Kazakh diaspora living there.

In the South Asian vector, Abdrakhmanov spoke about Kazakhstan's interest in India's potential in information technologies, transport and logistics, and in friendly relations with Pakistan.

As for the South East Asia, Abdrakhmanov particularly dwelled upon the transport and logistic ties with Vietnam.

"After the establishment of a free trade zone between the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) and Vietnam in 2016, mutual trade between Kazakhstan and Vietnam amounted to \$366 million in nine months of 2017, which exceeds bilateral trade with all other ASEAN [Association of Southeast Asian Nations] countries. In February 2017, Kazakhstan transported 720 tonnes of wheat to Vietnam for the first time in history through the new transport corridor in Lianyungang," he said.

Abdrakhmanov also stated negotiations on the creation of a free trade zone between the EAEU and Singapore with a potential of \$3.9 billion have started this year.

He also dwelled upon Kazakhstan's relations with the countries of the Middle East.

Speaking about Turkey, the minister noted common historical roots and cultural values, as well as the New Synergy 2017-2020 project.

He also focused on Kazakhstan's cooperation with Iran in the economic and transit spheres, a commitment to restoring Afghanistan, trade and agricultural engagement with Saudi Arabia, Emirati investments and relations with Israel.

The foreign minister spoke in more detail about the Astana Process and its contribution to bringing lasting peace to Syria, the P5+1 talks on the Iranian nuclear deal, the CICA, the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) and the Turkic Council.

Concluding his speech, Abdrakhmanov highlighted the inter-parliamentary engagement that is thriving both in bilateral format and within international organisations.

Vice-Speaker of the Mazhilis Vladimir Bozhko also told the meeting that the ministry's Asia efforts are important in the year of the 25th anniversary of President Nursultan Nazarbayev's initiative on creating the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA) and on the eve of Kazakhstan's January 2018 chairmanship at the UN Security Council.

# ECONOMY

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 17, 2017

## New tax code provides simplified regime for SMEs, new principles in administration

By Zhazira Dyussebekova

ASTANA – Kazakhstan's new Tax Code entered into force Jan. 1. The updated code provides for the introduction of some changes in the existing tax legislation, including a simplified tax regime for small and medium-sized businesses, the cancellation of some tax privileges and the introduction of new principles in tax administration.

In describing the code previously, Kazakh Minister of National Economy Timur Suleimenov said that it aimed primarily at the development of small and medium-sized businesses. One way to

support that is its new alternative tax regime, which uses a fixed deduction (taking into account income and expenses) of 30 percent. Business owners themselves will be able to choose which regime is more profitable for them. Businesses that make a maximum income of 300 million tenge (US\$903,000) and have a maximum of 50 employees can opt for this regime.

Relief is also offered to business in the form of fewer inspections: from 32 reasons for inspection, there are now just 14. The tax rate for individual entrepreneurs working under the patent was reduced from 2 to 1 percent.

Tax changes have been made

in the agrarian sector, in geological exploration and subsoil use, industry and investment and special economic zones. The financial sector is expected to recover, and the burden on payrolls has been reduced, according to zakon.kz.

In order to solve this issue and in order to maintain the current load, the social tax rate was reduced from 11 percent to 9.5 percent.

Inefficient benefits and payments have been cut. Auction fees have been cancelled, as have payments for the use of navigable waterways, since the state does not provide services and permits in these cases, according to Suleimenov.

Privileges have been cancelled for turnover from the services of slot machines, sales of lottery tickets, state postal payment signs and the import of postage stamps. Privileges that contradict World Trade Organisation (WTO) requirements were cancelled as well. The WTO requires equal conditions for taxation for domestically produced goods and imports. Revenues from e-commerce are now exempt from corporate income tax and individual income tax.

New principles in the field of tax administration have been introduced in an effort to establish clear rules for interaction between state revenue bodies and taxpayers. These are the principle of le-

gality, the principle of effective interaction and the principle of risk-based administration. Rights and responsibilities for conducting tax audits have been clarified and the risk management system has been radically revised. Tax administration, including incentive and control measures, will be built on a foundation of a differentiated approach to taxpayers. For low-risk taxpayers, there are no tax inspections, and the timing of reporting, the payment of debts, the possibility of participation in horizontal monitoring and other activities may be relaxed.

Amendments to the new Tax Code can be made no more than once a year.

### ECONOMY NEWS IN BRIEF

Kazakh Minister of Energy Kanat Bozumbayev believes the country needs a fourth oil refinery, khabar.kz reports. According to Bozumbayev, a team of specialists has been studying this question. Next year, it is planned to prepare a feasibility study for a new refinery. As the minister noted, from 2019 it will be necessary to attract an investor to finance the project and start construction. "Kazakhstan needs a fourth oil refinery, in my opinion. We raise this question, because the construction of the plant is not a matter of one year. Demand for fuels and lubricants is growing. According to our forecasts, there will be a need to increase imports of petroleum products by 2022. By this time, the fourth plant should have already been built. The capacity of the existing three will not be enough to meet the growing demand," Bozumbayev said.

The portfolio of Kazakhstan's second-tier banks exceeded 5 trillion tenge (US\$15.05 billion), showing growth of more than 30 percent over the past three years, khabar.kz reports. According to experts, the traditional surge of activity is explained by the New Year's holidays, among other factors. The consumer lending market has revived, according to First Credit Bureau (FCB) specialists, based on their research among financial organisations. The credit activity index of the population, calculated by the FCB, reached 30 points last year. This is a record indicator over the last few years. "This activity is primarily due to the fact that banks are more willing to lend. And not only banks: there are companies that are engaged in lending or microfinance organisations. That is, the consumer credit market became active," Business Development Director of FCB Assem Nurgaliyeva said.

In 2017, national spending on the social sphere increased 12 percent and exceeded 4 trillion tenge (US\$12.04 billion), increasing benefits and pensions, 24.kz reports. Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev paid particular attention to this sector in his annual address to the nation on Jan. 10. Pensions now depend on work records. Since Jan. 1, so called solidary pensions in Kazakhstan have increased 8 percent. In July, depending on employment, the basic pension will almost double. "Starting from July 1, the average pension size, taking into account the basic pension, will be about 82,000 tenge (US\$246.82). The total amount of funds provided for pension provision of citizens this year will be 1.9 trillion tenge (US\$5.719 billion)," Press Secretary of Kazakh Minister of Labour and Social Protection Nurlybek Zhenisbek said.

In 2017, the average monthly salary of Kazakhstan citizens increased 4.4 percent, said Kazakh Minister of National Economy Timur Suleimenov. "In January to November 2017, the average monthly wage in nominal terms increased to 146,700 tenge (US\$444)," the minister said at a Jan. 11 government meeting. According to the minister, steady growth of the economy was accompanied by an improvement in social indicators. He noted that one of the main priorities is the creation of new jobs. "Over nine months, the number of employees increased by 53,100 people and reached 6.4 million people as of Oct. 1 last year. This made it possible to keep unemployment at the low level of 5 percent. Approximately 34,000 self-employed persons transferred to the category of paid workers," the minister said.

The Kazakh Council on International Relations predicts growth for Central Asian economies this year, inform.kz reports. "In our opinion, this year will be more positive in terms of economic development. The countries are expected to move to a positive dynamic of economic growth," said Chairman of the Kazakh Council on International Relations Erlan Karin, presenting an analytical review of the region's 10 most important events. As he noted, according to various expert agencies, including the World Bank, Central Asia's economic growth will average 2.7 percent this year.

## Economy minister: inflation rate won't exceed 7 percent this year

Continued from Page A1

"Right now, our committee for regulation of natural monopolies and the protection of competition has legal levers: these are turn-over penalties and the withdrawal of monopoly income. While this year we did not stir anything, we will closely monitor the development of the situation," he added.

The December inflation rate was 0.7 percent compared to the previous month and 7.1 percent year-on-year compared to 2016, according to the Ministry of National Economy statistics committee.

"One of the important trends of the past year was the slowdown of inflationary processes. Throughout the year, inflation was within the 6-8 percent target corridor of the

National Bank and, as a whole, showed a downward trend. As a result of November, the consumer price growth index was 7.3 percent, which is lower compared to the end of last year – 8.5 percent," said National Bank chair Daniyar Akishev.

Prices for confectionery rose 10.7 percent in 2017 and horse-meat and fresh fish prices grew 9.8 and 9.4 percent, respectively. The prices for sugar dropped 19.5 percent and sunflower oil by 9.9 percent.

Diesel fuel prices rose 31.8 percent last year, gasoline (17.6 percent), coal (17.4 percent) and liquefied gas (8.6 percent). Prices for healthcare services increased 7.9 percent, legal services (7 percent) and entertainment and culture programmes (6.9 percent).

## Kazakhstan and EBRD to continue work on modernisation of economy

By Zhazira Dyussebekova

ASTANA – The Kazakh government and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) recently signed a new three-year accord extending cooperation within the Partnership Framework Arrangement (PFA) for Enhanced Cooperation for Promotion of Sustainable Development and Growth. The original accord was signed in May 2014 and expired at the end of 2017.

The accord includes cooperation on global competitiveness, green economy, privatisation, infrastructure and other priorities. The cooperation is meant to modernise and diversify the Kazakh economy.

A separate accord will be signed covering cooperation in attracting investments, the development of the financial and small busi-

ness sectors, the stimulation of entrepreneurship and sustainable regional development, states the press release from the EBRD office in Kazakhstan.

"In current circumstances, when the global competitiveness of countries depends on investments, technology development, and human capital, the cooperation and support from international financial institutions is crucial for our country. In this regard, we put the highest value to expanding cooperation with the EBRD and look forward to a further fruitful partnership," said Kazakh Minister of National Economy Timur Suleimenov.

The Partnership Framework Arrangement is expected to also spur cooperation within municipal infrastructure and identified cooperation priorities, including the development of a green economy

and the renewable energy sector, the improvement of Kazakhstan's global competitiveness, preparations for national company privatisations, among others.

"Over the past three years our joint work within the Partnership Framework has helped boost investments and has driven forward a number of significant reforms in the country. I would like to commend our Kazakh counterparts for the effective work of the Coordination Council and for their financial contribution to various investment projects. We have jointly achieved tangible results in different areas including SME support, innovation, investment climate, regional development and institutional reforms and municipal sector development to name a few," said EBRD Director for Kazakhstan Agris Preimanis.

## Government adopts bill to reduce transactions in foreign currency

Staff Report

The Kazakh government has adopted a bill developed by the National Bank of Kazakhstan to reduce transactions in the country in foreign currency.

"The bill is designed to expand the coverage of statistical monitoring of foreign exchange transactions and reduce the use of foreign currency in Kazakhstan," said bank chair Daniyar Akishev, presenting the bill at a government meeting.

One of the important changes and additions envisioned by the bill is strengthening currency control over transactions aimed against moving funds outside the country.

"In accordance with the instructions of the head of state, the bill defines a list of currency transactions that have signs of movement of funds outside the country. First is the provision of a financial loan by a resident to a non-resident, which does not provide for repayment by crediting funds in Kazakhstan. Second is the provision of a financial loan by a non-resident to a resident, which does not provide for repayment by crediting funds in Kazakhstan. Third

is the provision by the resident of an interest-free financial loan to an unaffiliated non-resident for a period exceeding 720 days or operations for payment of export or import with a repatriation period of more than 720 days," said Akishev.

"Such transactions will be carried out by banks only upon submission by the resident of permission to transfer information to the financial control authorities and the draft law provides for the right to transfer information on currency transactions containing bank secrecy to the state committee," he added.

The proposal also introduces a number of changes aimed at state revenue bodies' access to more complete information on currency transactions, improving the effectiveness of currency control in the legislation. At the same time, the draft law intends to preserve the principles of the liberal currency regime.

The draft legislative amendments were adopted at the government meeting and will be submitted for consideration to the Mazhilis (lower chamber of the Kazakh Parliament). The planned date for putting it into effect as the law is July 1, 2019.

## Real estate prices to hold steady, experts say

Staff Report

ASTANA – Representatives of the United Association of Realtors of Kazakhstan said prices for real estate in the country will not show significant changes in 2018, according to inform.kz.

"There were no seasonal price changes for several years. The price changes depend on the economic factors of demand. When considering the trends in these factors, real estate prices will not show any special changes in 2018. In Almaty, prices will remain at the same level or show a slight increase due to buyers who previously delayed the decision to purchase real estate, and also these factors will support continued positive dynamics in the number of transactions. The beginning of the functioning of the Astana International Financial Centre will also set a positive trend in the property market of Astana," said President

of the United Association of Realtors of Kazakhstan Yelena Griva.

According to her, prices will remain on the same level due to the commissioning of new state programmes and the further development of existing ones.

In 2017, Kazakh residents have observed relative stability in the market for new housing and a decline in the secondary market. In new buildings in Astana, the price was stable at a level of 318,000 tenge (US\$970) per square metre. In Almaty, prices for new housing have fluctuated in the corridor of 430,000-450,000 tenge (US\$1,310-1,370) per square metre.

Prices for secondary housing in 2017 in Almaty and Astana fell 5-8 percent on average, while in some regions of the country the price declined 10-11 percent. Vice President of the United Association of Realtors Nina Lukyanenko said that in 2018 the housing market will be stimulated by migration flows (of people moving to cities),

financial literacy and financial security of families and other economic factors.

"The number of transactions in Kazakhstan for the period from January to November 2017 compared to the same period in 2016 rose 28.6 percent. Is it due to increased solvency among the population? I don't think so. The first reason for such growth in deals is calmness in the hearts of those who planned to improve their living conditions. For this period of time, many watched the exchange rates and did not hurry to invest in apartments and houses, not fully understanding what will happen to the cost of different currencies," said Lukyanenko about the trends of 2017.

In 2018, in her opinion, demand will remain at a high level, but it is much more important for this demand to be solvent. Only if demand is solvent will there be further positive movement. Small apartments purchased for personal use will be in demand.



# BUSINESS

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 17, 2017

**BUSINESS NEWS IN BRIEF**

A project to expand production at the Aktogai Ore Mining and Processing Plant with an investment of \$1.2 billion has been approved, while the volume of processing of sulphide ore is planned to double starting in 2021, according to inform.kz. KAZMinerals confirmed the planned steps. The volume of investments will be supported by a steady flow of money from the Bozshakol and Aktogai mines, and the construction of another division will double the capacity of sulphide ore processing from 25 to 50 tonnes per year. According to Chairman of the Board Oleg Novachuk, "the expansion project is an opportunity to provide a significant return on investment from the asset by duplicating the existing sulphide factory. The copper forecast remains positive, and this development will help us continue to grow in a market where demand is increasing."

The Aktobe regional administration has signed a memorandum of cooperation with producers of construction materials, according to the press service of the region's governor. According to the agreement, the producers will provide the market of the region with products before supplying markets elsewhere. Seven brick and gas concrete block producers will provide for the internal needs of the region. "Last year was a record year in terms of construction. In summer, during the peak season, there was a shortage of bricks. We had to deliver not only from neighbouring regions, but also from Russia. This year, according to the order of regional Akim (Governor) Berdybek Saparbayev, we want to meet the demand for bricks and other building materials at the expense of local production as much as possible," said Deputy Governor Serik Tulenbergenov. In addition, in the second half of 2018, the opening of a new brick plant is expected in the Aktobe region, the capacity of which will be 120 million bricks per year.

The Atyrau Oil Refinery is the first in Kazakhstan to export benzene – a raw material for petrochemicals, reported inform.kz. "In 2017, 8,951 tonnes of benzene were produced, or 104 percent of the planned amount. Since the beginning of the production of benzene up to the present time, 14,381 tonnes of products have been produced and shipped. All of our product is exported to the Russian Federation. Its quality complies with the international standard," reads a press release from the refinery. Benzene is widely used in industry; it is the raw material for the production of medicines, various plastics and synthetic rubber.

KazMunayGas transferred 50 percent of the subsoil use rights for the Isatay oil field to Eni Isatay B.V. According to the website of the Kazakh Stock Exchange, the deal to transfer 50 percent of the subsoil use rights within the contract for combined exploration and production of hydrocarbons at Isatay was completed in December 2017. Eni is the biggest Italian oil and gas company. Its main regions of operation are Africa, Russia and Kazakhstan.

Two farms in the village of Makhambet in Atyrau region plan to produce 20 tonnes of goose meat, reported inform.kz. "Thanks to subsidies, residents of the Makhambet district are developing poultry farming. The first farm was aimed at producing quail eggs, which are sold in Atyrau. Not so long ago, a farm opened for goose breeding. It is designed to grow 5,000 birds a year. A similar farm is already under construction. In total, after reaching the planned volumes, up to 20 tonnes of goose meat per year will be produced in the district," said Zheksenbai Pazulov, head of the business and tourism department of the district. Another poultry farm is already in operation in the district; it produces up to 100 million chicken eggs per year.

## 13 enterprises worth 9.4 billion tenge launched in South Kazakhstan in 2017

By Meruyert Abugaliyeva

ASTANA – Thirteen enterprises were established in the South Kazakhstan region last year under the National Programme of Accelerated Industrial and Innovative Development for 2015-2019. The programme aims to boost economic diversification and improve the competitiveness of the manufacturing industry.

The new enterprises started manufacturing various goods and created new jobs in the first 11 months of the year. Rakhat-Shymkent constructed an 850-million tenge (US\$2.6 million) shop to produce wafer rolls, generating 28 positions. The annual production capacity is 1,700 tonnes.

Borte Milka launched a dairy products facility in the Ordabasy district. The 900-million tenge (US\$2.7 million) plant has an annual production capacity of 4,320



Photo credit: Kapital.kz.

tonnes. Baza-Service opened a canning shop in the Saryagash district for fruit and vegetable storage. The plant, with a price tag of 500 million tenge (US\$1.5 million), is capable of manufacturing 40,000 cans per year. Asia Agro built a plant in the Otyrar district to grow and process up to 5,000 tonnes of corn to provide feed for poultry farms. Akmergen, well-known for its new project of using natural reeds in production, opened a 622.3-million tenge (US\$1.9 million) plant employing 30 workers. The Rakhmankulov furniture factory in Shymkent can manu-

facture 4,000 units under the Bella Zhikhazy brand. The cost of the project is 506 million tenge (US\$1.52 million) and the entrepreneur received 300 million tenge (US\$903,000) under the Business Road Map 2020 programme. The plant uses modern technology and created 50 openings. Syrlly Sozak, which processes polymer waste and produces low pressure pipes, was established in the Suzak district industrial zone. The factory, supplying products to uranium enterprises, employs 31 people. In the Kazygurt district, the Otyrabat-Kurylyns plant started producing aerated concrete blocks. The 120-million tenge (US\$361,000) enterprise created 12 jobs. Corporation City Story opened a plant capable of producing 750,000 tonnes of asphalt per year. The project cost 280 million tenge (US\$843,000). Ruberoid company Bumprom

launched a 100-million tenge (US\$301,000) plant to produce cardboard paper, drywall and cement bags. The factory is capable of producing 4,000 tonnes of product per year. The Dezfumen Road Map 2020 programme. The plant uses modern technology and created 50 openings.

In Shymkent, RET produces bricks with ceramic coating. The cost of the enterprise, capable of producing 20 million bricks per year, is 103 million tenge (US\$310,000).

Chimpharm, owned by Polish firm Polpharma, launched a 4.3-billion tenge (US\$13 million) shop to manufacture solid medicinal production forms. The plant's annual capacity is 200 million tablets.

The entrepreneurship support programme provides help for 135 projects in South Kazakhstan with a total cost of 1.2 trillion tenge (US\$3.6 billion) and has created 17,500 jobs.

## MyBusiness: business without borders app to aid entrepreneurs doing business

By Dmitry Lee

ASTANA – The "MyBusiness: business without borders" app, developed and created by Chevron, the British Council and the Atameken National Chamber of Entrepreneurs, is a hoped-for way to protect the rights of entrepreneurs in the country.

"The mobile application 'MyBusiness: business without bor-

ders' is a unique software product created for the business community of the countries of the Eurasian continent to support, develop and expand transparent conditions for its successful quantitative and qualitative growth," said Yerlan Stambekov, chair of the Almaty Chamber of Entrepreneurs regional council during the app presentation in Almaty in mid-December. "We express our gratitude to Chevron and the British Council

for their assistance in developing the section on social entrepreneurship for this application."

The app includes various government databases, registrars, procedures for registering business in Kazakhstan, the list of banks and legal database for entrepreneurs interested in doing business in this part of the world in English, Kazakh, Mandarin and Russian. It also features tips from experienced businesspeople who have been

doing business in the country, frequently asked questions and success stories.

The community of foreign entrepreneurs in Kazakhstan is also interested in participating in the project and has offered its business-related information to be uploaded into the database.

"The interest to doing business in Kazakhstan is growing. Eight countries have reciprocated, among them China, Russia, Belarus and Armenia. The foreign investors and businesspeople have expressed a desire to post information about themselves in the application and to tell how they conduct business in their countries," noted Stambekov.

He added approximately 60 entrepreneurs successfully used the app in 2016 to secure legal aid in resolving paperwork. More than 20,000 people are currently using the app with their own personal pages and the chance to display their business and services.

The presentation was held as part of closing a phase of the I-SEED (Innovations – Social Entrepreneurship and Education)

project, implemented by the British Council and Chevron since 2013. The project's goal is to support socially pro-active youth in Kazakhstan and create conditions for a sustainable solution of social problems through promoting social entrepreneurship.

The nearly 300 people who took part in the project last year had the chance to learn more about project management, fund raising, project presentation to potential investors and business planning. They independently implemented 18 social entrepreneurship projects, with the two best receiving \$2,000 in funding from Chevron. The company is one of the leading private oil companies in Kazakhstan with significant shares in two large oil projects – Tengiz and Karachaganak.

The British Council, which works in the fields of cultural relations and educational opportunities, contributes to creating a friendly atmosphere for building cooperation and strengthening mutual understanding between the United Kingdom and other countries.



## Club of Rome report paints dire picture of future of fossil fuels

Staff Report

ASTANA – The end of the fossil fuel era is inevitable, and will likely arrive sooner than previously predicted. The cost of clean energy, like solar and wind energy, decreases every year, and its production is increasing. Growth in demand for oil will stop by 2020, and if Stanford researcher Tony Seba is right, the transition to renewable sources could happen by 2030, Hvylya.net reports.

These were some of the conclusions presented in the Club of Rome's "Come On! Capitalism, myopia, population and the planet's destruction" jubilee report.

Its authors noted that huge deposits of oil and gas will remain in the ground. The lost profits are estimated in the range of \$6 to \$20 trillion. The oil and gas sectors are becoming a huge bubble that could completely depreciate over several years. Some analysts and banking structures are already warning customers about the unacceptable risks of investing in such enterprises.

The club's experts say that surprising changes are taking place in China, the largest consumer of resources. The Communist Party proclaimed a policy of building

an ecological civilisation, which has been fixed in the constitution and is already reflected in the projects of the country's 13th (2016-2020) five-year plan. China is becoming the leader in the field of alternative energy: in four years the production of solar energy has increased by 20 times, and by 2050 the country intends to get 80 percent of its energy from renewable sources.

The Club of Rome is an analytical centre, an international public organisation, created by the Italian industrialist Aurelio Peccei, who became its first president, and Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) General Director Alexander King on April 6-7, 1968. They brought representatives of the world's political, financial, cultural and scientific elite to their new project, and the organisation has made a significant contribution to the study of prospects for the biosphere development and the propagation of the idea of bringing humanity into harmony with nature.

One of the club's main tasks is attracting the world's attention to global problems through its reports. The club determines the topic of the report and guarantees the financing of scientific research, but in no way interferes with the course of the work, nor its results

and conclusions; the authors of the reports, including those who are members of the club, enjoy complete freedom and independence. Having received a report, the club

reviews and approves it, usually during its annual conference, often in the presence of the general public – representatives of the public, scientific figures, politicians, and

the press – and then disseminates the results of the study, publishing reports and discussing them in front of different audiences in countries around the world.



**DISCOVER KAZAKHSTAN WITH A NEW APP**

A unique digital product – "Kazakhstan – Land of the Great Steppe" – is one-of-a-kind high quality interactive application, presenting multimedia on the most representative geographic, political, touristic, historical, economic facts about Kazakhstan. It contains hundreds of high quality unique photographs, videos, 3D objects, panoramic tours, interactive charts, and innovative maps. It should be of interest to anyone who wants to learn about the world's ninth largest country, including tourists, students, and business people. Available in English, Russian, and Kazakh.

Mobile device versions are available in AppStore and PlayMarket. Also available in Windows and as a web version.

You can run an application webpage by following the link: <http://bit.ly/28PkZza>

# EDITORIAL & OPINION

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 17, 2017

## Kazakhstan's UNSC presidency gives voice to modern security, geopolitical realities

Kazakh citizens are justifiably proud that this month the country is chairing the United Nations Security Council. It is a special moment in our country's history – another symbol of how far Kazakhstan has come as well as recognition of the growing importance of Central Asia.

The presidency is, of course, taken in turns by UNSC members, but its significance is not just symbolic. It provides the opportunity for a country from outside the ranks of the old, traditional powers to help set the international agenda. Attention can be focused and debate prompted on the global challenges it believes are most critical or over-looked.

These opportunities are, many would argue, perhaps not frequent enough. Our world may have been transformed over the last seven decades, but in some ways the UN as a body has not kept up with these changes. Its structures and, in particular, control of its decision-making levers can still seem to owe more to the world of 1948 than 2018.

It is why Kazakhstan is determined, as it has been since it took its seat on the Security Council a year ago, not to waste this chance to shape the global agenda. The country's leadership, team at the United Nations and diplomats are working flat out to make progress on its regional and international priorities.

Right at the top of this agenda is to make a start in removing for good the threat of nuclear war. When Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev urged fellow leaders at the UN in 2015 to make their main goal a world free of nuclear weapons, some may have thought that he was over-estimating the danger of catastrophic conflict. Scarcely more than two years later, this complacency has disappeared.

Setting out such big ambitions is always important to galvanise efforts and provide targets. But it must be coupled, as President Nazarbayev has shown many times, with practical steps to achieve them. This is exactly what the high-level UNSC discussions on confidence building measures regarding weapons of mass destruction that Kazakhstan has initiated this week are intended to help identify.

The aim of the discussions is to examine how confidence

and trust can be built at a regional and international level. We need to find agreed ways to resolve and prevent conflicts so states no longer feel it is necessary for their security to develop nuclear weapons. In time, too, such successful measures may persuade countries who already have nuclear weapons to reduce their arsenal or follow Kazakhstan's lead in giving them up altogether.

It is a mark of President Nazarbayev's own commitment to nuclear disarmament that he is helping lead these discussions himself in the Security Council. His involvement during his busy schedule in the United States will give the talks a real impetus. As the leader of the first country to renounce nuclear weapons voluntarily, he has the personal credentials to persuade fellow UNSC members to think seriously about what needs to happen.

His visit to New York also underlines the importance that Kazakhstan places on the United Nations. Right from Kazakhstan's first days as an independent country, it has seen a strong UN, respected by all countries, as absolutely essential for global stability, security and prosperity. Twenty-six years later, its critical role is clearer than ever.

As this paper has shown many times on different issues, our world is now so inter-connected and the challenges so complex, no country can overcome them on its own. Only by working together can we hope to find the solutions needed.

But if the UN is to play fully the role in identifying and delivering answers, it must be modernised and strengthened. Giving, for example, a greater role to the General Assembly as well as a better balance between regions in a reformed and expanded UNSC would help ensure solutions, which work for all countries, are identified and trusted.

Encouraging the reforms and agreements which will produce a stronger, better equipped United Nations ready to guide the world successfully through the challenges of the coming decades is another major priority for Kazakhstan. All who want to see a peaceful and prosperous world should be supporting Kazakhstan's agenda.

## Kazakhstan 2018

By Dr. Lisa Williams



A total of 138 out of 193 countries voted in June 2016 for Kazakhstan to become a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), making it the first Central Asian country to serve in the prestigious position. Kazakhstan's two-year term began in January 2017. In January 2018, Kazakhstan has assumed the rotating presidency of the UNSC. Kazakhstan's Senate Chairman Kassym-Jomart Tokayev noted "this event is an historic victory for Kazakhstan...made possible by the international authority of President Nursultan Nazarbayev." I agree.

The purpose of the UNSC is to maintain international peace and security. Kazakhstan's Foreign Minister Kairat Abdrakhmanov delivered President Nazarbayev's Policy Address to the UNSC in January 2017. Entitled "Kazakhstan's Concept Vision on Sustaining Global Partnership for a Secure, Just and Prosperous World," the address focused on a wide range of security issues including Syria, Afghanistan, Africa, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, and the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula. Kazakhstan is also focusing on food, water and energy security at the UNSC.

But, along with these important initiatives, Kazakhstan will ring in 2018 with a renewed focus on nuclear security. Unlike any other permanent or nonpermanent member state on the UNSC, only Kazakhstan has the political legitimacy to lead the world on the issue of nuclear disarmament and nonproliferation.

What sets Kazakhstan apart on the UN Security Council is President Nazarbayev. In 1991, following the collapse of the Soviet Union, President Nazarbayev made a decision to dismantle the nuclear arsenal it had inherited from the USSR. That decision changed the course of history – and continues to be a course that all other nations should follow.

From 1949-1989, the Soviet Union used Kazakhstan as a nuclear testing ground. The Soviets exploded their first nuclear bomb on August 29, 1949 at the Semipalatinsk Test Site in the eastern part of Kazakhstan. The test was code-named "First Lightning" by the Soviets and Joe-1 by the West, in reference to Joseph Stalin. The Soviets went on to explode another 455 nuclear bombs at Semipalatinsk. It is estimated that the cumulative effect of those explosions was equivalent to the power of 2,500 Hiroshima-sized bombs.

I have been to the Semipalatinsk Test Site with the late Congressman Eni F.H. Faleomavaega who was the Chairman of the influential U.S. House of Representatives' Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Asia, the Pacific and the Global Environment and also the first American lawmaker to set foot at ground zero in Semipalatinsk. During his tenure in Congress, Faleomavaega was an advocate for nuclear nonproliferation and consistently praised President Nazarbayev for his choice to renounce nuclear weaponry.

The late Congressman Faleomavaega once stated, "My position regarding this matter is no different than the position the United States took during a joint meeting between President Obama and President Nazarbayev on April 11, 2010 when President Obama stated that 'the U.S. appreciates the leadership of President Nazarbayev and the contribution of Kazakhstan to nuclear disarmament and nonproliferation'" – a view also held by former President George W. Bush and now by U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson.

On April 6, 2010, President Obama stated that "the United States will not conduct nuclear testing and will seek ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT)" which bans all nuclear explosions in all environments. While Obama was applauded for his efforts, Congressman Faleomavaega agreed with President Nazarbayev – that the time had come to move from a nuclear test ban to a nuclear weapons-free world.

Simply put, nuclear weapons are horrific. As a result of Soviet nuclear testing, more than 1.5 million Kazakhs were exposed to nuclear radiation. From 1946-1958, the United States conducted 67 nuclear tests in the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) with an equivalent yield of 7,000 Hiroshima bombs. The Marshallese people, like the people of Semipalatinsk, suffer from nuclear fallout to this day. "Neither the Soviet Union nor the U.S. have fulfilled their obligation in cleaning up the mess they left behind as a result of their Cold War arms race," Congressman Faleomavaega stated.

And now, the DPRK is threatening to launch nuclear weapons. Kazakhstan rightly and with authority "calls upon all member states to apply every effort in resolving this troubling situation," Foreign Minister Abdrakhmanov recently said. "Achieving this goal requires, above all, intensified dialogue between all stakeholders in regional and global security."

For the long-term, the only solution is the one President Nazarbayev has already put forward – a universal ban on nuclear weapons. The late Congressman Faleomavaega so strongly supported the idea that he included the following remarks in the United States of America Congressional Record:

"I believe it is time to move from a nuclear test ban to a nuclear weapons-free world. After all, the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), like the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), is based on a flawed and outdated premise. The NPT asserts that only five nations – the nuclear weapons states – namely, the United States, Russia, the United Kingdom, France, and China (which also happen to be the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council) – will pursue nuclear disarmament and share their technology for peaceful purposes if non-nuclear states agree never to acquire nuclear weapons. The NPT also states that only the United States, Russia, the United Kingdom, China, and France are permitted to own nuclear weapons because only they possessed nuclear weapons at the time the treaty was open for signature in 1968.

But the world has changed since 1968. No longer can non-nuclear states support the outdated premise of the NPT and none of us should settle for what the CTBT offers, particularly since the signatories of the NPT are among the worst violators of the nuclear code.

From 1949-1990, Russia conducted over 700 nuclear tests. In roughly the same time period, the U.S. conducted over 1,000 nuclear tests. Since 1964, China has conducted more than 43 nuclear tests. Between 1960 and 1991, France conducted more than 200 nuclear tests and, in 1996, despite being a signatory of the NPT, France broke a world moratorium conducting 6 more tests at Moruroa Atoll in the South Pacific while the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) silently consented.

It is time for all of us to say enough is enough. It is time for the world to follow Kazakhstan's lead and begin the process of dismantling. If Kazakhstan can dismantle a nuclear arsenal which was larger than the combined nuclear arsenals of Great Britain, France and China combined, then certainly the United States, Russia, the United Kingdom, France, and China can also do what is right.

Some twenty years ago, President Nazarbayev emerged to champion the cause of a nuclear weapons-free world, and no other leader before or since has done what he has done to advance the rights of the human person by promoting nuclear disarmament among possessor states and preventing proliferation to new states.

As President Loeak of the Republic of the Marshall Islands stated, "Had Kazakhstan retained the nuclear arsenal it inherited after achieving independence and following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, Kazakhstan could have altered the fragile peace brought about by the Cold War. But knowing the price Kazakhs and Marshallese paid to preserve international peace, President Nazarbayev chose to renounce and disarm."

For this, President Nazarbayev should be commended again and again. I commend President Nazarbayev for his initiative to move the world from a nuclear test ban to a nuclear weapons-free world – and it is my sincere hope that we will hold together and stand firm in our support of this great cause."

If not for his untimely passing in February 2017, I am certain the Honorable Eni F.H. Faleomavaega would stand shoulder-to-shoulder with President Nazarbayev as Kazakhstan makes history at the UNSC. And, for sure, he would join with the people and parliament of the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and urge others to do the same, in calling upon the Nobel Peace Prize Committee to honor President Nazarbayev for promoting peace through nuclear disarmament in a way no other has before or since.

Dr. Lisa Williams is the former Staff Director for the U.S. House of Representatives' Foreign Affairs' Subcommittee on Asia, the Pacific, and the Global Environment, and the first woman to have served in the position. She also served as Chief of Staff for the late Congressman Eni F.H. Faleomavaega of American Samoa.

### KAZAKHSTAN IN THE UN SECURITY COUNCIL

#### KAZAKHSTAN'S PRIORITIES FOR UNSC

Enunciated in President Nursultan Nazarbayev's Policy Address to UNSC in Jan 2017



#### KAZAKHSTAN CHAIRS THREE UNSC COMMITTEES



#### POWERS OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL PRESIDENT

**JANUARY 2018 r.** Kazakhstan assumes the UNSC Presidency

The Presidency of the Council is held by each of the members in turn, following the alphabetical order

The President opens and leads UNSC meetings

The President signs official reports of the Council

The President issues official statements on behalf of the Council

As UNSC President, Kazakhstan is planning to:

- Hold a Security Council briefing on the subject "Non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction: confidence building measures" chaired by President Nazarbayev
- Hold a Ministerial debate on Central Asia and Afghanistan
- Hold quarterly debates on the Middle East

#### UNSC PRESIDENCY IN 2017-2018



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# OPINIONS

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 17, 2017

## President Nazarbayev's annual address seeks to digitise Kazakhstan, strengthen social protection

Continued from Page A1

**First**, industrialisation is to be the flagship of the new technologies introduction. The new instruments aimed at modernising and digitising enterprises with a focus on exporting products have to be developed and tested. The best experiences on the digitisation of industrial enterprises will be widely expanded.

Innovation centres, such as the Nazarbayev University, the Astana International Financial Centre (AIFC) and the International

should find strategic niches in international markets and promote domestic production in these areas, creating and promoting a brand of natural food "Made in Kazakhstan."

The entire agricultural industry should be radically reoriented and based on agrarian science. Agrarian universities need to update training programmes and become centres for the distribution of the most advanced knowledge and best practices in the agro-industrial sector. It is necessary to focus on the transfer of new technolo-

gies and their adaptation to domestic conditions. It is necessary to encourage those who use the land with the best returns and take measures to address inefficient users. It is also necessary to overhaul ineffective subsidies to reduce the cost of bank loans for agribusiness entities.

**Fourth**, it is necessary to increase the efficiency of transport and logistics infrastructure within the framework of transcontinental corridors passing through Kazakhstan. The transit of goods through Kazakhstan in 2017 increased 17 percent to almost 17 million tonnes. The new task is to bring annual revenues from transit in 2020 to \$5 billion. It is necessary to ensure the large-scale introduction of digital technologies, such as blockchain, to track the movement of goods online and to ensure their unhindered transit, as well as to simplify customs operations. An Intelligent Transport System introduction is required to effectively manage transport flows and determine the requirement for further infrastructure development. To improve intra-regional mobility, it is important to increase funding for the repair and reconstruction of the local road network. The total budget allocated annually for this should be increased to 150 billion tenge (\$454.5 million) in the medium term.

**Fifth**, the introduction of modern technologies in the construction and communal sectors should ensure 30 square metres of housing per capita by 2030. Currently,

the volume of housing construction in Kazakhstan exceeds 10 million square metres per year. The financial system for house savings effectively makes housing affordable for the public. The provision of housing per capita has increased 30 percent in the last 10 years and is now 21.6 square metres. It is important to apply new construction methods, utilise modern materials and adopt fundamentally different approaches to the design of buildings and urban planning. It is necessary to establish increased regulations for the quality, environmental friendliness and energy efficiency of buildings. It is important to introduce appropriate changes in legislation, including regulating large housing consortiums. Akims (governors) need to more actively address issues of modernisation in housing and communal infrastructure on the basis of public-private partnerships. To solve the issue of providing rural settlements with high-quality drinking water, the government needs to provide at least 100 billion tenge (\$303 million) annually.

**Sixth**, "reloading" the financial sector, which means cleaning out "bad" loans from the bank portfolio. Bank owners will have to bear economic responsibility, recognising losses. The withdrawal of funds from banks by shareholders for the benefit of affiliated companies and individuals will be considered a serious crime. It is necessary to increase the speed that the law on bankruptcy of individuals is adopted. The National Bank should finally resolve the issue of mortgage loans that were provided to Kazakh citizens before Jan. 1, 2016, when the law to prohibit their issuance to individuals was introduced. The National Bank and the government should jointly address the issue of providing long-term business lending at rates that take into account the real profitability in the sectors of the economy. It is important to further improve the investment climate and the development of the stock market within the framework of the Astana International Financial Centre, applying English law and adopting modern financial technologies. The successful listing of Samruk Kazyna Sovereign Wealth Fund companies through the initial public offering (IPO) will also contribute to the development of the stock market.

**Seventh**, human capital is the basis of modernisation. It is necessary to accelerate the creation of Kazakhstan's advanced education system, covering citizens of all ages. The key priority of educational programmes is the development of the skills which allow students to constantly adapt to changes and assimilate new knowledge. Preschool education should, by Sept. 1, 2019, have uniform standards for early childhood development and provide enhanced social and self-learning skills. In secondary education, Kazakhstan has launched a transition to updated content and will complete it in 2021. To improve the prestige of the teaching profession, the salary of teachers who are versed in the updated contents of teaching materials will increase 30 percent. The updated contents are modern programmes of study, which meet international standards. These have been adapted in the Nazarbayev Intellectual Schools. In order to improve the effectiveness of diagnosis and treatment, it will be necessary to establish genetic testing and artificial intelligence in medicine. The quality of healthcare personnel training is an important issue. The medical centres should be integrated within all medical universities. A new edition of the Code on Public Health and Healthcare System should be developed to implement these and other measures. It is critical to ensure the efficiency of the labour market by creating conditions that enable everyone to fulfil their potential. It is necessary to develop modern standards for all major occupations. It is necessary to develop new or update existing educational programs in line with professional standards. The work of the Atameken National Chamber of Entrepreneurs on training businesses deserves support. The full-scale implementation of an online labour exchange database is required, where all information on vacancies and job-seekers will be collated and advertised. Citizens will be able to take vocational guidance tests, learn about training courses and state support measures, and find interesting work without leaving their homes. The law on electronic labour exchange must be adopted before April 1. The pension system is fully dependent on length of service. Expenditure on the social sector in 2018 has increased by 12 percent, exceeding 4.1 trillion tenge (\$12.4 billion). An increase in social benefits, including pensions, will raise the income of more than three million Kazakhstan citizens. A new method of providing

targeted social assistance to low-income population groups will be shifted from 2018. The threshold has risen from 40 to 50 percent of the living wage. From Jan. 1, solidary pensions have risen by 8 percent. The allowances for disabled people, families who have lost their primary income, and families raising disabled children have increased 16 percent.

**Eighth**, effective public administration should be further ensured to reduce the expenses of the businesses and the wider population, when they apply for public administration. It is necessary to ensure the digitalisation of public services for businesses, and their rendering on a "one-stop-shop" principle. State bodies should use modern digital technologies to listen to citizens' remarks and suggestions in real time and provide prompt responses. Integration of state information systems will help to move from the provision of an individual public service to the provision of

clustering their interaction with the public and business, is most important in the fight against corruption and ensuring the rule of law. Citizens will see how their appeals are reviewed and receive timely and qualitative answers. Institutional reforms of judicial and law enforcement systems are being carried out. Norms providing for strengthening the protection of the rights of citizens in criminal proceedings, reducing its repressiveness have been introduced to legislation. The rights of lawyers have been expanded, as well as judicial control at the pre-trial stage. The powers and areas of responsibility of law enforcement bodies are being delineated.

**Tenth**, Kazakhstan will promote smart cities for a smart nation. 2018 is the year of the 20th anniversary of the capital of Astana. Modern technologies provide effective solutions to the problems of a fast-growing metropolis. Comprehensive management of the urban environment based on the Smart

"To fit with the new times, we must unite as a single nation – a nation on the verge of a historic ascent under the conditions of the Fourth Industrial Revolution."

a set of services on the "one application" principle. The quality of natural monopolies services should be improved. It is important to establish reasonable tariffs for these and for energy producers, taking into account investment programmes. The civil servants' salaries in the regions and the centre will be rebalanced taking into account the nature and effectiveness of their work. The potential of the effectiveness of the public service in the regions should be more fully revealed through increasing their economic independence and responsibility. In general, the focus of regional policy will be shifted away from equalising expenditures and towards stimulating the growth of the region's own revenues. Domestic tourism is one of the most promising sources for any region. Since Jan. 1, in cities of district significance, as well as villages and rural districts with a population of more than two thousand people, the legislation provides for the introduction of an independent budget and municipal ownership of local government. From 2020, these norms will operate across all settlements.

**Ninth**, the digitisation of processes in government bodies, including their interaction with the public and business, is most important in the fight against corruption and ensuring the rule of law. Citizens will see how their appeals are reviewed and receive timely and qualitative answers. Institutional reforms of judicial and law enforcement systems are being carried out. Norms providing for strengthening the protection of the rights of citizens in criminal proceedings, reducing its repressiveness have been introduced to legislation. The rights of lawyers have been expanded, as well as judicial control at the pre-trial stage. The powers and areas of responsibility of law enforcement bodies are being delineated.

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"It is critical to ensure the efficiency of the labour market by creating conditions that enable everyone to fulfil their potential. It is necessary to develop modern standards for all major occupations. It is necessary to develop new or update existing educational programs in line with professional standards."

Technology Park of IT Startups will be actively involved in the digitisation process. A serious revision is required of the organisation of the activities of the Alatau Park of Innovative Technologies.

To deal with associated risks of a large-scale release of work force, an agreed policy on the employment of the released work force should be worked out in advance.

In 2018, the development of the third five-year industrialisation period devoted to the development of the "digital age" industry will be started.

**Second**, the 21st century's world still consumes natural resources. It is necessary to critically rethink the organisation of commodity industries, approaches to the management of natural resources.

It is important to increase the requirements for energy efficiency and energy saving of enterprises, as well as the environmental friendliness and efficiency of the energy producers themselves. Kazakhstan will increase the share of alternative energy to 30 percent by 2030. Akims (governors) of the regions should take measures on the modern disposal and recycling of solid domestic waste with a broad involvement of small and medium-sized enterprises.

**Third**, the wide use of the smart technologies in the agricultural industry should ensure a radical increase in labour productivity and growth in exports of processed agricultural products at least 2.5 times within the next 5 years. This will allow entering world markets with high-quality end products. The state, together with business,

## Kazakh President's vision good for country, investment

By Anurag Thukral

The priority tasks as outlined in 10 important areas by President Nursultan Nazarbayev in his state of the nation address Jan. 10 represent a great vision of a great leader of Kazakhstan. It shows how a strong dream and a powerful vision paves a strong foundation to build a strong nation. After reading the address and understanding the depth and passion, I am completely sold on the vision of President Nazarbayev.

One can envisage that this programme will benefit and improve the life of an ordinary Kazakh. As this programme gets implemented, Kazakhstan will be a leading country in terms of growth internationally and every citizen will be a proud Kazakh.

As implementation of the President's priority programme unfolds it will empower Kazakh industry and its business entrepreneurs to become world-class leaders. The programme would lead to increased labour productivity, improved quality of goods



and services, would encourage new business start-ups and enhance industrial output through modern and innovative technologies. This initiative of the President will definitely make Kazakhstan a strong and competent business hub.

Development and smart management of infrastructure and transportation systems as initiated by the President would enhance international confidence, increase connectivity and ensure timely delivery of goods and services. Efficient material handling and lowered transportation costs would increase profitability and export.

President Nazarbayev has his eyes on making Kazakhstan a smart nation. A smart nation

would use its resources and energy efficiently, reduce operational and management costs and overheads. A greater connectivity would encourage international and national businesses to have improved confidence. An efficient and reliable connectivity and access to the world financial, economic, political and latest technological systems would keep Kazakh businesses in line with world trends. The vision of President Nazarbayev for a smart nation would place Kazakhstan on the world map in gold.

The President wants the Kazakh government and public bodies to effectively participate in nation building by simplifying administrative procedures. He is encouraging innovation and development of public policies that would encourage businesses and would improve the life of the citizens. An efficient administration would demonstrate national pride, and adopting systems that demonstrate integrity would improve the confidence of ordinary citizens when working with public bodies. The President wants the government to be account-

able of their actions and prepare for self-governance. This is a great initiative that shows that the President's policies are down to earth and he understands the needs and the difficulties of citizens.

President Nazarbayev has placed a great emphasis on the health and welfare of the citizens of Kazakhstan. A healthy nation is a strong nation. When the top leader of the nation has

An efficient and reliable connectivity and access to the world financial, economic, political and latest technological systems would keep Kazakh businesses in line with world trends. The vision of President Nazarbayev for a smart nation would place Kazakhstan on the world map in gold.

his focus on improving the life and living standard of its citizens, the citizens would have greater pride and passion, and would pay back to the nation by staying within the country. An

improved healthy environment, greater employment opportunities, improved medical systems, healthy living and enhanced possibilities of growth and satisfaction of achieving professionally and financially will encourage the young generation to stay in Kazakhstan. The retained young talented workforce would be the biggest and most valuable national asset Kazakhstan will have for all times. I can clearly

see that the implementation of the President's programme will make every Kazakh patriotic. The President has vowed to make Kazakhstan self-reliant for food by boosting agriculture as

an important sector of the nation. President Nazarbayev's strategy is on track with his agricultural policies to produce sufficient food for its citizens and lead the world food supply.

The President has touched all aspects and all areas of the nation to make it a great nation. I take this opportunity to congratulate Kazakhstan for having a great leader in President Nazarbayev. His strong leadership and clear visions are reflected in his straightforward and timely execution. He has already commenced the implementation of his vision through his leadership team. To encourage international businesses to get established in Kazakhstan, Kazakhstan Asia Pacific Trade and Investment Chamber (KAPTIC) was formed to provide a welcoming platform for international companies to collaborate and form mutually-beneficial relationships. STARIN Ltd is a founding member of the KAPTIC.

The author is Managing Director of STARIN, an Australian investment company.

# EURASIA&WORLD

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 17, 2017

## EBRD continues work in Central Asia, returns to Uzbekistan

By Zhazira Dyussebekova

ASTANA – The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) continued to support the Central Asian region in 2017 with a total investment of \$1 billion. It has also resumed operations in Uzbekistan after a seven-year pause.

The bank is the largest institutional investor in the region, with approximately \$12.3 billion committed to a variety of projects. With the new financing in Uzbekistan, its lending in the region reached the figure last year, said EBRD first vice president Phil Bennett, according to Reuters.

During his speech at Nazarbayev University in June, EBRD President Suma Chakrabarti noted Central Asia is one of the bank's most important regions.

"We now combine a private sector focus on financing and the delivery of development goals with extensive work on policy reform with the governments of the countries where we work. In Central Asia, for example, we are actively engaged in such reform in the areas of green energy, diversification, the investment climate and the role of the private sector," he said.

Kazakhstan is one of EBRD's largest countries of operation; it ranked second last year after Tur-

key with nearly \$6.5 billion invested in 236 projects throughout the last 20 years. According to the bank's website, it has several priorities in the country such as balancing the roles of the public and private sectors, strengthening the banking sector and developing local capital markets. The bank also claims infrastructure as one of the most important areas. EBRD is also Kazakhstan's largest investor in sustainable energy, including renewable energy and energy-efficient technologies. As the bank's work in the country has been widely covered, the following concentrates on its activity in neighbouring countries.

### Uzbekistan

With the reopening of the Tashkent office in November, EBRD has signed three loan agreements totalling \$120 million. The largest, worth \$100 million, is for the Uzbek National Bank for Foreign Economic Activity for on-lending to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and trade finance. At the same time, agribusiness Agromir Juice and medical supplier Mutabar Medical Standart will each receive approximately \$10-million loans for expansion and growth. EBRD also signed a memorandum of understanding with the Uzbek Chamber of Com-

merce and Industry for joint work to improve competitiveness.

The bank noted its current objectives in Uzbekistan are supporting domestic SMEs and promoting trade finance and cross-border cooperation, as well as facilitating foreign direct investment resulting in technology and know-how transfer and improving competitiveness of the local economy. The EBRD Board of Directors is expected to approve a new country strategy for Uzbekistan which will set out longer-term strategic priorities, according to the bank's press release.

EBRD invested \$1.07 billion in Uzbekistan in 54 projects from 1992-2010. Next year, the bank is planning 15 projects in the country.

### Kyrgyzstan

EBRD announced in May that it is providing loan and grant financing to Manas Airport, Kyrgyzstan's main air gateway, to modernise the terminal. Under the agreement, the airport operating company will receive a \$4.7-million loan and \$500,000 investment grant to address the country's growing demand for good quality airport services and assist in installing a ventilation and heating system which complies with international and energy efficiency standards, noted

the bank's press release. In addition, EBRD will provide technical assistance to improve the airport's financial management and operational efficiency, as well as energy efficiency standards.

In December, the bank and the Kyrgyz Investment and Credit Bank (KICB) announced they are providing financing to Kaindy-Kant, the country's leading sugar producer. The \$2-million loan agreement will provide the company with working capital related to procuring and subsequently storing, transporting and processing sugar beets.

At the same time, EBRD indicated it will be contributing to the reliability of power distribution in the country with a financing package up to \$7.17 million to Vostokelectro, the power distributor covering 47 percent of the nation. It will consist of a sovereign loan and an investment grant from the EBRD Shareholder Special Fund to support the company's investment to improve energy efficiency and reduce energy losses. Vostokelectro will be able to install advanced metering systems, modernise and strengthen its low- and medium-voltage power infrastructure and establish a better integration with renewable sources of energy.

During its years of operation, EBRD has invested approximately \$770 million in various sectors of

the Kyrgyz economy in 160 different projects, mostly in infrastructure.

### Tajikistan

EBRD's Women in Business programme was launched in Tajikistan last year. The bank, which sees economic inclusion as one of the attributes of a successful modern economy, has allocated \$10 million to the programme, according to the press release. As well as access to finance, it will help women receive the know-how they need to develop their businesses through business advice, training courses in key entrepreneurial skills and a mentoring programme.

In late December, EBRD announced it is committing new funds to address solid waste treatment issues in the country. The loan, which will finance priority municipal investments in the city of Kulob, will be aimed at improving and expanding its solid waste collection network, procuring associated equipment and constructing a new sanitary landfill. The project is part of the Tajikistan Solid Waste Framework approved by the EBRD Board in December 2014.

A total of 114 projects are currently and/or will be implemented in Tajikistan, with a cumulative EBRD investment of \$716.7 million.

### Turkmenistan

In early 2017, the bank announced \$10 million in financing to Turkmenistan Coca-Cola Bottlers to support its expansion and energy efficiency improvements. The funds will allow the company to invest in energy efficient coolers, new vehicles and bottling machines to improve production processes, boost capacity and reduce energy waste. As part of the project, the firm will train local SMEs to help them meet Coca-Cola standards and potentially become suppliers.

EBRD will also provide Taze Ay, a family-owned meat producer, with a loan of up to \$4.5 million in cooperation with Taiwan ICDF (International Cooperation and Development Fund), which will finance a third of the amount. The funding will help the company expand its daily production volume of halal products and acquire new refrigerator trucks, which will help increase sales across the country during the extremely hot summer.

The cumulative EBRD investment in Turkmenistan is \$305 million in 64 projects, with the focus on private sector and SME development. Ninety percent is targeted to support local SMEs.

## Expert weighs in on Central Asia's top 10 foreign policy events in 2018

By Yenlik Tlesheva

ASTANA – The first 2018 meeting of the Kazakhstan Council on International Relations (KCIR), held Jan. 8, involved a discussion by experts of the top 10 significant events which will have important implications for the political and economic development, stability and security of Central Asia in 2018.

Council Chair Yerlan Karin, one of the nation's leading political analysts, highlighted the following events as setting the trends in the region:

First, a stable foundation set in 2017 will allow countries on average to achieve 2.7 percent economic growth in 2018. Depending on specific dimensions of internal and external factors, the average growth rate per country will vary. A projected modest increase in oil prices and U.S. Federal Reserve decisions are among the common external triggers.

Second, communication among

Central Asian states that has significantly increased in 2017 may lead this year to the first high-level gathering of Central Asian leaders since 2005. Although bilateral cooperation will remain a driving partnership force in the region, the



Yerlan Karin

perspective itself may signal the revitalisation of regional cooperation.

Third, given the strategic relationships between Russia and the Central Asian states in security, politics and economy, campaign rhetoric and statements rather than the Russian election out-

come will be important in that it will shape, expressly or by implication, Moscow's further actions in the region.

Fourth, the return of Central Asian militants from Syria increases the terrorist threat in the region. Approximately 5,000 foreign fighters from Central Asia have fought in Syria and Iraq, with about 500 having already returned home. This trend will intensify as the situation in Syria and Iraq continues to change. The involvement of Central Asian natives in terrorist activities abroad will have serious security implications in Central Asia. In 2017, they committed several terroristic attacks on foreign soil, including Russia. This fact, along with sleeper cells of extremists already existing in the region, adds up to security vulnerabilities in the region and the world, thus keeping the fight against terrorism on the region's agenda.

Fifth, in 2017, the world has seen a worsening of the political and military situation in Afghanistan, reaching the highest human

toll since 2001. The Taliban de facto controls 11 percent of the country's territory, claiming its authority over 29 percent. The developments in Syria lead to the activation of ISIL/ISIS in that country, which has already claimed to be the perpetrator of terrorist attacks committed last month in Kabul and other Afghan locations/sites. In light of such events, the world might see a new U.S. strategy in Afghanistan.

Sixth, Central Asia will be moving towards more digitalisation, as relevant state programmes in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan were announced earlier.

Seventh, the Central Asian population exceeded 70 million in 2017, marking a turning point in the demographic structure of the region. According to UN data on aging, some countries in Central Asia are experiencing the growth of life expectancy. The age structure of the Kyrgyz and Uzbek populations changed last year, as the proportion of people aged 65 and over has grown significantly. This

is associated with increasing life expectancy and a declining mortality rate. At the same time, the younger age groups will continue growing and by 2018 their share is expected to be 30 percent. As a result, the demographic changes in the region will be another of the year's important developments.

After its latest enlargement in 2017, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) leaders' summit will bring together eight countries and 40 percent of the world's population for a meeting in China, making it an essential occasion and No. 8 of the top 10 events. Considering China's foreign policy efforts in recent years, this event may serve as a new platform for China to advocate its initiatives.

Ninth, in January 2018 Kazakhstan is tasked with the UN Security Council (UNSC) presidency with a programme focusing on Central Asia. The country seeks to advance cooperation issues and be the region's voice at the venue. This historic event for Kazakhstan, along with non-

permanent UNSC membership for 2017-2018, is expected to enhance the country's diplomatic mediation capacity.

Last but not least, 2018 might be a year for increased water security awareness in the region. This year marks the 20th anniversary of the establishment of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea. Signing of the the agreement on the status of the Caspian Sea, as well as launching the Rogun Dam Project, are expected this year.

KCIR was set up in early 2017 as a non-profit think tank specialising in Kazakhstan's foreign policy and international affairs. Headquartered in Astana, it aims to consolidate local experts in international affairs and serve as a resource for its members, government officials, journalists and others to help them better understand the world and the foreign policy choices facing Kazakhstan and Central Asia countries. The members include elected officials, cabinet ministers, Parliament members and leading foreign policy experts.

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# Nation&Capital

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 17, 2017

**PEOPLE**

Gabidullina receives special award from International Paralympic Committee

**B2**

**CULTURE**

Tokyo audience welcomes Kazakh theatre with deeply moving play

**B3**

**SPORTS**

Skier Dmitry Reiherd wins silver at World Cup

**B7**

## We can contribute to modernising Kazakhstan's identity, says Belarussian ethno cultural centre leader



By Meruyert Abugaliyeva

ASTANA – Dmitry Ostankovich, leader of Radima Belarus ethno cultural centre, recently noted ethnic Belarussians living in Kazakhstan will make every effort to promote the virtues associated with Kazakhstan's identity modernisation. He spoke about this and other topics in a recent interview with The Astana Times.

Of approximately 60,300 Belarussians currently residing in Kazakhstan, most live in the Kostanai (21,000), Karaganda (18,000) and Akmola regions (16,000). Approximately 3,700 live in the capital and their representatives founded the centre in 2013, uniting people who care deeply about preserving and promoting the Belarussian language, traditions, customs and history.

"In a short period of time, our centre managed to conceive and hold various cultural projects. We organise presentations and roundtables and try to make them appealing to all the ethnic groups

in Kazakhstan. There is a folklore ensemble called Vyaselka functioning inside the centre which is a regular participant in various festivals and contests. The primary focus of its work is performing songs that stimulate love for the motherland and the high spiritual values of our people," said Ostankovich.

The centre has 40 active members, including students, public service workers, doctors and business people. Radima provides opportunities for them to communicate and pursue common goals.

Ostankovich noted the centre is personally important to him.

"The desire to continually develop prompted me to lead the centre. However, it is also a huge responsibility and I cannot let people down who trusted me with this mission. Thanks to the centre and the People's Assembly of Kazakhstan, I have made a lot of friends in our country and abroad and they are not only Belarussians. I can also perform my original songs during various events," he said.

"Our centre's activities are not financed by a particular organisation. We function thanks to the enthusiasm and energy of our members, the assistance of the People's Assembly of Kazakhstan and the Embassy of Belarus in Kazakhstan. This support allows our centre to work actively for the sake of peace and friendship," he added.

Radima has set the 2018 goal of stepping up its activities. The centre is currently working to launch a Sunday school in the city and is also determined to work on the Nadezhda youth organisation, which unites young people and children.

"They have their own special interests and life attitudes. At the same time, they treat the Belarus culture and the culture of nations residing in Kazakhstan with great respect," he said.

The ethno cultural centre and Belarussians can contribute to Kazakh social life. In his programme article "Course towards the Future: Modernisation of Kazakhstan's Identity," President Nursultan

Nazarbayev called for improving society by preserving all the best of its behavioural and cultural aspects accumulated by tradition and the history of the peoples residing in Kazakhstan.

"The representatives of the Belarus nation have lived on the gracious land of Kazakhstan for more than 150 years. We deserved the sincere respect and love of millions of Kazakhstan people due to our natural kindness and diligence. Therefore, we would like to continue to be a great example of hard work and friendliness," said Ostankovich.

"We aspire to strengthen the trust and friendly ties between ethnic groups in Kazakhstan. It is of vital importance to take the good virtues from every one and learn from each other. In our centre, we will make every effort to develop in all the directions of spiritual modernisation, such as competitiveness, pragmatism, preservation of national identity, cult of knowledge, evolutionary development and open mindedness," he added.

## Smart city dev't launches to improve infrastructure

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – Smart city technologies are being introduced in the country's five largest cities – Aktobe, Almaty, Astana, Karaganda and Shymkent – as part of the Digital Kazakhstan programme, said Minister of Information and Communications Dauren Abayev at a Dec. 26 government meeting.

The concept is designed to improve the efficiency of all city services, as people and their needs lie at the heart of its mission. Comfort, safety, efficiency and environmental friendliness are the key characteristics of smart cities.

The standard, developed as part of the state programme, includes projects using the Internet of Things, artificial intelligence and other advanced technologies. The document also defines the fundamental principles, approaches, goals, priorities and tasks to implement smart technologies.

"Many organisations and independent experts are currently engaged in assessing the implemented models of smart cities and make ratings of smart cities. Participation in these ratings will make the city not only a popular travel destination, but develop and implement the best technologies to effectively address the most diverse problems of urban development. In this regard, the system was developed for assessing key performance indicators to assess the region's readiness and its decision to enter the world ratings," said Abayev.

Employee trainings were conducted in the regions and the criteria for assessing the project initiative execu-

tion, pilot zones by regions and road map projects 2018 were defined.

Local executive bodies are responsible for project application. The priorities are improving the quality of life, increasing the share of e-government services, entry into the smart city international ratings, implementing initiative projects according to the smart city concept and stimulating paperless interaction in G2G, B2B and G2B segments. The initial steps include launching a laboratory, forming a working group, approving road maps and creating a competence centre.

"The projects will be implemented as part of the public-private partnership, informatisation model, budget financing and private investment. The projects will be launched using benchmarking; that is, with an orientation toward the best world and domestic practices," said Abayev.

The national standards for smart cities based on international standards were also developed and approved. They provide unified requirements for fundamentally new opportunities for urban management and a high level of security and services through innovative solutions in energy saving, housing and communal services, transport, education, health, environment and information technology.

The collaborative innovation will be the main mechanism as the format of interaction between state bodies and private organisations, which will gradually develop new improved solutions, approaches and necessary changes in laws and regulations.

The special map will be developed to access smart city projects. The evaluation will be assigned to each industry based on compliance with the standard indicators.

## HR agencies will join the Electronic Labour Exchange

By Frol Leandroer

ASTANA – Internet sites and private employment agencies are connecting with the Electronic Labour Exchange [www.enbek.kz](http://www.enbek.kz), the press service of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Kazakhstan reported.

"Today, four internet sites have already joined the electronic labour exchange: [hipo.kz](http://hipo.kz), [market.kz](http://market.kz), [rabota.nur.kz](http://rabota.nur.kz), [zarplata.kz](http://zarplata.kz). Search for vacancies posted on these Internet sites can be done at the Electronic Labour Exchange at [www.enbek.kz](http://www.enbek.kz). To view the full information about the vacancy, a transfer to the source site is carried out," the ministry said.

A total of 27 private employment agencies from West Kazakhstan, Aktobe, Atyrau, Kostanai, Zhambyl, South Kazakhstan, Karaganda regions, as well as Astana and Almaty registered a personal office on the website and use the Electronic Labour Exchange to carry out their activities such as mediation in the search work and staff selection.

The Electronic Labour Exchange has been working in pilot mode in the employment centres of Astana, Almaty, Pavlodar and Shymkent since October 2017. Since January 2018, the launch has been carried out throughout Kazakhstan. According to the new business processes, the employment centres of the population will select candidates for vacancies, received through the website [www.enbek.kz](http://www.enbek.kz) from employers and private employment agencies.

A multi-channel procedure for registering vacancies without mandatory personal visits to employment centres is introduced for employers. The employer can transfer information to the employment centre about the availability of vacancies through a personal office.

Today, the employment centres are moving towards a proactive and targeted format of interaction with employers. In practice, approaches focused on the interests of employers will be implemented. As modern HR services on the basis of professional selection by competence, they will select the most suitable potential applicants for employers.

## Blizzard shuts down Astana for one day



By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – Due to a major blizzard, Astana Mayor Asset Issekeshev announced an emergency situation in Astana Jan. 11, asking officials and managers of state institutions, private companies to cease operations for the day. Only

3,100 calls were received by 112 emergency hot line services during one day.

emergency services are asked to continue working.

"We recommend all heads of state bodies, educational institutions, business entities (markets, shopping and entertainment centres), construction and other activities to stop operation, with the exception of the city's life support organisations: fire service, police, emergency services, emergency medical services, medical institutions, public utilities," the Astana Mayor wrote on the website of the city administration.

Nazarbayev International Airport stopped operation for a day too, resuming flights closer to

evening hours. Air Astana delayed four flights and canceled 30 flights, including 14 international. SCAT delayed nine flights and canceled 12 flights.

An elementary school student also disappeared in the snowstorm on route to school but was later rescued and returned to his parents.

"Dear Astana residents! Let's be more tolerant on such days of unfavourable weather conditions and help each other. If you see that people cannot walk on the road because of strong wind, please help them. If cars are stuck, please help them as well. Let's be more kind and friendly," said akim of Saryarka district of Astana Arman Turlubek.

According to Official Representative of Emergency Ministry of Ministry of Internal Affairs Ruslan Imankulov, Many cases of damage of cars and damage to the roofs of private residential and multi-storey buildings were registered in Astana.

The roof of the Agrarian University was damaged and all Kazpost branches were shut down. Postal deliveries were also canceled.

Astana LRT announced about changes in schedule and routes of public transport and provided information via hashtags.

**THINGS TO WATCH & PLACES TO GO**

**ASTANA OPERA**

**January 20 at 6 p.m.** Tosca, Opera

**January 24 at 7 p.m.** Spartacus, Ballet

**January 28 at 6 p.m.** Kyz Zhibek, Opera

**BARYS ARENA**

**January 21 at 5 p.m.** HC Barys – HC Lada Togliatti

**January 23 at 7.30 p.m.** HC Barys – HC Avtomobilist Yekaterinburg

**RADISSON HOTEL ASTANA**

**January 27 at 7 p.m.** Astana Burns Supper 2018, Charity Gala Evening

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 17, 2017

## Gabidullina receives special award from International Paralympic Committee



Zulfiya Gabidullina and her daughter.

By Dana Omirgazy

ASTANA – Zulfiya Gabidullina, Kazakhstan's first-ever Paralympics gold medal winner, is one of the country's 100 New Faces. The inspirational story of the 52-year-old international class Master of Sports in swimming, silver and three-time bronze medallist in the 2013-2015 World Championships, 2014 Asian Para Games winner and 13-time world record holder motivates and encourages people around the world to achieve their dreams and goals despite physical limitations.

As a 5-year-old in 1971, Gabidullina was in an accident which resulted in spinal, head, hand and foot injuries, multiple limb fractures and severe brain trauma. She spent most of her childhood in rehabilitation centres, where her parents brought her every three months. While Gabidullina needed to learn how to cope with the difficulties, she never failed to believe in a bright future.

"When I found out that I was among the project participants, I was very surprised. You know, we are usually critical of ourselves. We think that others are better. When the voting began, my daughter was very excited and proud of me. I am very pleased to be among the 100 New Faces project winners," she told The Astana Times.

Gabidullina has been involved in sports since 1990, taking first place the following year in the first presidential wheelchair races. She enjoyed participating in tournaments and competitions and in 1994 became the best in athletics and swimming contests.

In the 2012 Summer Paralympics, Gabidullina entered the 50-metre backstroke, placing 12th in the S3 category. Four years later in Rio, she beat the world record in the 100-metre freestyle, bringing home Kazakhstan's first-ever Paralympic gold medal.

Gabidullina is among the world's eight strongest swimmers in several rankings. She has taken fourth place in the 50-metre freestyle and fifth in the 100-metre distance and is fifth in the 150-metre complex swimming and seventh in 50-metre backstroke.

"Sport is the most interesting activity for me. Enthusiasm and victories brought an interest to my life," she said.

In December, Gabidullina became the world swimming champion at the Mexico City 2017 Para-Sport Festival and received a special prize from the International Paralympic Committee at the 2017 World Para Swimming Series.

"Famous sportswoman, champion of the 2016 Summer Paralympics Zulfiya Gabidullina won first place at a distance of 50 metre freestyle. Along with this, Gabidullina received a special award from the International Paralympic Committee. Four more athletes in para swimming from other countries earned a similar award. It is gratifying that our athlete was on this list of honorary swimmers," reported the Kazakh National Paralympic Committee press service.

"Unfortunately, I could not participate in the Dec. 1 forum with the participation of the President. I really wanted to be there and get to know those people who entered this project. However, I had to miss it, because I went to the Mexico competitions," she said.

## Astana cat café invites feline friends to spend holidays with pets, opens first cat hotel

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – Pet businesses are an emerging trend. While their uniqueness can be both attractive and challenging to find their niche and customers, doing what one loves is one of the key elements of a successful business.

Miki Piki Cat Café founder Aigul Kurmanaliyeva is enthusiastic about running an establishment related to her favourite animal.

"My husband and our children are fond of cats and we always have cats at home. We knew about cat cafés and two years ago when we were in South Korea, we went to the famous animal cafés. We really liked this idea and had a great desire to open a similar café in our city," said Kurmanaliyeva in an interview for this story.

It took almost two years from inception to opening and the entrepreneurs launched their eatery in July during EXPO 2017.

"We were glad to find this perfect location with a separate entrance and everything here meets our requirements. Then, we immediately bought nine kittens of different breeds. It is important not only to gather cats, but to make them feel comfortable with each other. Our cats grew up together as a family and now they are like brothers and sisters. We named the café after our tenth cat. My son called her Miki Piki and we still do not know what that means," she said.

Kurmanaliyeva believes their café attracts visitors because they have social friendly cats. They are on cloud nine when people come to them.

"Many people think that this is a café only for children; in fact, it is a café for everyone. Now, we have 15 cats. We have more Brit-



Photo by Oksana Korolchenko

ish Shorthair cats and Scottish Fold cats. There is also an Abyssinian cat, Bengal cat, Elf cat, Exotic Shorthair cat, Kurilian Bobtail cat, Norwegian Forest cat, Maine Coon cat, Oriental cat, Persian cat, Sphynx cats and a Siamese cat," she noted.

The concept café works as an anti-café with a drink and pastry menu. There is table hockey, a billiards table and piano. The two-hour entrance fee is 2,500 tenge (US\$7.50) for adults and 1,500 tenge (US\$4.50) for children.

Visitors are not permitted to

bring their own pets. Guests are prohibited from running and shouting, because cats are very sensitive and like a quiet environment.

"All our cats are neutered to prevent unwanted behaviour. They have passports and received all mandatory and additional vaccines, because many people come to us and we need to protect them. We keep everything clean and ask visitors to put on shoe covers and treat their hands with an antiseptic. Our café is much more like a kindergarten," said Kurmanaliyeva.

"Children should learn to play gently with pets. They should know how to pick up and hold pets the right way, otherwise it is not safe to play with them. We try to gather different cat breeds so that our visitors come and get closely acquainted with them. Many people come to work as volunteers and help us to look after the cats. We wanted to create a home environment and a young designer helped us implement this cosy interior. Cats are associated with the house and we have soft carpets and sofas. There's a separate area for food and drink," she added.

The café also has a small cat hotel. A passport and vaccinations are required and the cost is 2,000 tenge (US\$6) per day.

"Our cats are given gifts and volunteers bring some food. Some visitors have their favourite pets

and they come to certain cats. We do not do advertising, as it's expensive; we promote our café through social media," she said.

Veterinarians by occupation, the Kurmanaliyeva family was involved for a long time in cow breeding and farming.

"There are some challenges in running this kind of business to achieve self-sufficiency. We have a lot of expenses including food, fillers, vaccines, sterilisation and vitamins. This is more like a social project for us now. Children and students are our regular customers. People also come from neighbouring cities on weekends. We want to collaborate with the city administration and to include our café in Astana's sightseeing map," she said.

The company also welcomes new volunteers to join their team.

"Some say that dogs are loyal, but I think cats are also very devoted friends. When we come in the morning, they run to greet us. They are gentle and kind. They have their instincts. They feel people who love cats," said Kurmanaliyeva.

The café's hours are 3 p.m. - 9 p.m., weekdays, and it opens at 3 p.m. on weekends and holidays. Visits should be booked in advance to control the number of guests.

Address: 58A Kabanbai Batyr Street, Building 1.

Contact number: +7 778 347 1277.

## ATOM project honorary ambassador takes part in Nobel Peace Prize award ceremony

By Dana Omirgazy

ASTANA – Kazakh artist and Honorary Ambassador of The ATOM Project Karipbek Kuyukov took part in the Dec. 10 ceremony in Oslo, Norway where the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) organisation was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for 2017.

ICAN is a Geneva-based global civil society coalition made up of 468 partner organisations, including The ATOM Project, in 101 countries.

Kuyukov congratulated the winners of the Nobel Peace Prize, noting that the non-proliferation effort is at "the beginning of a long way ahead of which there is still much to be done."

He also took part in event with representatives of the victims of the atomic bombings in Japan's Hiroshima and the ICAN campaign. In his remarks, the Kazakh artist emphasised the importance of the foreign policy initiatives of President Nursultan Nazarbayev in the field of disarmament and non-

proliferation. Those initiatives resulted in Kazakhstan becoming the first country in the world to

voluntarily renounce the world's fourth largest nuclear arsenal and shutting down the infamous Soviet

Union's nuclear test site at Semipalatinsk, providing an example to other world powers.



Karipbek Kuyukov (C) meets with international anti-nuclear activists.

"I participated in the meeting of the Norwegian public with 20 surviving victims of atomic bombings (Hibakusha) from Japan. ... I listened to the speeches of live witnesses of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings. I was really touched by the words of one Japanese woman who said that Japanese women were very afraid of giving birth to children for a long time, and there was panic and fear, when they learned that they would have a child. ... People kept silent about many things, and only now they began to speak about some events that led me to a shock ... I met there a victim who remembers me young when we were together and participated in the Nevada-Semipalatinsk movement," Karipbek wrote in a Facebook post.

The Nobel committee awarded ICAN the peace prize for ICAN's "work to draw attention to the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons and for its ground-breaking efforts to achieve a treaty-based prohibition of such weapons."

ICAN has played a key role in campaigning for the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which was adopted by 122 countries in July 2017.

### The Kazakh artist emphasised the importance of the foreign policy initiatives of President Nursultan Nazarbayev in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation.

Beatrice Fihn, ICAN's executive director, urged states possessing nuclear arms to sign the agreement.

"It provides a choice. A choice between the two endings: the end of nuclear weapons or the end of us," she said in her speech at the Nobel Peace Prize ceremony.

# CULTURE

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 17, 2017

## Tokyo audience welcomes Kazakh theatre with deeply moving play

By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – A full house of 800, many of whom waited in line for a seat, were recently treated to Almaty's Auezov Theatre presentation of the play "Ahiko from Aktas." The programme also featured Uly Dala Eli, a concert with theatre soloists and dancers performing portions of the well-known play "Kyz Zhybek" and singing Kazakh songs.

"We came to Tokyo as part of the Rukhani Janghyru (Modernisation of Kazakhstan's Identity) programme and its Modern Kazakhstan Culture in Global World project organised by the Ministry of Culture and Sports and supported by the Embassy of Kazakhstan in Japan," said theatre director Yerlan Bilalov as he welcomed the audience.

The play centres on Ahiko Tetsuro, a Japanese man arrested by Soviet authorities in 1948 while he was a student. He was one of more than 100 people, including women with newborns, sent to a concentration camp in a remote area of Kazakhstan where he fell victim to Soviet purges.

After living through unspeakable nightmares, including severe famine, the captives were released six years later. Unlike his fellow detainees, however, Tetsuro chose to remain in Kazakhstan rather than return to Japan. He married and the couple settled



A scene from "Ahiko from Aktas" play staged in Tokyo.

in Aktas village in Karaganda region.

The emotional story of their fellow citizen left the audience in tears. The hall broke into applause as the 87-year-old Tetsuro

walked on the stage at the end of the play.

Director Askhat Maemirov noted the piece was written in a new dramatic genre.

"Documental drama is well de-

veloped in Russia and Europe. It is the first time in the history of the Kazakh theatre that a person is telling the story of his life. The play was written based on historical facts. We wanted to show

the nightmare that Tetsuro lived through, tell about his soul," he said.

The visitors included Japanese fan club members of Kazakh rising star Dimash Kudaibergen.

"It was incredible, especially the way the actors played their roles. Today, I watched the play for the second time and I am still deeply touched. I could not stop crying when I watched it for the first time. Today, I tried to hold back my emotions to be more attentive to details and be able to better understand the history. The actors are wonderful. Tetsuro chose Kazakhstan, where he now lives, on his own. It is amazing. The play shows us how important peace and friendship are for us," noted club chair Yuriko Volker, as quoted by Tengrinews.

Japan Foundation President Hiroyasu Ando noted the drama is a great achievement for Kazakhstan and Japan, serving as an additional stimulus to strengthening friendly ties between the nations.

"Everything was beautiful. The life of Ahiko was conveyed in a very emotional way. I would love to visit Kazakhstan. We are working on various projects. It will be great if they are implemented. We would love to familiarise the Kazakh audience with Japanese culture," he said, as quoted by Tengrinews.

Kazakhstan President Nursultan Nazarbayev told Tetsuro's story when he addressed the Japanese parliament in Tokyo in November 2016. He stressed the lives of many Japanese people are bound to Kazakhstan and the account is one of the brightest examples of fortitude and courage of Japanese prisoners of war.

## Astana Opera to perform in Almaty

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – Astana Opera will be touring to the cultural capital of Kazakhstan – Almaty. The opera plans to present a rich programme featuring world art masterpieces at the Abai Opera House, the alma mater of opera and ballet. The tour, to be held Feb. 10-18 under the Rukhani Janghyru programme, is supported by the Ministry of Culture and Sports.

"This tour is very important for us, first and foremost, because we are performing for the people of Kazakhstan – our native viewers. Most of the artists of our company will appear onstage in front of their teachers, who will assess their professional growth. This is another exam for all of us. In general, every company needs a touring life and exchange of experience," said Astana Opera Director Galym

Akhmedyarov in an interview with The Astana Times.

The tour will begin with the outstanding work of Kazakh musical art – the classical opera "Abai." The production will be presented 6 p.m., Feb. 10 and 11, led by Astana Opera Maestro and Principal Conductor Alan Buribayev.

"We did not choose the opera 'Abai' for the Almaty tour by chance; this work became the hallmark of our national art. By performing this opera, we pay homage to the oldest Kazakh opera and ballet theatre named after Abai," said Akhmedyarov.

The masterpiece, based on the libretto of Kazakh writer Mukhtar Auezov, is the story of Kazakh poet, educator and philosopher Abai Kunanbayev.

The roles will be performed by Sundet Baigozhin and Zhanat Shybykbayev, Meir Baines, Nurlan Bekmukhambetov, opera prima

Maira Mukhamedkyzy and Salтанат Akhmetova. Tatyana Vitsinskaya, baritone Yerzhan Saipov, Talgat Galejev, Barseg Tumanyan, Bolat Yessimkhanov and mezzo-soprano Malika Minisini will debut as well.

The production was fashioned by Kazakh and Italian artists. The staging was created by Italian director Giancarlo del Monaco; the consulting director is Professor Yesmukhan Obayev and Yerzhan Dautov is chief choirmaster. Contemporary set designer Ezio Frigerio and Academy Award-winning costume designer Franca Squarciapino are responsible for the design.

On Feb. 14, Astana Opera will present "Manon" by 20th-century choreographer Kenneth MacMillan. The ballet is based on the novel "L'Histoire du Chevalier des Grieux et de Manon Lescaut" by Abbé Prévost. The production was added to the opera's repertoire relatively recently, as the premiere was held April 28. Choreographers Karl Burnett and Patricia Ruanne, keepers of the Royal Ballet traditions, staged the work at the capital's opera house. The music director and conductor is Arman Urazgaliyev and the ballet is orchestrated and arranged by Martin Yates, with set and costume designer Nicholas Georgiadis.

The production was added to the opera house's repertoire thanks to the company's artistic director Altynai Assylmuratova. She has danced the title role many times at London's legendary Royal Opera House, working on the portrayal personally with MacMillan. The production team responded to her proposal with great joy to revive the masterpiece on the Kazakh stage.

Madina Basbayeva will perform the part of Manon and Rustem Seitbekov will act as Des Grieux. Bakhtiyar Adamzhan, Zhanibek Imankulov, Anel Rustemova and Arman Urazov will also have roles.

Roland Petit's ballet "Notre Dame de Paris" set to the music of Maurice Jarre, to be presented Feb. 17 and 18, will conclude the tour. The production is popular throughout the world, yet is not featured in most opera houses. France's Les Ballets Roland Petit Foundation has granted the Kazakh opera house exclusive rights to recreate the production.



A scene from "Manon" ballet performed by Rustem Seitbekov and Madina Basbayeva.

## Almaty resident invents Kazakh-style Game of Thrones board game

Staff Report

ASTANA – Almaty resident Kobylanda Zhanabekuly has brought "Game of Thrones" to his own country as the inventor of the board game Kazakh Khanate. It has been patented and is unique to the nation.

Kazakh Khanate has 40 different tribes across a field representing the three zhuzes (the three largest

conglomerations of tribes in the Kazakh nation) and players must gather as many villages and auls as possible. The game takes them to the times of the great conquests, with the action unfolding on the board. Players have chips, cards and precise calculations in their arsenals and are given 30 minutes to beat their opponent.

When players' chips intersect, they need to battle and resolve any

dispute by resorting to help from batyrs, sultans, tulpars and sarbabs – mighty warriors, warlords, flying horses and soldiers, accordingly.

Zhanabekuly worked for nearly a year to develop Kazakh Khanate, which includes features similar to chess, backgammon and monopoly. Before releasing the game, he tested the rules with players of various ages and walks of life, from 7-year-olds to retirees.

"The game is called Kazakh Khanate because you play as a sultan – the way Abylai, Kassym, Zhanibek and Kerey khans played in the very beginning. They united tribes and the more Kazakhs you unite, the higher your status rises, and whoever has the biggest number of tribes first will become a khan," he said.

Kazakh Khanate combines the traditions and customs of the Kazakh people. When a player's chip lands on the Bazaar tile, for example, he or she uses cards with descriptions of different rituals which help secure the desired territory.

The first batch of 500 copies is already on sale. Prices vary from 15,000 tenge (\$45) to 20,800 tenge (\$63).



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Sincerely,  
Roman Vassilenko  
Editor-in-Chief  
The Astana Times

## COUNTRY

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 17, 2017

## Mangistau region intends to boost energy efficiency

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – Construction of wind and solar power plants is underway in an effort to develop renewable energy sources in the Mangistau region in 2018, according to the regional press service.

Two facilities, a five-megawatt wind farm in Akshukur village of the Tupkaragan district and a seven-megawatt solar power plant in Batyr village of the Munaily district, will be completed in the first quarter. A 12-megawatt solar power plant in Shetpe village is expected to launch by the end of the year.

"A desalination plant with a capacity of 50,000 cubic metres per day will be built using the technology of the world's leading companies to provide a water supply to the region. The Caspian desalination plant will be entering the second stage of modernisation to increase productivity by 20,000 cubic metres per day and bring the total capacity to 40,000 cubic metres per day," said energy and utilities department head Sapar Amanbekov at a Dec. 26 meeting.

Four energy and two water supply projects are expected to be implemented from the list of 105 projects presented at EXPO 2017 and approved by the Ministry of Energy.

A 250-megawatt combined cycle gas turbine unit will be launched at the site of the former Aktau nuclear power plant as part of the public-private partnership. The unit aims to cover electricity demand and increase the reliability of the energy supply at the central heating and power plant if a high load growth scenario occurs. The competition was announced to attract private investors.

Total utility bill debts in the region decreased from 2.1 billion to 1.6 billion tenge (US\$6.3 million – \$5 million) compared to the same period last year. Local executive bodies have recommended monitoring heating system functions in residential buildings and taking appropriate measures to ensure timely payment of debts.

Mangistau, better known for its vast oil and gas onshore and offshore reserves, is ranked second in the local Ease of Doing Business list. The 204 projects worth more 11 billion tenge (US\$33 million) were subsidised as part of the Business Road Map. The number is 1.3 times more than last year's figure and nearly 1,400 jobs were created.

The 47,000 small and medium businesses showed a growth of 107 percent year on year. The enterprises employ approximately 112,000 people, 103.2 percent more than last year.

## Snow turns dark in Temirtau, working group investigates

By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – Kazakh officials are investigating after the snow in Temirtau city in the Karaganda region recently turned dark from what is believed to be emissions from the city's numerous industrial factories. Residents also reported a specific smell across the city that feels particularly strong at night and weekends.

City residents blame the ArcelorMittal plant, part of ArcelorMittal Group and a major mining and metallurgy enterprise in Kazakhstan.

The working group consisting of representatives of the city and regional administration, prosecutor's office, environmental experts, natural resources department specialists and representatives of industries, has been set up to investigate the reasons behind an environmental phenomenon.

Head of the regional Ecology Department Alibek Bekmukhametov said the ArcelorMittal plant was found to have excessive emissions but that the broader investigation into the darkening of the snow continues.

"The department conducted an inspection at the ArcelorMittal Temirtau and the results showed the amount of emissions exceeded the limits. They also failed to fulfil the plan of environmental protection measures. With these violations in place, the enterprise incurs an administrative liability totalling 105 million tenge (US\$317,100) and will also have to pay 495 million tenge (US\$1.49 million) for the environmental damage. The warrant was issued obliging it to rectify the violations," noted Bekmukhametov.

ArcelorMittal representatives said the company has pledged \$56.4 million to improve its cleansing equipment in 2017, 2018 and 2019 and that a final solution is a "long-term project."

The Karaganda regional administration requested in April 2017 an inspection of the region's major enterprises and biggest suspected air polluters – the ArcelorMittal Temirtau, Bassel Group coal-fired thermal power station and Temirtau electrometallurgical plant.

## Nazarbayev University graduates develop device to lower cost of electricity delivery

By Dana Omirgazy

ASTANA – Nazarbayev University graduates have developed a device to extend the working capacity of transformers, the press service of the city administration reported recently.

The project, named Remote Monitoring of Transformers, implies a cloud system with registered algorithms on the servers. According to manager and member of the start-up team Adlet Zaubenbek, data from transformers will be collected

and processed. The data will be used to increase the efficiency of transformers and their life cycle.

The team of young scientists believe this invention will help monitor, identify and eliminate problems in the work of transformers.

"The transformer is the same machine that eventually breaks down. If the problem is not detected in time, it will eventually lead to breakdown. The faster the device is repaired, the cheaper it will cost. The efficiency will increase many times, and it will save a lot of money," he explained.

The cost of the transformer reaches several hundred thousand dollars. Large power plants own a huge number of such devices.

"For example, Astana – Regional Electric Grid Company has about 100,000 transformers, the cost of each is almost \$150,000. If they increase their life cycle by five years, this will save billions. In the future, our system will act as artificial intelligence," Zaubenbek said.

The invention underwent testing experimentally: it figured out a breakdown and automatically

reported this. "In the course of the experiment, after eight hours and 35 minutes with an error of five minutes, the transformer burned down, and our experience was successful," Zaubenbek said.

According to him, the research is applied at the first stage in the laboratory. The team plans to use the equipment on real transformers.

The young team worked on the project for more than a year. The launch of the device is scheduled for the summer of 2018.

## Wireless service providers to be prevented from imposing unnecessary services

Staff Report

ASTANA – The Kazakh Ministry of Information and Communications recently announced plans to change the rules regulating telecommunication services to prevent wireless communications services from imposing unnecessary services for users.

"The ministry is making changes in the rules. We believe that the amendments are designed to solve many problems that cellular communication subscribers have faced for a long time. For example, the new rules do not allow mobile network operators to render services in the absence of funds on the balance sheet, in particular it concerns

roaming services. We will prevent operators from activities with the negative cash balance," said Minister of Information and Communications Dauren Abayev in a post on Facebook Jan. 9.

According to the minister, a beep signal when dialling to the numbers transferred from one network to another will also be eliminated. Installation of additional acoustic signals and pauses before the call signal is now available only at the request of the subscriber.

"We also introduce a USSD command or sending SMS to solve the issue of imposing additional communication services. Accidentally pressing the keypad while the phone is not in use, accidentally sending a message or other actions will not result in the

connection of undesirable services," he said.

The full version of the document will be published in the media soon and the regulation will enter into force within 10 days after that.

"The mobile operators will have to introduce a single customer service and help desk number with the introduction of the rules. The contact number is 116 now. Restriction on the distribution of advertisements at night, except for information on emergencies will be introduced. The measures will not entail additional financial burdens for operators, and tariff increases are not expected," said Tariff Analysis and Tariff Regulation Department Head Timur Bailov.

## Internet service providers: parents can control children's Internet access

Staff Report

ASTANA – The Internet opens wide possibilities for children, however, free access to all websites can pose hazards. While it is technically impossible to make sure a child surfs the web safely, Internet service providers can block access to sites at the request of parents, said Vice Minister of Information and Communications Alan Azhibayev during the discussion of the draft law protecting children from harmful information.

"In April 2016, domestic and foreign media reported that the European Parliament intended to set age limits this year for social media use. This initiative is important for Kazakhstan as well. Parliament members offered to apply a similar norm in Kazakhstan. This initiative was backed by representatives of IT companies, including

Kaspersky Lab," said Mazhilis (lower chamber of Parliament) member Kenes Absatirov.

He added the government provided an official response to Mazhilis members on July 1, 2016 and assigned the Ministry of Information and Communications to study the question.

"One and a-half years have already passed. Is it possible, given the high social price paid by children involved in suicide sites, being raped by 'acquaintances' from social networks and so on, to finally ensure control over access to social networks for children under 16 in the draft law?" he asked.

Although Azhibayev indicated it is not yet technically possible to ensure a safe Internet, he noted parents can contact telecommunication operators and restrict access on children's computers and devices. The corresponding agreement would be concluded with the operator.

"Each parent can apply to the operator and ask to connect the safe Internet to the gadget, where they will have access to certain sites. Thus, each parent can show social responsibility and limit Internet access for their children, particularly access to social networks. This is the way out and we are working in this direction," he said.

Mazhilis Speaker Nurlan Nigmatulin noted the ministry should conduct wide information work in this direction.

"Responsibility should be mutual and parents should be responsible, not just letting children into society with pockets filled with telephones and gadgets. There is a need to bring this information to the whole society to ensure that parents and the public know how to protect children with the help of those opportunities which we have," he said.

## Country's first robot surgery, transplantology centre to open in Ust-Kamenogorsk in 2018

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – Kazakhstan's first robot surgery and transplantology centre will open in the first quarter of 2018 in Ust-Kamenogorsk. The centre is being paid for by the national government, according to the regional government's press service.

The centre will offer endoscopic interventions and low-traumatic and minimally invasive treatments. The unique facility is located at the city hospital. More than 60 surgeries are carried out annually in the region and 2,000 of them are conducted at the hospital.

The centre intends to serve up to 500 patients annually. Surgical

simulation training rooms will be also opened for students.

"It is necessary to purchase equipment that will promote quality treatment of patients. All the infrastructure needs to be developed properly too," said East Kazakhstan region Akim (Governor) Daniyal Akhmetov.

Medical equipment was purchased as part of the modernisation of medical organisations. Surgery can be performed with the help of robotics. A low-traumatic method of treatment and minimal pain after surgery are the main advantages of this kind of surgery.

"It is necessary to use warm colours in interior design so that the building will be cosy and comfort-

able for visitors," the head of the region noted.

The centre's medical personnel took part in the training courses in Germany and Italy. Last year, a group of specialists in the field of motherhood and childhood, cardiology and oncology studied in the U.K.

"Study abroad is only the first step of our development. We should invite the best practicing specialists to train our doctors here in the future. Our medicine should introduce new methods in treatment and develop successfully," he said.

A stroke unit is also planned to open at the centre. Trauma, complex care and rehabilitation beds and silent access wheelchairs are already provided.



East Kazakhstan region Akim (Governor) Daniyal Akhmetov (C) is shown visiting one of the region's medical facilities.

# SOCIETY

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 17, 2017

## New media production company eager to take Kazakh market to new level

By Dmitry Lee

ASTANA – Tochka, a creative video production agency established in October, is trying innovative ideas and approaches in the business and launching several projects this year.

In an exclusive interview with The Astana Times, CEO Galiya Tokareva, also known by her maiden name as Galiya Idoyatova from her years on television, discussed the new approaches her company is willing to undertake to stick out from the crowd.

“We are doing TV clips, short videos and we also have projects for YouTube and a project titled ‘On equal,’” she said.

The latter is a not-for-profit project where an 8-year-old child is trying to understand the nuances of doing business in Kazakhstan, from agribusiness to restaurants.

“We are also doing honest interviews with celebrities, politicians and businesspeople. We are just starting this project now,” she added.

The idea for the company has been cooking for more than a year.

“In 2016, I left my job at the Astana TV channel and planned to try and create my own business,



Tochka CEO Galiya Tokareva.

but I didn't have enough finances and I got an interesting proposal from the Atameken Business Channel to work as a producer. For a year until October last year, I was working for the new business channel as a general producer. I've met people there whose destiny, like mine, then crisscrossed with Tochka. In October we decided to start this little but essential, for us,

project. I collected all the documents and found finances. My husband and I used our car as collateral to get some money for it,” said Tokareva.

“I believe that all this investment will bring us dividends, because this agency is not just a business. It's a company with a part of our heart and soul which was started with eight people who

are trying to change some rules in the production market. We will try to do our own content with good quality, with our soul and for an affordable price. I don't blame my colleagues who are also in the video production business, but I know there are some examples when the pricing is not honest,” she added.

Although the company just

started the project this year, Tokareva is already hopeful for the next half a decade.

“We have big plans for this year – it's the year of our presentation and promotion. Speaking of our plans for the future three-five years – my dream is to establish a web site with analytical long reads, videos mainly in Kazakh and about a quarter part in Russian. Now, I'm looking for an investor,” she said.

Starting a new endeavour can be quite challenging, especially when starting from scratch, but Tokareva believes being tough in this business is not a decision, but a requirement.

“The trouble is imminent when one tries to leave one's comfort zone. All my life I worked for someone; now, I'm responsible for seven persons, for their salary, for their future in some ways. It's the best motivation for me. But if you ask me if I regret this start up, I would say no, because every new start for me, for my team, is the best challenge and we will do our best to satisfy our clients,” she said.

The Tochka team is young, smart and creative. While some do not have extensive experience working on TV, the one thing for

sure is they are all talented, she added.

“Marat Ybyrai, our director, is one of the most talented young professionals, in my opinion. He speaks Russian, Kazakh and English and has his own creative view in video production. Meirman Smagulov, our cameraperson, is also a professional with a good sense of humour and also a very good person and a friend. Askar Sabyrgaliyev – design and montage; he is one of the main guys in our team. His work is accurate and fast. Zarina Beremkul joined us in January; she is a journalist with great perspectives and potential. She could be a good interviewer and investigate economic topics. Nurgul Nurmagambet is our producer; she has extensive experience and she is a very creative person. She is also responsible for our profiles on the social networks. Balzhan Aliyeva is another producer who is doing impossible things for our video products; she is good at finding things,” said Tokareva.

“I want to say a big thanks to my team and to our first client, which we had in the end of November, beginning of December last year, who believed in us,” she added.

## Young researcher combines science and entrepreneurship

By Meruyert Abugaliyeva

ASTANA – Dias Tastanbekov, one of the 100 New Faces project winners, exemplifies hard work and a thirst for knowledge. He works with entrepreneurs on the

National Technical Research University. He also works on commercial projects in small teams.

“I believe it is more efficient to work in small teams separately from large organisations despite their resources and funding opportunities. I think bureaucracy is

with Arman Toksanbayev, chemist Yerkebulan Maral and three investors. The facilities, in Almaty and Karagandy, grow plants without soil by automatically spraying the roots and stems with water.

“The idea of aeroponics came to me as a solution for my own

tion for providing funding to start this project,” he added.

The researcher plans to pursue a PhD and dedicate study to biodegradable implants for treating bone fractures. Metal devices currently implanted during surgery must be removed after the bone has healed and using biodegradable implants will make a second invasive procedure unnecessary. In the last two years, Tastanbekov submitted proposals to several funding organisations to commercialise such technology but without success and decided to do it himself.

“This technology and aeroponics are not original. I always say that unfortunately, and at the same time fortunately, this technology exists. Unfortunately, since I am not a pioneer in the field and fortunately because now I know for sure that such technology works and is viable. I have done the preliminary research plan as well as research into scientific articles and patents and now I am looking for collaborators in Germany and France,” he said.

Tastanbekov noted all his projects demand individuals who are highly skilled in their fields and motivated to make a difference. To that end he launched the rocketry school, which will attract promising scientists for teaching positions and educate a new generation of researchers. The school is an example of STEM interdisciplinary education technology that makes science appealing and easy to grasp. Tastanbekov also attracted rocketry expert Chenghis Akhmetullayev, a test engineer from the Baikonur branch of the Moscow Aviation Institute with five years' experience in Baikonur space launch, to join the school. The team has created the Q100 educational YouTube channel for students.

“It is wise to make outstanding people recognisable and hold them as role models. My nomination among the 100 New Faces is an advance payment for me. I have achievements, but they are not impressive. Therefore, this is a huge responsibility and I strive to live up to the expectations of me. I perceive the victory as an opportunity to promote my projects and my teams, who made everything possible,” said Tastanbekov.

“My dream is to build a sustainable, self-funding, multidisciplinary research organisation so that every motivated researcher there will have access to resources to do science and make a contribution to the prosperity of society,” he added.



Dias Tastanbekov

Zertis aeroponic greenhouse to produce green vegetables, while simultaneously researching biodegradable bone fixation implants for his PhD and running a rocketry school to make science attractive to children.

“My passion for science developed at school and later I realised that I am particularly keen on chemistry, which gives me an understanding of the world around us. Since I was also not bad at it, I felt I should choose a scientific career or at least a research-oriented one,” he said.

Tastanbekov received a Bolashak scholarship to earn a Master's degree at the University of Sheffield. Upon his return, he embarked on a career at Nazarbayev University Research and Innovation System (NURIS), later becoming laboratory chief at Kazakh

an obstacle for research since it diminishes enthusiasm. Still, there are many ways to obtain governmental and international support for research and start-ups. There are gifted researchers and promising inventions in Kazakhstan. We do not lack support; we lack proper management,” he said.

“It is wise to make outstanding people recognisable and hold them as role models. My nomination among the 100 New Faces is an advance payment for me. I have achievements, but they are not impressive. Therefore, this is a huge responsibility and I strive to live up to the expectations of me. I perceive the victory as an opportunity to promote my projects and my teams, who made everything possible.”

Tastanbekov finds it convenient to apply science in business, and then use the proceeds for further research. His first project, the greenhouse, is run in cooperation

problem. When I was a junior researcher at NURIS, I had a lot of plants and pets at home and long-term business trips as well. If I could leave the pets with friends, there was still the problem of finding someone to water your plans in your absence. I made a small investigation and realised that plant care can be automated and gardening can be soil-free. Such farming is eco-friendly and efficient in terms of human resources, water use, soil, place and expenses,” he said.

“We receive requests from local hotels, restaurants and cafes. This year, we plan to sell 30 kilogrammes of arugula and basil and to build greenhouses in other cities. I would like to thank the Start-up Bolashak competition organised by Damu Entrepreneurship Development Fund and the Bolashak Associa-

## One of nation's 100 New Faces helps digitise library materials



Nurzhan Zholdybalinov

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – National Academic Library Deputy Head Nurzhan Zholdybalinov, one of the country's 100 New Faces, co-developed the digital library, digital library card and introduced technology to convert eBooks from Cyrillic to Latin script.

Zholdybalinov started his career at the national library in 2007. An IT specialist by occupation, later he received graduate degree from a library school.

“Our task was to develop the digital library project by creating a single database. Nearly 2,000 books in PDF format were downloaded the same year. We started to download copyright-free books, mostly rare ones. We closely collaborate with other libraries, since the project covers all the available libraries in the country. Regional libraries also handed us books for digitisation,” said Zholdybalinov in a Jan.11 interview.

The electronic library modernisation also included the implementation of automated information library systems to ease library jobs. Now the libraries work on a single base through an international protocol, so it is possible to exchange files and search books.

“President Nursultan Nazarbayev said that the national electronic library should become the think tank library in his address in 2012. To us, the most important thing is that all full-text books should be accessible to all residents and those who study abroad and the Kazakh diaspora,” he noted.

The developers decided to cancel authorisation and registration on the website.

“The analysis showed that authorisation process caused difficulties and took a lot of time

for older people,” he explained.

“This change immediately increased site traffic by 28 percent in one quarter. We also intend to convert all the books of our online library into Latin alphabet this year. We want books in the Latin script to be available for the future generation. The readers will have the option to choose reading books in Latin or Cyrillic scripts,” said he. “Today, we have more than 38,000 electronic copies of books. Unfortunately, we cannot digitise all books due to copyright rules. We invite authors to cooperate with us and we can post their books on our web portal. According to statistics, readers from 115 countries visit our site.”

The project of the digital library card giving readers access to the libraries nationwide using a single card is also one of the successful achievements of the developers.

“We are currently creating an online catalogue for searching books across the country. New technologies are rapidly developing as well as programming language. We successfully collaborate with IT companies to develop our projects and to improve our services. We studied the best practices before introducing the projects. When we develop our project, we observe it from the readers' point of view to make an accessible service. Now our e-library is recognised as one of the best digital library projects in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). We also have a version for the visually impaired,” he added.

Zholdybalinov said that his participation in the 100 New Faces project is a significant achievement.

“I am grateful for my management and colleagues for their support. Of course, we have a lot of things to do,” he said.

# TOURISM

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 17, 2017

## Kazakhstan seeks ways to bolster tourism

By Elya Altynsarina

ASTANA – Kazakhstan will enhance its tourism industry by developing a destination culture, mountain skiing and urban travel products, said managers of Kazakh Tourism, a new state-owned company tasked with developing tourism products in the country.

By 2025, the country plans to increase the tourism share of the GDP by 8 percent, up from the current 0.9 percent. Comparable sectors of the domestic economy, such as transportation (8 percent), construction (5.9 percent) and agriculture (4.9 percent), would be similarly affected, according to a recent government report.

Kazakh Tourism is coordinating the measures to create an industry-friendly environment, including institutional changes and region-specific goals of reconstructing popular resort zones and highways. Some products will be developed in conjunction with the Ruhani Janghyru (Modernisation of Kazakhstan's Identity) programme that envisions creating the "belt of sacred sites." The memo claims there are more than 100 such locations, not counting regional sites well-known to local communities.

From 2006-2016, the number of foreign visitors to Kazakhstan doubled in comparison to the previous decade, reaching 6.5 million



Kazakh Tourism CEO Rashid Kuzembayev.

people. Justifiably, that number may have been helped by hosting the 2010 Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Summit, 2011 Asian Winter Games and EXPO 2017, as well as by establishing a visa-free regime for most developed countries and allowing new air routes into the nation.

"Our goal is to maintain the flow and boost visitors' interest in the future," said Kazakh Tourism CEO Rashid Kuzembayev in a recent interview with kursiv.kz.

Yet in 2017, Kazakhstan ranked only 81st in the World Economic Forum's (WEF) World Competitiveness and Travel Competitiveness Index.

Kuzembayev emphasised the areas where the industry needs to improve if it is to successfully attract tourist flows. Similarly, the

report lists a number of drawbacks hindering tourism.

First, problems persist with visa and migration regimes and there is a lack of qualified personnel. The Kazakh Concept of the Tourism Industry until 2023 does not provide for a needs assessment and estimate of self-reliance measures, making it difficult to attract investments and implement projects.

The quality of service remains low, even in places most attractive to visitors. Not surprisingly, Kazakhstan ranks between 71 and 121 in the WEF's Travel and Competitiveness Index in terms of service quality, availability of rental cars, infrastructure quality and hotels-population ratio. More than half of the 1,770 hotels nationwide do not have a star rating, which negatively affects the occupancy

rate. That rate in hotels with a star rating is only 24 percent and 19 percent in those lacking it.

In addition, Kazakhstan has yet to apply contemporary ideas of tourism management. Tourists coming to the country are those mainly attracted by international events. As the report states, however, there are not many companies that can skillfully arrange and supply domestic tourist products that would meet international standards, while domestic tour agencies mostly specialise in outbound tourism.

According to statistics, only 1 percent of visitors come to Kazakhstan primarily for tourism, with the overwhelming majority of them from Russia, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. People travel to Kazakhstan mostly for business, personal or transit purposes or as labour migrants.

McKinsey Kazakhstan Executive Director Jochen Berberner has compared tourism development in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and notes the number of foreign visitors is higher in other member nations. Yet, on average a visitor spends more in Georgia or Azerbaijan. Statistics from the report demonstrates Kazakhstan is rather a "tourist donor" with 9.8 million visits abroad by its people in 2016 on private, business and tourist trips. The estimated expenditure abroad by these

individuals was approximately \$1.6 billion.

To overcome these and many other hurdles and by drawing upon the best international tourism development practices, the Kazakh government is considering focusing on "soft" infrastructure, which does not require considerable funds and can provide a quick return on investment. Government officials believe this tactic will entail a wider use of mass media, including television, the Internet and social networks in an effort to shape the country's international tourist image – a brand of a new destination.

Efforts will also be made towards creating competitive tourist goods and services. Popular tourist destinations traditionally rely on attractions associated with unique nature, national history, architecture, culture and art, local cuisine, active leisure and shopping. At the same time, the experience of other countries shows a successful tourist industry does not need many tourist products, rather ones with quality and uniqueness. Berberner believes Kazakhstan has much to offer international visitors in sports, business, sustainable and ethno-tourism.

"A strong emphasis will be placed upon digitalisation of the industry," said Kuzembayev. "Internet portals and mobile applications will facilitate tourist flows

and motivate them to visit more tourist attractions, including sacred sites."

Similarly, Kazakhstan plans to make concerted efforts to ensure its tourist products, accommodations and services are listed on such popular resources as Expedia.com and Booking.com, with information relevant to inbound tourism being regularly updated.

In the long run, more investment will be made in high-quality infrastructure to ensure accessibility and enhance the quality of tourist facilities and services.

"To enhance the tourism perspectives of Kazakhstan, our company is promoting PPP (public-private partnership) in construction of roads, airport terminals and other infrastructure projects," added Kuzembayev.

The government is currently considering measures such as improving investment flows to the industry, adopting and including relevant tourism indicators in local governments' strategic plans, introducing measures that facilitate visa issuance while considering a possibility of adopting no visa rules for passengers who face extended transit times and diversifying air transportation routes.

Tourism is currently the fastest growing trend in the world. Estimates show that the average annual market growth is expected to be 46 percent between 2016-2020.

## Zhambyl region studies ancient settlements, encourages cultural development

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – Thirty projects to preserve history and encourage cultural development are being developed in the Zhambyl region as part of the Ruhani Janghyru (Modernisation of Kazakhstan's Identity) programme, reported Kazinform.

"Six out of 27 projects have already been implemented as part of the Tugan Zher (Small Homeland), the Sacred Geography of Kazakhstan and the Modern Culture projects," said regional culture, archive and documentation department head Duissenali Bykybayev.

The programme aims to implement the tasks set in President Nazarbayev's article titled "Course towards the Future: Modernisation of Kazakhstan's identity" in the next five years.

Financing of the culture sector increased to 2 billion tenge (US\$6.1 million) from 2012 to 2017 in the region. Nearly 250 cultural objects were reconstructed, including the Balasagun central concert hall in Taraz, the Alexander Scriabin memorial museum, a

medieval mosque near the Karakhan mausoleum and the Akyrtaş palace complex. The Zhambyl Zhabayev centre was also opened.

"The map of sacred sites has been developed to boost domestic tourism and promote the historical and cultural heritage sites. The tourist infrastructure is also improving. The digitalisation of library and museum funds is currently underway. The theatre festivals and competitions, aitys (song contests) and other concerts are held," he noted.

Eight historical and cultural sites in the Zhambyl region were included in the list of the national fund for sacred objects. These are the ancient settlement of Taraz, a large medieval city centre and former Kazakh Khanate capital (dated to the 1st – 19th centuries), the Tekturmas mausoleum (dated to the 14th century), the Karakhan mausoleum (dated to the 12th century), the Aisha Bibi mausoleum (dated to the 11th – 12th centuries), Babadzhi-Khatun mausoleum (dated to the 10th – 11th centuries), the Baisak batyr mausoleum, the Akyrtaş palace complex (dated to the

8th – 19th centuries) and Zhaisan Sanctuary.

"Tens of thousands of artefacts were found during the archaeological excavations of the Taraz ancient settlement. The excavations were also conducted at the Bektobe, Georgievsk, Tamdi, and Saudakent ancient fortifications. Historians and archaeologists plan to conduct conservation and museification of these sites. These sites will be included in the list of micro-sacral objects. All the artefacts will be transferred to the Zhambyl regional museum of natural history," he said.

The Ruhani Janghyru, a programme article aimed at reviving the spiritual values of the nation taking into account all the contemporary risks and challenges of globalisation, was launched in 2017. It includes the Tugan Zher special project promoting patriotism among residents, the Sacred Geography of Kazakhstan project about the sacred sites, their history and descriptions, as well as other related projects such as the 100 New Faces highlighting success stories of self-made people in various walks of life.



## Zerenda resort zone to build visit centre to accommodate tourism growth in 2018



By Dmitry Lee

ASTANA – The Zerenda resort zone will build a visitors' centre this year, the advisor to the region's akim (governor) announced in a Jan. 4 Facebook post.

Furthermore, Marat Igali wrote in his post, once the Schuchinsk-Zerenda highway is completed later this year, the Zerenda resorts will see more tourists.

"The regional Akmola branch of the Atameken National Chamber of Entrepreneurs has discussed creating a visit centre for tourists inside the territory of the state national natural park in the Zerendinsky district of the Akmola region. The general plan of development of the natural park includes a plot of land for the construction of the visit centre," Igali wrote.

The government of Kazakhstan has been allocating funds to stimulate domestic and international tourism in recent years.

As a move to further develop the tourism industry, last June the government approved a concept for the development of the tourism industry to 2023. In August, Minister

of Culture and Sports Arystanbek Mukhamediyulov said there were plans to create other visit centres for tourists.

At the time, the minister also noted that the construction of such centres is a "world practice" and that "all necessary infrastructure for visitors and tourists such as cafes, souvenir shops, conference halls, workshops and much more will be located here."

According to Igali, the visitors' centre will be located inside the Kokshetau park area.

"The Kokshetau state national nature park refers to a specially protected natural area, a special regime of protection is established on its land plots, on natural complexes and on water objects," he wrote on his Facebook page.

"There are 20 hiking trails on the territory of the national park, for which there are passports, all of them are registered in the register of hiking trails, including six tourist routes (three for automobiles, two sailing and one combined) and 14 sightseeing trails (hiking trails)," he explained.

The total length of hiking trails

in both directions is 1,167 kilometres, including 202.5 kilometres of hiking trails, 860 kilometres of automobile routes, 18 kilometres of sailing routes and kilometres of combined routes, he wrote.

"The Kokshetau national park has six recreation facilities with a one-time capacity of 200 people, including four recreation centres, the Ozerny station and the Hunter's House," he noted, and said this year the park will build another recreation centre near Lake Zerendinskoye as well as continue construction on other planned houses. "It is planned to build about 30 houses," he revealed.

More than 50,000 tourists visit the Zerenda resort and the national park each year.

Zerenda is often referred to as a mini Borovoye, the famous mountain and lake resort a few hours outside of Astana. The scenery in Zerenda is similar to Borovoye with pine forests surrounding the lake, but it so far attracts fewer summer crowds.

Zerenda is located about 50 kilometres northwest of the city of Kokshetau.

## SPORTS

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 17, 2017

## Skier Dmitry Reiherd wins silver at World Cup



Staff Report

Kazakh freestyle skier Dmitry Reiherd took the silver in moguls at the World Cup stage in Deer Valley, Utah (USA). He scored 83.66 points, second only to Canadian Mikael Kingsbury (88.80), whose victory was his 13th in a row at the World Cup stages. Australian Matt Graham (82.37) closed the top three.

The showing is Reiherd's fourth silver medal in the current season. He previously placed second at the World Cups in Finland, China and Canada.

Reiherd won the World Cup stage in Lake Placid, New York (USA) in 2017, one of several prizes he captured last year. He

also won individual and parallel moguls at the Universiade in Kazakhstan and took fifth place in the last World Championship in Sochi (Russia). He is ranked fifth in the overall standings.

Reiherd is one of the top possibilities for a medal in next month's Olympics, the fourth of his career. "Kazakhstan's freestyle at the Olympics in PyeongChang will be represented in two disciplines, moguls and acrobatics. So far, four athletes, including Yulia Galysheva, Ayaulym Amrenova, Dmitry Reiherd and Pavel Kolmakov, have qualified for the Olympics in moguls. In acrobatics, we will have five athletes, but the final line-up for the Olympic Games will be known on Jan. 21. Our leading athletes in both moguls and acrobatics will compete for the medals of the Olympics. I don't want to think ahead; time will show, but I think we should believe in our athletes," said Kazakh Freestyle Federation Vice President and national team coach Elena Kruglykhina.

Athletes in moguls will start competing at the Olympics earlier than representatives of other freestyle disciplines. The first qualification will take place Feb. 9, the Games' opening day. The women's final race will be held Feb. 11, followed by the men's event the next day.

## Deaflympics encourages Almaty to apply to host 2019 Winter games

By Meruyert Abugaliyeva

ASTANA – The Head of International Committee of Sports for the Deaf Valery Rukhledev recently visited Almaty and encouraged Kazakhstan to submit an application for Almaty to host the 2019 Winter Deaflympics.

"Almaty has not submitted its application to host Winter Deaflympics, but we would like to consider it as a candidate. We observed the sports infrastructure and were impressed by the architecture of the buildings, state-of-the-art equipment and especially by the active sports life in those facilities. In addition, we witnessed national competitions in curling and skiing, children's training of figure skaters and hockey players, as well as mass skating and skiing. All of this, as well as the 28th World Winter Universiade held in February 2017, prove that Almaty is deservedly one of the world winter sports capitals," said Rukhledev.

Almaty is home to 44,100 people with disabilities, including 5,000 with hearing impairment.

Rukhledev noted that the Winter

Deaflympics have not been held on the Asian continent. He also mentioned potential benefits of hosting the Games, including developing urban areas and improving urban environments for people with physical challenges, including the installation of elevators, sidewalks, traffic lights, special marking and visual pointers. He also said such events generate interest in sports among people with disabilities, which helps them integrate into social life.

The Deaflympics are an international sports competition for athletes with hearing impairment sanctioned by the International Olympic Committee. The Games were first held in 1924 in Paris. They were the first international sports event for people with disabilities and the second international sports competition after the Olympics. Ever since 1924 the Games for the deaf are held every four years with the exception of 1943 and 1947 due to the World War II and the Winter Games were introduced in 1949. Although there were only 9 countries participating in the Games in 1924, the Deaflympics now unite athletes from 113 nations.

## Kazakh short track racer to carry flag during 2018 Winter Olympic opening

By Frol Leandro

ASTANA – Kazakhstan short-track player Abzal Azhgaliyev has been named flag bearer and captain of the Kazakh team for the Winter Olympics in Pyeongchang, the National Olympic Committee of Kazakhstan press service reported Jan. 9.

"Only today I learned that I was chosen as the standard-bearer of the Kazakhstan national team at the Olympic Games. To say that I was surprised is to say nothing. This is a great honour for every athlete, and I am very glad and



proud that I was the one who was trusted to carry the flag. I thank the National Olympic Committee of the country for the trust, I will try

to justify the hopes placed on me," said Azhgaliyev, who is training in Holland.

Azhgaliyev was born Jun. 30,

1992 in Uralsk. He took the fifth place in the team relay race at the Olympic Games in 2014. He is also the first in the history of Kazakhstan World Cup winner (Salt Lake City 2016-2017), a two-time silver medallist of the World Cup 2016-2017, two-time bronze medallist of the World Cup 2016-2017 (as part of the team relay race), silver medallist of the World Winter Universiade 2017 and bronze medallist in the team relay race of the Asian Winter Games in Sapporo in 2017.

A special flag bearer's costume is being designed for the athlete.

## Playing chess results in better brain function

By Dana Omirgazy

ASTANA – Chess is the best sport to exercise the most complex and important organ in the body – the brain. In Kazakhstan, it became the beloved intellectual game among children and adolescents. In an exclusive interview with The Astana Times, Kazakhstan Chess Federation (KCF) Executive Director Irina Grishchenko talked about 2017's key activities, ongoing projects and recent chess victories.

"This was a very interesting year. We fulfilled all our plans. The federation organised and carried out 22 national tournaments. We held children's cups and adult chess cups among men and women and invited grandmasters from several countries. This means that people were able to fulfil the standards of FIDE (Fédération Internationale des Échecs or World Chess Federation) Master, International Master and Grandmaster norms without going abroad. Previously, according to FIDE rules, it was necessary to play

only abroad in order to get these norms," she said.

Kazakhstan hosted four international tournaments, including the Astana Open International Chess Festival during EXPO 2017.

"It was a major event of the past year. We managed to attract approximately 600 people in different age categories and levels to this tournament. We were glad to welcome participants from 18 countries," she said.

The national chess team participated last year in all official FIDE tournaments, with more than 3,500 players involved in national and international competitions. Kazakh players earned nine gold, four silver and seven bronze medals.

In the past few years, the federation has been witnessing an increase in the number of both children and adults playing chess. Compared to 2015, the figure has increased by two and a half times. According to Grishchenko, this year the federation intends to increase the number of tournaments.

"We plan to hold 24 tournaments.

For the first time, we will assist in organising chess tournaments among people with limited abilities. We will start cooperation this year," she noted.

Beginning in September, the Chess in School pilot project was introduced in 19 schools in Almaty, Kyzylorda, Pavlodar and Pavlodar region involving approximately 1,500 students. The KCF and Shakhmardan Yessenov Scientific and Educational Foundation initiated the project and provided all the necessary equipment.

"We provided schools with methodological guidebooks, textbooks and workbooks. In the summer, we trained teachers and psychologists under the project. Psychologists conduct research and draw conclusions about the effects of chess training. They observe improvements in students' logical and strategic thinking, memory and concentration," she said.

The East Kazakhstan region is expected to join the pilot project next year by introducing chess lessons in the school curriculum.

"We want all Kazakh people to

play chess. Chess improves cognitive abilities and problem-solving capacity. It has a positive effect on the development of intellectual potential. This is a good opportunity for children to learn how to think multi-channel. I am sure that chess is the only way to teach children to be adapted in our world. Our President was right when he once said that every leader should know how to play chess," she said.

Kazakh chess champions Dinara Saduakassova and Zhansaya Abdumalik are well-known for their victories. Based on their latest achievements, Grishchenko also named Kazybek Nogirbek, Ansat Aldiyar, as well as Meruert Kamalidenova and Assel Serikbai, who became Asian champions in their age categories.

"I have an optimistic view of Kazakhstan's chess development. I am sure that chess lessons will be introduced in all schools of the country. Our children and young people will become more concentrated, more competitive and intellectually developed," she noted.

## Olympian Alzhan Zharmukhamedov attends 'Going Vertical' premiere in Astana

By Ilyas Omarov

ASTANA – The Olympic champion of 1972 in basketball in Munich Alzhan Zharmukhamedov recently visited Astana. In the Kazakh capital, he took part in the premiere of the Russian film "Going Vertical," which tells of the historic victory of the USSR basketball team over the U.S. team in the 1972 Olympic finals. Zharmukhamedov is the hero of the film – the athlete played in the Soviet national team at this legendary game in Munich.

The famous basketball player said that during the historic Olympic finals in Munich he was on the court almost the entire game: "I had to play the most of the players. I played 36 minutes out of 40. I rested only two minutes in the first half and in the second half. Everything was this way – not to let the other team score, and to help



Alzhan Zharmukhamedov (L) and PBC Astana General manager Valery Tikhonenko (R).

my team. I was wrapped up in the game," he recalled.

"After the premiere of the 'Going Vertical' on Dec. 21, I received many invitations. I was also invited to Astana. Of course, it's very pleasant that in Kazakhstan there is such interest in the film and my person. The whole huge hall walked by me shaking hands and taking pictures. I was even a little shocked by such great interest," said Zharmukhamedov.

Basketball Federation but they did not achieve it because Uzbekistan fought for me at the highest level. After that, it turned out that I went to Moscow to CSKA," he said.

In Astana, Zharmukhamedov held a meeting at the Youth Basketball Academy, where he conducted a training session and shared some secrets of his mastery.

"Basketball in Astana is developing, and it is noteworthy that a specialist from Serbia Dejan Parizhanin works in the Youth Academy because Serbia is famous all over the world for its school of basketball," he noted.

Zharmukhamedov is the champion of the 1972 Olympic Games, the bronze medalist of the 1976 Olympics and the first Kazakh who received the title of Olympic champion. Currently he lives in Moscow and continues his active life in the sports community, teaching children basketball.

## Team Astana completes Peruvian stages of Dakar Rally

Staff Report

ASTANA – The final stage of the Dakar 2018 rally on the sandy paths of Peru ended Jan. 10. The route of the fifth stage of the marathon brought racers to the city of Arequipa. For the next stage, the caravan of Dakar racers will travel to Bolivia for routes over 3,000 meters high.

According to the press service of the Astana Presidential Club, for the cargo crews, the total length of the route was 934 kilometres and the special stage lasted 268 kilometres. Astana's team never stopped at the final stage of the Peruvian sands – the athletes spent 16 hours in the truck.

Artur Ardavichus and his team

managed to rise to ninth place in the standings by the end of the stage and improve their position to eighth place in the general classification.

"In total, I covered more than 900 kilometres today. We left the bivouac at six in the morning and arrived at the next bivouac at 10 in the evening. Today was a good day. Navigation was carried out without mistakes. We finished the stage without a single blot. Of course, we are really tired; the day was tough and fruitful," commented Ardavichus.

Both quad riders of Astana also reached the finish line of the final stage in Peru.

In the previous stage, Maxim Antimirov injured his right leg, which put his further participa-

tion in doubt. However, despite the injury, the athlete started the fifth stage of the marathon and passed it at a stable pace. Antimirov arrived at the finish in the city of Arequipa 15th, having risen in the general classification to 27th place. He

was on painkillers during the fifth stage of the Dakar. Now he is suffering and facing difficulties in moving independently. Considering that with each stage it will be more difficult to finish while suffering pain and general physical

weakness, the current condition of the athlete puts his further participation in Dakar in doubt.

Last year's ATV champion of Dakar, Russian racer Sergey Karyakin, left the race due to a fall in the special stage of the fifth stage. The pilot was airlifted to a hospital, where he was successfully operated on.

"We don't spot a hole like that on the track once – and a blow-out. We caught such holes while driving the car. Nothing good, but for a four-wheel motorcycle rider it is, of course, a great injury. It's good that he's alive! Sergey was supposed to be the winner, and our guys had to finish. Now there are only guys who must finish," the Astana captain commented on Karyakin's disaster.

Another Astana ATV rider, Dmitry Shilov, was 14th in the fifth stage. The athlete holds the same position in the general classification. He noted that the situation with Karyakin made him resist the urge to drive too fast.

"It was a difficult day, first I decided to slow down the pace myself, but then I saw the helicopter and Sergey being evacuated and decided to drop the tempo. Later there was a mistake, I had to go back to seven kilometres and take a position again. One of the rivals asked for a spare but I refused him, because I still had 120 kilometres to finish. Tomorrow we leave, and we'll see what will happen at high altitude. Tomorrow we leave Peru and start to go up to Bolivia," he said.



# Astana to celebrate 20th anniversary with grand cultural events



Photo credit: Sputnik Kazakhstan

By Meruert Abugaliyeva

ASTANA – Kazakhstan is planning a rich, year-long cultural programme to celebrate the 20th anniversary of its capital. Performances and exhibitions by the Vienna Opera, New York City Ballet, Grand Palais in Paris and British Museum and numerous events from 20 world capitals will enrich the festivities.

Minister of Culture and Sports

Arystanbek Mukhamediuly spoke about the plan at a Mazhilis (lower chamber of Parliament) government hour in December.

“The whole year will be dedicated to the 20th anniversary of Astana. One of the main events organised by the ministry will be the Parade of Capitals: 20 years of Astana – 20 World Capitals international cultural project, which contains cultural events from 20 capitals,” he said.

The project includes tours by the world’s leading performers, joint

productions with foreign theatres, musicals, film production, exhibitions, music and sports festivals and comedy shows.

The Astana Opera House and Beijing National Opera Theatre will stage “Turandot,” Giacomo Puccini’s last opera. Astana Musical will present “Notre Dame de Paris” with its authors Riccardo Cocciante and Luc Plamondon.

The events will include the premiere of “My Happiness,” a six-episode television series co-pro-

duced with Russian Channel One. Contemporary composer Karl Jenkins will present his new oratorio “Shine Astana,” dedicated to the capital. The Mariinsky Theatre and International Symphony Orchestra of the Silk Road will also perform.

City residents and guests will have an opportunity to attend four unique international exhibitions featuring works from the State Tretyakov Gallery (Russia) and Great Mughals – History Artefacts exhibition (India), masterpieces from the

Grand Palais (France) and A History of the World in 100 Objects from the British Museum collection.

The Eurasian Dance and Voice of Astana international pop music festivals will be among the international offerings. Academy Award-winning actress Dame Helen Mirren and theatres from France, Italy, Russia and Spain will attend the World Theatre Festival. The Spirit of the Dance, featuring modern ethnic music and choreography, and the Uly Dala Ruhya national sports contest

will be among the attractions. Those who lean towards humour will have a chance to attend the Astana Azil Star Fest and Bayrzhan Fest.

“All events organised for the celebration of the capital’s 20th anniversary are intended to enhance the image and tourist attractiveness of Astana and Kazakhstan and strengthen the cohesion and pride of the Kazakhstan people for the development of an independent Kazakh capital,” added Mukhamediuly.

## New Astana pay-to-park system will increase available parking, decrease traffic, says passenger transport department chief

Staff Report

ASTANA – A new pay-to-park system to be launched in Astana this month should increase access to parking spaces, improve traffic flow and help create a culture of legal, systematic parking, said head of the city’s Passenger Transport Department Bekmyrza Igenberdinov.

Nearly 9,000 toll parking spaces have been put into operation Jan. 15 across two zones – the intersection of Turan, Saraishyk, Orynbor and Syganak streets and intersection of Saryarka Street, Bogenbai Batyr Street, Republic Avenue and the embankment of the Yessil River.

The first 30 minutes of parking will be free of charge, while each next hour will cost 100 tenge

(US\$0.3) from 8 a.m. until 6 p.m. Parking will be free weekends and holidays.

“By contributing your 100 tenge (US\$0.3) for an hour of parking, we all make our contribution to the formation of a new culture for us – the culture of parking. As a result, we get roads without chaos and traffic jams, which means significant decrease in the number of road accidents. An ordinary driver wins, who no longer has to worry about his or her health and safety, safety of car and the future of our capital,” noted Igenberdinov.

The new parking tolls are part of the city’s broader efforts to modernise its transport system.

Igenberdinov said the project seeks to decrease the traffic load by 20-30 percent by reducing the number of cars parked on roads for

a long period, decrease the load of parking spaces by 40-50 percent, increase the demand for public transport by 15-20 percent and reduce traffic violations by 70-80 percent, among other results.

“The capacity significantly increased, traffic jams decreased. Now drivers do not drive round and around trying to find a place to park their car, when all those places were taken by numerous illegal taxi drivers,” he added, “When the project launches, we will quite soon see its efficiency – drivers will not be leaving their cars for days, there will be a concrete understanding of the turnover of every parking lot. A car will be parking for an hour or two, which means one parking space will service a minimum of four or five cars per day.”

People have a wide range of choice in the means of transport, according to him.

“There are many possible ways to get to work – personal transport, taxi, public transport or by foot,” he added.

“We have developed a clear-cut network of routes and we handle any load during a rush hour. It will cost 180 tenge (US\$0.54) to a person to take a bus to work and back home,” said Igenberdinov.

The toll parking introduced recently at the old train station serves as a successful example, said Igenberdinov, seeing an increase of road capacity in the first two weeks since the project came into effect.



Photo credit: today.kz



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