



President briefed on Astana's development progress



By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – Astana Akim (Mayor) Asset Issekeshev briefed Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev April 5 about the capital's development and the most recent infrastructure improvements. The President assigned the city administration to pay attention to the construction of housing and social facilities, creation of parking spaces and ensuring safety in public places as well as power energy system modernisation.

"We fulfilled the dream of our ancestors and built a capital in the heart of the Saryarka. We managed to create a beautiful city and opened it for the whole world. Astana became the pride of the whole nation. A large number of people have worked here tirelessly, despite the weather conditions," said Nazarbayev.

"In a short historical period, we managed to create a real metropolis of one million people with the appropriate infrastructure. Astana

is a well-known city, where the most important world events take place and attract the attention of the entire globe," he added.

Issekeshev also reported on the implementation of projects for the development of urban infrastructure and the construction of social facilities. In particular, he spoke about the implementation of digital technologies in healthcare, construction of housing facilities and power energy system modernisation to improve the environmental situation in the capital.

The President praised the achievements of a number of economic indicators, including the volume of attracted investments and the development of small and medium businesses.

"Astana is the fastest growing city in our country. The number of citizens has exceeded one million people. Along with the growing number of residents, housing construction is gaining momentum," said Nazarbayev, highlighting that 20 million square metres of housing, 53 new schools and 26 hospi-

tals have been constructed over the last 20 years.

He emphasised the role of Astana in the prosperity of the country and certain sectors of its economy.

"The decision to build the city was right. Astana has become a new point of further development of the economy, the growth of the population, the development of science, technology and innovation. All investments into its construction have already been returned," the President said.

"By 2050, the population of Almaty will reach 2.5 million people, Astana – two million people, Shymkent – 1.5 million people. These cities will turn into growth points where world-class services will be provided. Other cities also need to have their own development programmes. The government needs to study this issue," said President Nazarbayev.

He noted the necessity to create parking spaces in the city and ensure the safety of people in public places, reminding about the recent tragedy in Russia's Kemerovo

where a fire at the local shopping mall killed 64 people. The President directed officials to apply the best practices of EXPO 2017 in the field of energy supply and to speed up the gasification of the city.

The city administration and government also discussed the development of transport infrastructure, construction of the light rail network (LRT) and leisure facilities and educational facilities at the meeting. At the end of the meeting, Nazarbayev got introduced to an IVECO Heuliz experimental electric bus.

The Ministry of Culture and Sports and the Astana administration plan to hold 645 events for the 20th anniversary of the capital, including the presentation of the Astana International Financial Centre (AIFC) with the invitation of many political leaders on July 5. The World Islamic Economic Forum will be July 4 and the Forum of Mayors of the Cities of the of Silk Road countries will be July 3.

Kazakhstan's population tops 18 million

Staff Report

ASTANA – The Kazakh population recently topped 18 million, according to figures released by the Ministry of National Economy statistics committee.

February data shows the number of residents increased 240,600 or 1.3 percent in 2017 over 2016, reaching approximately 18,177,700 people. Of those, 57.4 percent or 10,439,600, live in urban areas with 42.6 percent or 7,738,100 living in rural sections of the country.

The fertility exceeded mortality as the rate of natural increase is 13.83, it grew 13.1 percent and came to 21,500 in January com-

paring to the same period last year. The population of the capital is up to 1,035,500, increasing 0.3 percent since the beginning of the year, while the number of people living in Almaty increased 0.28 percent, reaching 1,806,800 in February.

The South Kazakhstan region remains the most populous with a population of 2,933,800. The population of the Almaty region was 2,019,300 people, according to Feb. 1 data.

The number of births in January exceeded last year figures by 4.4 percent amounting to 33,300. The birth rate is equal to 21.42.

Statistics show 317 infants under the age of one died in Kazakhstan in January. The infant mortality

rate increased 7.1 percent compared to the same period in 2017.

The main reason for infant mortality is the conditions that arise in the prenatal period. The figure indicates 146 infants died in January which was 46.1 percent of the overall number of deaths among infants. Another cause of infant death is congenital anomalies with 20.2 percent (64). The number of infants who died from respiratory diseases is 29 or 9.1 percent, and 3.5 percent (11) died from poisonings and injuries accidents. The infant mortality rate was 9.53 in January.

The number of registered migrants who came to the country in January compared to the previous year decreased 9.2 percent and

amounted to 1,360 people according to statistics from the national migration services. The number of emigrants increased 34.9 percent, reaching 2,258 people. As a result, net migration is equal to minus 898 people.

The main cross-border migration exchange occurs with Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) countries. The share who arrived from CIS countries is 78.1 percent while 86.7 percent of those who left Kazakhstan moved to CIS.

The percentage of interregional migrants was 33.3 percent totaling 1,058 people in Astana, 3,549 in Almaty as well as registered in Akmola and Mangistau region with 157 and 26 people.

Economy ministry projects real GDP growth of 3.8 percent in 2018

By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – The Kazakh Ministry of National Economy projects the nation's real GDP will reach 3.8 percent this year, which is 0.7 percent higher than the previous projected indicator voiced in August 2017. The ministry also projects per capita GDP will rise to \$9,200, Economy Minister Timur Suleimenov told an April 3 government meeting.

"Nominal GDP in 2017 is estimated at 52.4 trillion tenge (US\$163.49 billion). Real growth made 4 percent. Economic growth in January-February of this year also reached 4 percent," said Suleimenov.

"Taking into account the refined database for 2017, the nominal GDP is expected to reach 57.2 trillion tenge (US\$178.46 billion) this year. This is 1.3 trillion tenge (US\$4 billion) higher than

what was approved in August (last year). Real GDP growth is estimated at 3.8 percent. GDP per capita will grow to \$9,200," he reported.

The projected oil price for 2018 is up from \$45 to \$55 per barrel, he added.

The Kazakh Ministry of Energy anticipates the nation's oil production to reach 87 million tonnes. Last year, the oil-rich nation produced a record high 86.2 million tonnes of oil, which allowed it

to mark a 4 percent economic growth.

"The revenues in 2018 are estimated at 5.7 trillion tenge (US\$17.78 billion), which is 190 billion tenge (US\$592.8 million) higher than what the previously approved plan envisioned. The payments into the National Fund will grow 546 billion tenge (US\$1.7 billion) and make 2.6 trillion tenge (US\$8.11 billion) in total," said Suleimenov.

ASTANA'S SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN 20 YEARS

20 ASTANA

THIS YEAR MARKS THE 20TH ANNIVERSARY OF ASTANA AS THE CAPITAL CITY OF KAZAKHSTAN.

IN THE LAST 20 YEARS

Astana's population has more than tripled, surpassing **1 MILLION PEOPLE**

Industrial production has risen by 36 times to over **\$1.7 billion**

The city's gross regional product has increased 190-fold to **\$15.6 billion**

Average monthly salaries have **increased by 21.5 times**

Investments have increased 48-fold, reaching almost **\$3 billion in 2017**

Unemployment has **dropped to 4.6%** from 12.6%

Poverty has dropped to **0.7% in 2017**, down from 7.7% in 2001

Foreign trade turnover has increased 13-fold to **\$4.1 MILLION**

State budget revenue has increased by 78 times to over **£3 billion**

The volume of output of small and medium-sized businesses is **over \$13.4 million**

Astana growth dynamics of the key socio-economic indicators since 1997

INDICATORS	1997	2017	Growth Rates in nominal terms
Population thousand people	300.5	1 029.6	3.4 times
Economically active population thousand people	164.2	521.3	3.2 times
Gross regional product (GRP) billion tenge	25.7	4 865.32	190 times
GRP per capita thousand tenge	87.5	5 273.32	60.3 times
Industrial output (works, services) in current prices, billion tenge	15.2	549.4	36 times
Investments volume in fixed assets billion tenge	19.3	944.6	49 times
Amount of construction work billion tenge	12.3	608.5	49.5 times
Commissioning of housing thousand square meters	124.4	2 360	19 times
Employment volume of SME thousand people	98.71	302.92	3.1 times
SME volume of output billion tenge	177.81	4 297.82	24.2 times
Retail sales volume billion tenge	9.4	1 033.4	110 times
Foreign trade turnover million US dollars	324.2	4 172.1	13 times
Average monthly nominal wage thousand tenge	9.9	225	23 times
Unemployment %	12.6	4.6	fell by 2.8 times

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NATION

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 11, 2018

New Single State Real Estate Cadastre to be digitised by 2021

By Aigerim Sadykova

ASTANA – The Single (Unified) State Real Estate Cadastre (SSREC) will be drafted to collect data from all property objects and infrastructure in Kazakhstan. The draft will be completed using the merged information systems within the Digital Kazakhstan state programme, said Minister of Information and Communication Dauren Abayev at the March 27 governmental meeting.

“The SSREC will include 19 subsystems and modules. The project will be implemented starting this year to 2021. We are developing a concept and terms of reference and documentation of the programme and working on the transfer of an automated information system of the land cadastre and the real estate registry state database to the state corporation Government for Citizens,” he said.

The ministry implemented the urban cadastre with nine thematic bases, including 35,000 objects in the main economic areas. The registry ensures architectural and construction activity transparency, providing information for citizens and the business sector, said Minister for Investment and Development Zhenis Kassymbek. The cadastre offers unified information about any property and infrastructure located above, below or on the ground.

“The majority of regions have engineering infrastructure data that was conducted by disparate entities of monopolies in different formats on hard copies without any reference to coordinate the systems. The level of digitised data is on average 20 percent in the state due to the information provided by akimats (city administration),” he said.

Digitising data on engineering infrastructure and real estate is in the initial stage, he added, as the urban cadastre was implemented

only in regional centres. Engineering networks and all settlement communications are 100 percent digitised in Kyzylorda region and the capital, while Almaty city has 80 percent excluding mountainous areas.

“About \$2.2 million was allocated from the local budget for five years to digitise the Kyzylorda region cadastre. The cadastre increased tax payments on real estate objects 14 percent and reduced violations in design and construction in the region by three times,” he added.

According to the akimats, the urban cadastre data is digitised in Karaganda and Taldykorgan cities, 95 percent complete in Uralsk and 80 percent in Atyrau city. The 1:500 digital data scale is absent in the Aktobe, East Kazakhstan, Kostanai, Mangistau, North Kazakhstan and Zhambyl regions.

Kazakh regions have started to provide SSREC with available information resources. The work from allocated funds to inventory engineering networks and communications has also begun.

West Kazakhstan region has been preparing materials for three years with \$704,878 allocated for data transfer inventory at the district centre. This year, Zhambyl region will receive \$598,363 and get approximately 2.2 million tenge (US\$6,895) for the next three years. Kostanai region will spend \$313,279 this year and \$789,463 in 2019.

Speaking about Digital Kazakhstan, First Vice-Minister for Investment and Development Roman Sklyar noted the ministry pays attention to digital factories.

“Digital factories are demonstration sites that will show the efficiency of Industry 4.0 (Fourth Industrial Revolution). It is very important for our business to have examples of what the industry provides,” he said at a press conference following the meeting.

Kazakhstan begins electronic customs system

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – As of April 1, the Kazakh Ministry of Finance is using a free, online electronic customs system. The project, supported by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), aims to eliminate direct contact between customs officers and customs clearance experts, simplifying and speeding up the customs clearance process.

The ASTANA-1 automated system uses the current version of UNCTAD’s ASYCUDA World. The system will optimise all customs procedures, reduce the time to issue documents and be completely integrated with the Ministry of Finance tax bases, as well as interact with other state bodies.

The declarant can perform all customs operations without leaving his or her office. After goods arrive at the destination point, an electronic storage document is executed which not only automatically registers, but also automatically issues a declaration. The latter makes it possible to eliminate direct contact between customs officers and customs clearance experts. The time

to process and issue declarations is now less than a minute; export procedures previously took at least 55 minutes and those involved in foreign economic activities needed to personally come to the customs office.

All customs formalities, from submitting prior information, crossing the customs border, controlling the delivery of goods and filling out different documents to releasing goods and controlling their departure from temporary storage warehouses, will be carried out by state customs representatives, declarants and customs carriers through the ASTANA-1 one window principle.

UNCTAD is a permanent inter-governmental body established by the United Nations General Assembly in 1964. The organisation, headquartered in Geneva with offices in Addis Ababa and New York, seeks to develop trade in response to the globalisation process. UNCTAD actively helps developing countries gain access to the benefits of a globalised economy in a more fair and effective way. The organisation has already helped many countries become integrated into the global economy by providing analysis and offering technical assistance.



Digitising healthcare will make medical care more accessible, efficient

By Meruyert Abugaliyeva

ASTANA – Electronic health passports and medical information systems have been implemented in Kazakhstan this year to make medical service provisions more efficient for both patients and doctors. Kazakh Minister of Healthcare Yelzhan Birtanov briefed the government on the roadmap developed to digitise healthcare.

“Healthcare digitisation, which entails unification of information systems, mobile application use, implementation of electronic health passports and paper-free medical documentation, seeks to improve accessibility and efficiency of medical services,” he said.

Special attention is being paid to promoting a healthy lifestyle and illness prevention, as the ministry plans to communicate information on nutrition, physical exercise and healthy habits using mobile apps by the end of 2018.

SMS (Short Message Service) notifications inviting certain groups to undergo medical check-ups will be introduced by June.

Citizens living in the Akmola, Karagandy, Kostanai and West Kazakhstan regions will have the opportunity to register online.

“Patients often have to visit a doctor multiple times and carry all the medical documents. This often results in ineffective time management of both patients and doctors. Therefore, we will launch electronic health passports by June and optimise service provisions using digitisation to reduce the number of visits twice by September 2018,” said Birtanov.

Patients suffering from chronic illnesses will also be able to make fewer doctor visits. Starting in November, the pilot project will allow people with diabetes, oncology and arterial hypertension to obtain prescriptions and submit information on their health status online. Patients will only need to see their doctor in urgent situations.

Electronic health passports will make locating patient information far easier. The programme will also help assess the quality of medical services provided and collect AI (artificial intelligence) data to aid decision making for doctors

and patients and predict genetic illnesses and disease outbreaks.

The developments, however, need appropriate IT infrastructure to function fully.

“To date, around 85 percent of workplaces in healthcare, precisely 82,149 out of 97,784, are equipped with computers and out of 6,283 medical institutions only 3,050, or 51 percent, have access to the Internet,” he added.

Almost all institutions at the regional, city and district levels, which serve around 85 percent of the population, have access to the Internet. Regional akimats (governments) will provide computers for all doctors in cities and district centres by the end of the year, allowing the regions to switch to paper-free medical documentation.

“All the initiatives will be implemented by the end of the year, including integration of all healthcare systems and e-passports. Next year, the plans are to launch a system to monitor health status online and use AI analysis. By 2021, we will also use AI and machine learning to predict illnesses,” said Birtanov.

PM announces launch of steel bloom production plant in South Kazakhstan

Staff Report

ASTANA – The Shymkent Temir steel bloom production plant will launch production in South Kazakhstan in April, announced Prime Minister Bakytzhan Sagintayev during his March 28 trip to the region.

Nearly 4.85 billion tenge (US\$15 million) of investments were attracted to the project, which will create 150 jobs. The design capacity of the enterprise is 240,000 tonnes of bloom per year. The owners also plan to produce steel blooms ready for further processing. Forty-tonne induction furnaces and three-rounder continuous casting machine (CCM) operate at the plant.

Overall, 20 projects will be launched as part of the Industrialisation Map in the region.

Sagintayev also visited the international checkpoint located in Zhibek Zholy village on the border with Uzbekistan. Up to 25,000 individuals and up to 100 cars pass through the customs post per day. The construction of a new bus terminal building increases passenger



flows and the volume of freight traffic between the two countries.

Work is also underway to expand the customs area and improve four checkpoints.

The prime minister also discussed agricultural development, export potential, subsidising, attracting investments in agricultural processing, technological modernisation of agro-industrial complex, development of meat cattle breeding and plant growing with local agricultural producers.

“The agro-industrial complex has a promising future. The country can be one of the world’s largest

producers of agricultural exports. The government takes all necessary measures to develop the state programme on agro-industrial sector. The draft law concerning the veterinary service was initiated, the small and medium size businesses are stimulated to participate in scientific research, and subsidies are provided for procuring organisations. Also, the subsidy policy is also being revised to promote the export-oriented enterprises,” said Sagintayev.

The proposals initiated by local farmers and heads of enterprises will be discussed by the Ministry of Agriculture and other state bodies.

Government to spend \$47 million on school digitisation in 2018

By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – Schools in Kazakhstan will receive more than 15 billion tenge (US\$47.25 million) in 2018 to access broadband Internet and to provide technical equipment for school information systems, said Social and Cultural Development Committee Chair Gulnur Iksanova during a March 19 session in the Mazhilis (lower house of the Parliament).

Sixty-two percent of schools in Kazakhstan have access to broadband internet, while 88 schools still have no access, which makes other school systems and education tools mostly useless without the internet.

“Problems with technical equipment are acute. Though there is one computer per 10-11 children on av-

erage and this indicator is considered acceptable, computer equipment in schools is by 28 percent outdated. Another 22.3 percent of computers are needed for information technologies classes and other subject classes,” said Iksanova.

The use of funds allocated to provide internet access in schools, she noted, is also ineffective, emphasising 700 million tenge (US\$2.198 million) that remained unused last year out of a total of 3.6 billion tenge (US\$11.3 million) allocated from the national budget for that purpose.

“Inspection of the quality of internet connection in schools revealed a discrepancy between the stated and serviced channel width of network,” she added.

This year, the government allocated more than 3 billion tenge

(US\$9.42 million) for the same purpose and Iksanova stressed the need to conduct an audit across all regions meant to check the quality of the implementation of agreements.

Another obstacle, according to her, is lack of standard requirements to equipment and network infrastructure in educational organisations.

“Failure of e-learning projects could partially be explained by the fact that the equipment was purchased without providing access to internet. Interactive boards stood idle in the absence of educational resources. Twelve sets of server equipment purchased for the regions are still not serviced. Meanwhile, the budget for this project was more than 30 billion tenge (US\$94.2 million),” said Iksanova.

NATIONAL NEWS IN BRIEF

Turkish investments will be used to construct a pesticide manufacturing plant next year in the Almaty region’s Kairat industrial zone, according to the Kazakh Invest press service. Agrobrest Group will be investing \$30 million to produce herbicides, insecticides, fungicides, seed protectants and glyphosate. More than 60 percent of the products will cover the domestic market, with the balance exported to markets in Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, said the release. The plant’s capacity will be 12,000 tonnes of pesticides per year and approximately 200 jobs will be created.

The Bumprom paper recycling plant in the South Kazakhstan region is increasing its turnover in processing waste paper and cardboard, reported Kazinform. Launched in 2016, the plant is located in the Ontustik industrial zone. The project, worth 200 million tenge (US\$624,000), has a capacity of 4,000 tonnes of product per year. “We purchase raw materials for 40 tenge (US\$0.12) per kilogram delivered from Almaty, Kyzylorda and Shymkent. We need more waste paper. We observe the rising cost of raw material... We sent our proposal to the National Chamber of Entrepreneurs to limit the export of such raw materials,” said enterprise deputy head Serik Tashnazarov. In the future, the company plans to export its products to Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan.

Farmers in the Akmola region announced the launch of a week-long sowing campaign beginning April 5. “We will plant more than 4.7 million hectares of crops including cereals and legumes. The spring wheat will be sown on an area of 3.7 million hectares,” said a regional internal policy department representative. This year, oilseeds will cover 258,400 hectares and feed crops, 628,400 hectares. More than 11.2 billion tenge (US\$35 million) in subsidies was allocated this year to develop the region’s crops.

An entrepreneur forum was held April 5 in the Atyrau region. “The development of entrepreneurship is a priority. Approximately 1.2 billion tenge (US\$3.7 million) was allocated from the local budget over five years. This year, more funds have been allocated to support entrepreneurs in the districts. We did colossal work to diversify the economy and develop the agro-industrial complex and food processing,” said regional Akim (Governor) Nurlan Nogayev in his opening remarks. A number of microloan programmes for rural businesspeople were launched with the support of local executive bodies. As a result, 67 projects were implemented and 123 jobs created as part of the 2017 regional business programme.

The 2018 Social Innovation contest gathered 156 social entrepreneurs April 5-6 in Almaty who presented modernisation, socialisation and evolution ideas. The jury selected the 50 best projects. “The social significance, innovation and sustainability of the project were the main criterion. The project will be financed by the Foundation of the First President and be implemented for the benefit of the community,” said Information and Resource Centre public fund head Altynai Kobeyeva. Among the ideas were an interactive Internet radio for those with visual impairments, 3D museum of historical monuments for toddlers and mobile app for mothers. Grants from 1 million-5 million tenge (US\$3,120-15,600) were allocated to implement the projects.

Digitisation has helped increase the academic performance of Shymkent schoolchildren 10 percent, said Deputy Prime Minister Askar Zhumagaliyev at an April 10 press conference as reported by Kazinform. “The digital transformation will cover the whole city until the end of the year. All these instruments will improve academic performance. The school attendance increased at times. Children sometimes did not attend classes for 22,000 hours. Now this figure decreased to 2,000. Due to new technologies, parents can solve issues related to attendance,” he said.

EURASIA&WORLD

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 11, 2018

EXTERNAL NEWS IN BRIEF

Kazakh energy companies hope to attract partners at the Green Energy Expo April 4-6 in the South Korean city of Daegu, reports inform.kz. Organised since 2004, the Green Energy Expo gathers 280 companies from 32 countries worldwide, focusing on production of renewable energy, energy saving and electrical equipment, development of alternative energy. Kazakh companies participating in the event, including KazEnergoNaladka, Svenco, EcoEnergy and Astana Solar, believe the platform is useful for setting up business contacts, negotiations and searching for potential clients and suppliers. Astana Solar Marketing and Logistics Department Chair Alexander Kikbayev noted South Korea is a new market and offers both import and export prospects. Though the main clients are local, the company's products, which include photovoltaic modules, are gaining interest abroad as well, he added.

Kazakhstan and Latvia recently agreed to strengthen cooperation in transport, as the Latvian capital hosted the first meeting of the intergovernmental commission working group on transport, one of the most promising areas in bilateral cooperation. Latvian Transport Ministry State Secretary Kaspars Ozolins emphasised Kazakhstan is a key partner for Latvia, the largest transport hub in the Baltic region of the Eurasian transport corridor. The two countries witnessed stable growth of freight traffic volume that rose from 61,000 tonnes in 2016 to more than 133,000 tonnes last year. Yet, there is always a room for improvement, according to Kazakh First Vice Minister of Investments and Development Roman Sklyar. He marked the launch of direct flights linking the two nations as a milestone in the development of bilateral cooperation. The intergovernmental commission is expected to meet in Riga in the end of May.

The Eurasian Centre for Strategic Studies (ASAM - Avrasya Stratejik Araştırmalar Merkezi) in Istanbul recently organised a conference gathering eminent Turkish political scientists and journalists to discuss Kazakh diplomatic initiatives. Turkish diplomat Evvet Tezcan marked Kazakhstan's January presidency of the United Nations Security Council, the country's 2010 chairmanship of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) as well as the OSCE summit organised the same year in Astana as an "evidence of the recognisably growing role of Kazakhstan in the international arena." Istanbul University Professor Ferhan Demirkol also pointed out the Astana Process talks addressing the worsening situation in Syria contributed to Kazakhstan's increasingly important role in global diplomacy.

Astana-based Gumilyov Eurasian National University and Peking University agreed to increase cooperation during the recent visit of Gumilyov University rector Yerlan Sadykov to Beijing. Associate Professor and Associate Dean of the Institute of International and Strategic Study at Peking University Guan Guihai stressed the need for more joint studies and research to fulfil the sustainable development objective. He also spoke about Sadykov's suggestion to organise joint archaeological excavations for deeper study of the history of the Great Silk Road. As part of the visit, Sadykov also met with Kazakh students studying in Beijing.

London city residents were recently immersed in Kazakh culture as part of the Kazakh Culture Day celebration organised by the country's embassy in London, as reported by 24.kz. The Victoria Embankment Gardens, one of London's beautiful parks, hosted the festivities that included visiting a Kazakh yurt, tasting Kazakh national dishes, presentation of Kazakh national jewellery and handmade items. The public enjoyed the performance of the Akmesht ensemble of the Kyzylorda Regional Philharmonic that travelled to London to familiarise the British audience with Kazakh national music.

FM Abdrakhmanov calls for Afghan peace talks to start sooner



By Almasbek Zhumadilov

ASTANA – Kazakh Foreign Minister Kairat Abdrakhmanov reiterated Kazakhstan's support for efforts to stabilise Afghanistan and called on parties to launch peace talks as soon as possible during the March 27 Tashkent high-level conference on Afghanistan called Peace Process, Security Cooperation and Regional Connectivity.

The conference was organised by the Uzbek and Afghan governments with a goal to coordinate the basic principles of a peaceful settlement in Afghanistan, the development of a mechanism to launch negotiations between the Afghan Government and the armed opposition and the coordination of international joint actions to support this process.

Minister Abdrakhmanov said Kazakhstan, like all countries in the region, seeks the stable, economically sustainable and safe development of Afghanistan. He said the conference will help that effort and contribute to the peace process.

"Creation of a regional zone of peace, security, cooperation and development in Central Asia, including multilateral assistance to Afghanistan in economic and social development, combating threats to peace and security, as well as strengthening its capacities are among the main priorities of Kazakhstan in the UN Security Council," said Abdrakhmanov.

On January 19, the Kazakhstan delegation to the UN Security Council organised a ministerial level debate on "Building a regional partnership in Afghanistan and Central Asia as a model for the interdependence of security and development," which resulted in the adoption of a consensus statement by the president of the Security Council aimed at improving the efficiency and coordination of foundations, agencies and UN programmes in the region.

In his welcoming speech to the participants of the Tashkent conference Uzbekistan President Shavkat Mirziyoyev expressed his sincere gratitude to President Nursultan Nazarbayev for the initiative shown in convening that meeting in the UN Security Council.

"We believe that the basis for stabilising the situation in Afghanistan should be reforms aimed at improving social and economic indicators in the country, the level of education and other human standards. Afghanistan's economic recovery through long-term projects and wide participation of the regional countries are the most effective ways of solving complex problems of Afghanistan. We are considering direct participation of Kazakhstan in the development of the rail network of Afghanistan. Our common goal is to link Central and South Asia by stable trade and transport routes", noted Abdrakhmanov, expressing support for Afghanistan's integration into the regional network of trade, energy and transport links.

Since 2010, Kazakhstan has implemented a \$50 million educational programme for Afghan citizens in its educational institutions. Under the programme, about 1,000 Afghan citizens will be trained in peaceful professions in the period from 2010 to 2021. Kazakhstan has now taken the initiative to continue the education programme for Afghan citizens with co-financing from the European Union and other partners with a focus on Afghan women.

"In autumn 2018 in Astana, Kazakhstan plans to organise the international conference titled Expanding Opportunities for Women in Afghanistan to discuss the role and contribution of women in the peaceful development of Afghanistan, issues of empowering Afghan women in the political, social and economic spheres of the country through increasing their participation in the public and private sectors and developing specific recommendations aimed at enhancing women's opportunities in that country," Abdrakhmanov said.

The minister also noted Kazakhstan will continue to provide technical and humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan, both within the framework of bilateral agreements and in a multilateral format, providing thousands of tonnes of humanitarian supplies, including food, essential commodities, fuel and various equipment.

New avenues for the social and economic development of Afghanistan were also discussed at the working (consultative) meeting of

the heads of Central Asian states, chaired by the President of Kazakhstan in Astana on March 15. As a result of the conference, the Tashkent Declaration was

expanding the strategic partnership between Kazakhstan and the United States including implementing agreements reached during the official visit of President

"Creation of a regional zone of peace, security, cooperation and development in Central Asia, including multilateral assistance to Afghanistan in economic and social development, combating threats to peace and security, as well as strengthening its capacities are among the main priorities of Kazakhstan in the UN Security Council."

adopted, outlining steps to promote a political settlement in Afghanistan and reaffirming the central and coordinating role of the Afghan side in the process of political settlement.

The event was attended by the foreign ministers and high representatives from Russia, China, the U.S., India, Iran, Pakistan, Turkey, the U.A.E., Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Britain, Germany, France, Italy, Japan, the UN, the EU, the Collective Security Treaty Organisation, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), NATO and others.

On the sidelines of the conference, Abdrakhmanov held bilateral meetings with the heads of the delegations of the United States and Iran.

With U.S. Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Thomas Shannon, the sides discussed

Nazarbayev to the U.S. in January 2018.

The officials confirmed the sides' readiness to support international efforts to stabilise and economically restore Afghanistan. The American diplomat praised Kazakhstan's contribution to Afghanistan's peaceful development. The sides also discussed strengthening regional cooperation between the countries of Central Asia and the United States.

Abdrakhmanov also discussed trade, transport and logistics cooperation with Iran with Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Arakchi. The main theme of the conversation was interaction within international and regional organisations, including CICA, the SCO, and in the context of the Astana Process on the settlement of the conflict in Syria.

FM briefs CIS foreign ministers on Kazakh initiatives, signs security and education agreements



By Elya Altynsarina

ASTANA – Kazakh Foreign Minister Kairat Abdrakhmanov briefed the Commonwealth of Independent States Council of Foreign Ministers April 6 in Minsk, Belarus on Kazakhstan's initiatives on regional security and development, denuclearisation and confidence building.

Abdrakhmanov also thanked his colleagues for supporting Kazakhstan's presidency of the United Na-

tions Security Council and efforts on Afghan security and the Syrian peace process. He also praised the council as a platform allowing discussion of diverse issues in an environment of equality.

Abdrakhmanov told the gathering that, considering Afghanistan will hold parliamentary and presidential elections in 2018-2019, Kazakhstan supports the results of the Tashkent Ministerial Conference on Afghanistan and the Tajik government's initiative to convene, in cooperation with the

UN Office of Counter-Terrorism, a conference on combating terrorism and extremism in May in Dushanbe.

Abdrakhmanov said such meetings help the CIS rapidly adapt to geopolitical and economic changes and praised Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev for stressing the need to adapt to changing conditions.

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United Nations, the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe and other multinational organisations.

The meeting participants signed an agreement to hold 12 multi-level foreign ministerial meetings to discuss cooperation within the United Nations, the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe and other multinational organisations.

The group also signed draft agreements on security, including the fight against the illegal use of information technologies and the interstate programme of joint measures against crime for 2019-2023.

Participants also discussed so-

cial and humanitarian cooperation and Turkmenistan's proposal to declare 2021 a year of Architecture and Urban Development. The participants supported as well a Kyrgyz initiative to mark in 2018 the 90th anniversary of famous Kyrgyz writer Chingiz Aitmatov.

They also signed an agreement on youth policy called 100 Ideas for the CIS and agreements on education programmes, including training for professionals working with tax and financial investigations.

Russia was president of the council in 2017 and had proposed measures to improve the council's efficiency, which will be now reviewed by the council of ministers and the economic council. Turkmenistan is the council's 2018 president.

On the sidelines of the meeting, participants were received by President of the Republic of Belarus Alexander Lukashenko. Minister Abdrakhmanov also held bilateral talks with the heads of the Azerbaijan delegation Khalaf Khalafov and the Turkmenistan delegation Serdar Berdimukhammedov to discuss trade, economic and cultural-humanitarian cooperation, as well as preparations for the fifth Caspian Summit.

The next council meeting will be in Dushanbe in the fall.

ECONOMY

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 11, 2018

Kazakhstan joins OECD Steel Committee

By Meruyert Abugaliyeva

ASTANA – The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Steel Committee approved March 16 Kazakhstan's committee membership, allowing the country to interact with other major industry participants.

"After the presentation of Kazakhstan's steel industry policy preliminary review Sep. 28-29, 2017, the Steel Committee Secretariat decided to recommend the OECD Council invite Kazakhstan as an associate member," said Kazakh Ministry for Investment and Development press release.

The application took five years with significant efforts by the Industrial Development and Industrial Safety Committee of the ministry and the Kazakhstan Industry Development Institute. Throughout the application process, analytical works on the steel industry in Kazakhstan were developed as well as the medium-term and long-term goals on the market.

Membership on the committee will allow Kazakhstan to stay informed of the latest developments and react to market changes on time, addressing issues related to the steel industry on equal terms with other members – major steel producers. It will also provide unlimited access to research and analytical materials produced by the OECD.

Committee admittance was planned as part of a broader OECD Country Programme developed within the memorandum of understanding between the Kazakh government and the OECD.

The OECD Steel Committee provides a platform for governments to handle challenges facing the steel industry and work towards political solutions to ensure transparency on steel markets.

By promoting fair competition between steel producers, the OECD aspires to a more sustainable steel industry so that steel continues contributing to economic well-being globally.

The OECD, established in 1961, includes 35 countries, accounting for 45 percent of steel production worldwide and 75 percent of steel exports.

National Bank issues short-term notes through Invest Online

By Meruyert Abugaliyeva

ASTANA – Kazakhstan's National Bank has launched Invest Online, a system allowing Kazakhs to borrow funds by buying and selling short-term notes and securities recently issued by the bank. The safe and riskless investments can be completed at any time using the mobile app.

"The system operates round-the-clock and all the transactions are free of charge since no commission taxes are involved. The notes are also highly liquid; in other words, they can be sold and converted into cash at any time without risk of losing value and income is accrued on a daily basis. The transactions and income accrued can be monitored on the personal account in the

system," said National Bank Chair Daniyar Akishev.

The bank began March 27 issuing 50 billion tenge (US\$155.5 million) in short-term notes. The maturity or lifetime is one year with an interest rate of 8.5 percent.

The price of the notes is set to increase steadily; a 92.19 tenge (US\$0.286) note issued one day will be 92.21 tenge (US\$0.286) the following day and 92.23 tenge (US\$0.287) the next. After a year, a note will cost 100 tenge (US\$0.31).

"If one buys and sells the note in one day, he will earn the same amount of money. Moreover, one can receive more selling a note few days later. There is no limit on the number of notes available for one person to purchase," he added.

The application was developed

by the bank using three innovative solutions.

"First of all, blockchain technology was for the first time used on a state level. Each transaction is recorded as a series of individual blocks, which ensures information is safe and unchangeable. Secondly, it is the first time for the National Bank to issue electronic currency applicable for securities transactions. Finally, all the transactions are available online on electronic devices," said Akishev.

The app is available on Play Market and the App Store and registration can be completed using one's electronic digital signature or personal account in the Single Accumulative Pension Fund. Individuals can also join the system through a central securities depository account.

Eligibility is restricted to Kazakh citizens.

Special electronic currency created for the sale and purchase of given notes is easily convertible into tenge. The electronic wallet can be filled with cash via terminals or using a bank account. The reverse conversation is made through bank accounts only.

At present, the system can only be used to trade notes with the National Bank. In the future, however, it might also be possible for people to trade between one another.

"The technological capabilities of the system will allow trading not only National Bank's notes, but also securities of Kazakh companies entering an IPO to attract funds. In the future, Invest Online will be a safe and convenient platform for Kazakh citizens to trade any security," Akishev added.

ECONOMY NEWS IN BRIEF

Payment card turnover reached 2.5 trillion tenge (US\$7.8 billion) in January-February, a 45.3-percent increase compared to the same period last year, said ranking.kz. Cash withdrawals increased 28.1 percent to 1.8 trillion tenge (US\$5.6 billion). The volume of non-cash payments grew 2.4 times to 622 billion tenge (US\$1.94 billion), increasing their share during the year from 15.3 percent to 25.3 percent of the total turnover. Growth in non-cash payments was recorded in all 16 regions of the country. Almaty leads in volume with 403.3 billion tenge (US\$1.26 billion), followed by Astana with 55.9 billion tenge (US\$174.4 million) and the Karaganda region with 25.5 billion tenge (US\$79.56 million).

Three new production facilities will be commissioned this autumn in the Mangistau region, reported 24.kz. Azerbaijani businesspersons are investing in a plant producing cable products and transformers under construction in the Aktau Sea Port special economic zone (SEZ). The items will be oriented towards the domestic market. A second plant in the SEZ will manufacture polymer packaging and produce approximately 400 tonnes of plastic trays and containers a year slated for export. A 157 million tenge (US\$489,840) factory producing furniture and plastic windows will be located in the city's industrial zone. The three enterprises will provide jobs for more than 200 people.

The International Centre of Green Technologies and Investment Projects will be implementing innovative ideas approved during EXPO 2017 in Astana, reported kazakh-tv.kz. There are more than 100 projects for potential sponsors and all necessary procedures will be conducted at the centre on the expo grounds. "The centre aims to accumulate and transfer green technologies from developed countries to emerging countries. All information about green technologies will be collected there. This will help our country to fulfil its obligations under the Paris Climate Agreement," said Green Economy Coalition Chairperson Saltanat Rakhimbekova.

The Pavlodar petrochemical plant has shipped approximately 22,000 tonnes of bitumen required to construct roads in the region, reported inform.kz. "The question on the preparation of bitumen should be on daily control. In the summer, the supplier can raise the price for its products, because demand generates supply, and after that, builders will complain of the lack of funds and huge queues for bitumen. We have made special advance payment and the contractors have started to prepare materials," said Pavlodar region Akim (Governor) Bulat Bakauov during an extended meeting of the akimat (local administration).

South Kazakhstan region Akim (Governor) Zhanset Tuimbayev travelled to Sarygash district to review a number of peasant farms, reported inform.kz, including a strawberry farm established in 2011 in Bertleik rural district. Its greenhouse, measuring 1.6 hectares, cost 75 million tenge (US\$234,000) and the farm has a seasonal output of 50 tonnes. "Since last year, we have been shipping our products to Almaty and Astana. Thanks to the technology of drip irrigation, we have reduced costs and increased profits. Now, we are planning to increase the volume of production. For this, we need to work systematically," said farm manager Nurzhan Omarov.

Kazakh representatives are expanding the list of goods to export to Uzbekistan, according to kazakh-tv.kz. Supply agreements were signed at an international industrial exhibition in Tashkent. Large Kazakh enterprises will ship metallurgical and mining industry equipment, as well as chemical reagents, plastic and rubber products.

First-quarter inflation hits 1.8 percent

By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – The Kazakh inflation rate has reached 1.8 percent since the beginning of the year, reported Minister of National Economy Timur Suleimenov during an April 3 government meeting. At the same time, the rate remained within a 5-7-percent range.

The rates demonstrated a downward trend in prices for food products (2.2 percent) and non-food items (1.3 percent) compared to the first quarter of 2017, when prices grew 3.2 percent and 1.7 percent, respectively.

Ministry data showed prices were lower for buckwheat (12.6 percent), eggs (1.1 percent), rice (1 percent) and rapeseed oil (0.2 percent).

"Inflation in prices and tariffs for paid services remained at 1.7 percent," said Suleimenov, emphasizing the biggest price surge for paid services was observed in the legal (6 percent) and post (4.3 percent) areas.

The ministry seeks to keep the inflation rate within a 5-7 percent span this year and prevent the previous year's 7.1-percent price growth.

The Almaty, East Kazakhstan, Kyzylorda, North Kazakhstan, Pavlodar and South Kazakhstan regions witnessed price hikes that exceeded the nation's average, he noted.

"These regions need to undertake measures to curb price growth to preserve the inflation rate within a new corridor. At the same time, other regions need to continue maintaining a low inflation rate," he said.

Kazakh National Bank Chair Daniyar Akishev cited weakening imported inflation and declining consumer purchasing activity as key factors contributing to the slower food price growth this year compared to 2017.

"The inflation rate of trade partners such as Russia, China and the European Union remained low. The situation in the global food market is characterised by a price downfall across the majority of products. Second is moderate consumer buying behaviour, which is explained by a negative change in real wages and incomes of the population during 2016-2017," he said.

The nation's financial regulator projects a decrease in the annual inflation rate and 4-6 percent range for 2019.

"Inflation expectations within the population are declining and perception of real and future inflation is improving. The result of the survey across the population in February 2018 revealed inflation expectations have fallen from 7.7 percent in November 2017 to the current 6 percent," he noted.

Akishev added certain risks may hamper achieving the inflation-related objectives, including supply shocks in certain goods and services markets, the population's subsequent rising inflation expectations and stimulating consumption with the help of budgetary, borrowed resources and lending. In the case of the latter, import revenues will soar without developing domestic production, he said.

Chinese company to build wind and solar power stations

By Dana Omirgazy

ASTANA – China's Jiangsu Zhenfa Holdings Group Co. Ltd investment company will start construction in August on \$154.5 million wind and solar power stations in the South Kazakhstan region. The new facilities are expected to generate 50 megawatts per hour of wind power and 30 megawatts per hour of solar energy. Kentau is a city located 150 kilometres northwest from the regional capital Shymkent.

Kazakhstan's Ambassador to China Shakhmat Nuryshv and

Vice President of Jiangsu Zhenfa Holdings Group Co. Ltd Hu Wei discussed the implementation of the renewable energy projects during a March 19 meeting.

"The construction of the projects will be completed within two years. The sides exchanged views on the inclusion of this project in the list of priority projects of cooperation within the Programme on Industrialisation and Investments implemented between Kazakhstan and China," the press service of Kazakhstan's embassy in China reported.

Nuryshv stressed that Kazakhstan attaches great importance to

the development of alternative energy sources.

"In 2017, Astana hosted the EXPO 2017, the main theme of which was the future energy. Our country will continue developing the potential of clean energy," the ambassador said.

The diplomat focused on the country's preferential policies for foreign investors engaged in priority areas for cooperation in Kazakhstan, such as transport and logistics infrastructure, water supply, energy and others. Wei noted that Kazakhstan has great potential to implement renewable energy projects. Upcoming projects can

become exemplary in renewable energy cooperation between the two countries, he said, according to the embassy.

The Jiangsu Zhenfa Holdings Group Co. Ltd company owns 40 power plants in China and provides 10 percent of the Chinese market with photovoltaic power stations. Recently, the corporation completed a four-gigawatt power plant. The investment company cooperates with the China Energy Conservation Association and the China Guangdong Nuclear Power Group. The company's branches are located in Turkey, Pakistan, the U.S. and other countries.

SPIID programme increases manufacturing value

By Aigerim Sadykova

ASTANA – The 2015-2019 State Programme of Industrial and Innovative Development (SPIID) has contributed to increasing the manufacturing industry volume by 5.7 percent while raising industry exports by 10.5 percent last year compared to 2015, said Minister for Investment and Development Zhenis Kassymbek during the March 27 government meeting.

The growth was the result of increases in metallurgy, oil refining, the chemical industry, pharmacy and food production, the minister told the meeting chaired by Prime Minister Bakytzhan Sagintayev. Manufacturing exports totalled \$15.5 billion and investment volume increased 8.8 percent from 2015, reaching approximately \$3 billion.

Kazakhstan's manufacturing products are exported to 122 countries. The nation is among the top five suppliers and occupies an 8-percent share of the imports to Central Asia countries. Supplying products to neighbouring countries grew by 30 percent, or \$1.5 billion.

In the last three years, SPIID has generated 378 projects worth \$9.4

billion, resulting in 30,000 jobs. The ministry added 150 new projects valued up to \$3.1 billion, creating 15,000 jobs by the end of the year. A Prommashkomplekt railway wheels production complex and Asia Steel Pipe Corporation factory manufacturing large diameter welded pipes are among the

projects, according to Kassymbek.

He noted the ministry has initiated the industrial-innovative development concept for 2020-2024 and will finish the work by the end of the year. While in the drafting phase, Sagintayev suggested Kassymbek consider possible new technologies.

Despite the good results and manufacturing industry growth, its share of the economy has not exceeded 11 percent in recent years, he added.

Minister of National Economy Timur Suleimenov and Minister of Energy Kanat Bozumbayev summed up SPIID's results for

2017. The former noted the quality of the programme planning, as SPIID indicators were not revised, achieving 78 percent of their goals. The second stage of reconstructing and modernising the Shymkent oil refinery will end this year, increasing the refining depth to 87-90 percent, said Bozumbayev.

A polypropylene production plant with a capacity of 500,000 tonnes and six major projects will be implemented in the energy sector. The Pavlodar oil refinery was also modernised.

"The motor fuels production of ecological K4 and K5 classes and production of 100 percent high-octane gasoline was established. Pavlodar oil refinery processes West Siberian oil with 5.5 million tonnes per year and Kazakhstan's oil is 4.7 million tonnes per year. The production of aviation fuel will be set at about 13,000 tonnes per month in the second half of 2018," he added.

Up to 100 projects were included in regional business maps, but not all of them follow the industrialisation priorities and need to be under the control of the National Economy and Investment and Development ministries, said Sagintayev.



Photo credit: kapital.kz

BUSINESS

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 11, 2018

BUSINESS NEWS IN BRIEF

Construction of modern waste-processing plant in Astana will begin in August and end in September 2019. The facility worth 3.4 billion tenge (US\$10.6 million) will process 180,000 tonnes of organic waste, 50 percent of total waste volume. The project also involves purchasing 25 garbage trucks and more than 6,000 waste containers for 1.8 billion tenge (US\$5.62 million), which will be installed in all yards by September. City Mayor Asset Issekeshov noted the plant will apply French waste-processing technology, which was presented during EXPO 2017. The differentiation of waste as dry and wet will be applied in Kazakhstan for the first time.

Seven projects worth more than 19 billion tenge (US\$59 million) will be launched in the Tassay industrial zone in the South Kazakhstan region this year, according to inform.kz. The facilities employ 70 workers. One of the projects is a 110-220 voltage transformer manufacturing plant, which has been under construction since 2016. Each year, the plant will produce 120 transformers satisfying Commonwealth of Independent States requirements. Overall, the Tassay industrial zone will consist of 25 projects and create more than 1,600 workplaces on a territory of 84 hectares.

The State Revenue Committee of the Ministry of Finance discussed tax breaks for online shops as starting Jan. 1. To date, there are about 3,000 companies working in e-commerce, 50 of which have been registered since March 7 for tax exemption. To be eligible for the tax break, several criteria must be satisfied, namely non-cash payment, online contracts and availability of delivery service. Moreover, revenue from e-commerce must comprise not less than 90 percent of company's annual income or over the tax period. The measure is undertaken to promote e-commerce and non-cash payment and ensure transparency.

Construction of a pesticide plant will begin this year in the Kairat industrial zone in the Talgar district of the Almaty region. Turkish investor Agrobrest Group has invested \$30 million to launch production of herbicides, insecticides, fungicides and glyphosates with the support of Kazakh Invest. Construction works are estimated to end in 2019. The plant capable of producing up to 12,000 tonnes of pesticides annually will create 200 jobs. Around 60 percent of production volume will cover domestic demand, the remainder will be exported to Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan.

Business people from Singapore expressed their willingness to finance the construction of a small-capacity oil refinery in Karaganda region and several gas stations. The project in Atasu village of Zhanaarka district will cost more than 300 billion tenge (US\$936 million). The plans are to construct facilities capable of processing up to 1 million tonnes of oil annually by 2021. Overall, the construction process will require 3,000 workers and later create 800 jobs. The products of the Atasu oil refinery will satisfy Euro-5 standards. Investors also want to build housing as well as a kindergarten hospital for plant workers.

The construction of a textile factory has started in Mangystau Industrial Park. The project worth 97 billion tenge (US\$302 million) will be capable of producing up to 32,400 tonnes of wool annually. The factory will also produce 60,000 metres of cotton fabric per day. The construction works will involve 200 workers and the plant will employ 700 workers upon completion. The plans are to use local raw materials along with some imports from Uzbekistan and then export the products. The Mangystau Industrial Park will also include a gas turbine station, steel-rolling mill and ferrochrome plant.

Kazakh Invest works on improving investment climate, executive says

By Arsen Omarov

ASTANA – Kazakhstan is Central Asia's recognised leader in terms of investment attraction: this country accounts for more than 70 percent of all foreign direct investments into the region.

The world market is volatile, however, and any slump in demand for ores and metals, along with a decrease in world oil prices, may entail a notable outflow of foreign capital.

Therefore, it is crucial to have a clear understanding about the ways of building better business relations with international companies so they continue investing in the national economy.

To improve the investment climate in Kazakhstan, the country's President has created a national company, Kazakh Invest, tasked to be the sole negotiator between the government and international businesses. For the same purposes, the government also drafted the National Investment Strategy for 2018-2022 that is about providing investors with comprehensive support.

"Our company has created a network of foreign and regional representative offices to help investors domestically and internationally in the procurement of permits and interaction with local and central executive authorities," said Marat Birimzhan, the deputy chairman of the board of Kazakh Invest.

The work scope is massive. At the beginning of the year, the company created a list of 145 projects with participation of foreign investors, which envisages the creation of nearly 35,000 jobs. To this date, 31 projects have been added to the list. The total value of the in-



Marat Birimzhan

vestment projects amounts to \$45.7 billion.

In 2018, local administrations and stakeholders are planning to start the implementation of 52 projects worth nearly \$5 billion. It is scheduled to commission 50 projects totaling \$3 billion.

Indeed, it is important not only to attract investors with interesting proposals, the company believes, as its work does not end there. It is also crucial to create comfortable conditions for their work, the company executives say. For example, this year, the company is launching an informational and monitoring system that will monitor the project process, to interact with foreign companies and government bodies. It will help oversee the project's stages and timely identify emerging issues.

"The full launch of the system is scheduled for the first half of the year. The system will be accessed by all governmental agencies, foreign institutions, and local administrations. Our mission is to coordinate the work in different regions of the country. Besides, investors will be able to use this system to monitor the resolution of issues relating to their projects," said Birimzhan.

"We will apply the urgent response principle to ensure timely

problem solving, like an ambulance. To this end, we are planning to strengthen the institution of the Investment Ombudsman and to open the All-Kazakhstan Call Centre in the first half of the year, which will operate 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The main goal is to resolve any issues posed by investors – even if it is about registering family members in the migration service or finding schools and hospitals," Birimzhan explained.

Attracting foreign investors is undoubtedly a complicated process. It requires creativity, in-depth knowledge, experience and comprehensive approach. The analysis conducted by Kazakh Invest specialists identified 11 priority countries that account for almost 80 percent of all direct investments in the world. Kazakh Invest intends to establish close cooperation with these countries regarding their intention to invest in the economy of the Central Asian region.

Each priority country or group of countries will be assigned its own "country strategy." The representatives of Kazakh Invest look for promising companies that plan to expand their presence in the region in the next five years and propose to them Kazakh projects. For the successful implementation of the "country strategy," the company has hired local experts in the countries such as the United States, Germany, France and Turkey. It has also engaged special companies that provide support to investors.

"Working in Kazakhstan, foreign investors particularly value the country's political, economic and social stability. Surely, they are also attracted by Kazakhstan's strategic location in the heart of the Eurasian continent,

which contributes to the optimal logistics chain for the export of finished products to neighbouring countries, such as Russia, China and Central Asian countries," Birimzhan said.

In fact, most foreign investments have been made into extractive sectors for a long time. Companies were mainly interested in our raw materials. Today, however, Kazakhstan intends to increase the capital inflow to the value-added sector.

In 2018, local administrations and stakeholders are planning to start the implementation of 52 projects worth nearly \$5 billion. It is scheduled to commission 50 projects totaling \$3 billion.

"We have identified the first-priority sectors and branches of economy for attraction of new investments. They are food industry, deep processing of oil, gas and minerals (metallurgy, chemistry and petro-chemistry) and mechanical engineering. When searching for investors and planning projects, we focus on these sectors. In the future, the priority sector list may be supplemented with ICT, tourism and finance. However, if an investor wants to build a pharmaceutical plant or a garment factory, that investor will receive the same attentive support," said Birimzhan. "Besides, we devel-

op projects with estimated profitability and risks that could be attractive for potential investors, including local ones."

The company's high-priority portfolio offers 50 projects, which are ready for implementation and worth nearly \$20 billion. Their descriptions have been sent as business proposals to embassies and foreign representative offices. "We already see the first results – potential investors have shown interest in some projects and negotiations have begun. In 2018, it is planned to add about 100 projects to the list of proposals for businesses," the executive explained.

"We sometimes hear concerns that foreign investors are given priority over local businesses. In fact, foreign companies that plan to start a business in Kazakhstan have to look for a local partner in the first place. For Kazakh entrepreneurs, this cooperation offers an opportunity to embrace new innovative technologies and improve the skills of their employees," said Birimzhan.

Most importantly, the products made in Kazakhstan will be able to enter the international markets faster thanks to the opportunities offered by foreign partners. A classic example: one of the largest groups in Europe – Polpharma – bought the share of Khimfarm in Shymkent by investing \$100 million dollars, built three large plants and began exporting its products. As a result, the winners are the local investors, because the project attracted highly skilled staff, technologies, and money.

According to Birimzhan, successful work with foreign investments improves the country's credibility and helps it attract new investors.

EBRD to finance irrigation system reconstruction in Zhambyl region



By Amir Khaidar

ASTANA – The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) is allocating 24.2 billion tenge (US\$75.8 million) to reconstruct the Zhambyl region irrigation system. The deal is part of the extensive financing package signed in May which will invest more than 57 billion tenge (US\$180 million) to rebuild irrigation systems across three Kazakh regions.

Zhambyl region has 117 bodies of water, five reservoirs and 13 canals stretching more than 3,000 kilometres. Its irrigation facilities are transferring from communal ownership to national control, according to the regional akimat (administration), and the government agency will oversee the reconstruction projects and guarantee maintenance and operational security.

In 2016, 206.2 million tenge (US\$645,900) from the regional budget was spent to rebuild 18 water facilities owned by communal services, a figure increased to 402 million tenge (US\$1.3 million) the following year. Mechanically cleaning the canals and maintain-

ing 23 water reservoirs and ponds has also been completed.

With the help of EBRD funds, plans are underway to reconstruct the existing irrigation system covering more than 51,000 hectares. To date, 286 canals measuring 38,700 hectares have already been transferred from communal ownership to the state. The remaining canals on 12,300 hectares, including those in private ownership or abandoned, will be transferred according to the projected plan by the end of the year.

The project falls under EBRD's Green Economy Transition programme, an initiative aiming to increase the share of green financing up to 40 percent of the bank's annual investment volume by 2020. Improving the Zhambyl region's irrigation system is also expected to benefit the area's economic and social situation.

Kazakhstan previously partnered with the Islamic Development Bank and World Bank to modernise and increase the efficiency of the country's irrigation system. Loan agreements totaling 83.9 billion tenge (US\$263 million) provided infrastructure modernisation in the Almaty and Kyzylorda regions.

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EDITORIAL & OPINION

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 11, 2018

Rukhani Zhangyru – National Identity Programme: one year on

The health and strength of a nation, as we have witnessed repeatedly across the world, depends on more than just its economy. In fact, a clear, secure yet forward-looking sense of national identity and purpose can instead be the difference between those societies which struggle in testing economic times or fracture when faced with natural or man-made disasters and those which overcome the challenges they face.

It is a reality that President Nursultan Nazarbayev showed he fully understood when a year ago he coupled an ambitious programme of economic reform with plans to support and modernise Kazakhstan's national identity. The announcement underlined the determination to build on a national character and cohesiveness, which has proved critical in the country's remarkable journey over the last 26 years.

It is a character, for example, which is moderate in attitudes, which helps explain why extremist views have found little resonance here in Kazakhstan. It is also outward-looking as you might expect from somewhere, which for centuries has been where cultures and people meet. This openness to ideas and influences is why the country has been so successful in attracting outside investment and building economic partnerships to boost growth and living standards.

The Modernisation of National Identity programme – and the practical measures which underpinned it – unveiled a year ago were aimed at strengthening these positive national characteristics and links with Kazakhstan's history, traditions and values.

Over the last year, we have seen the measures begin to be rolled out, putting a new emphasis on the rich history, both ancient and modern, of our country and its people. Important archaeological and sacred sites are being identified and restored across the country and a renewed effort at local level and national level to explain their importance. The 100 New Faces of Kazakhstan initiative will see individual stories from every walk of life publicised to reveal how the country has been transformed in recent decades.

But there is nothing, as we said in these pages a year ago, backward-looking about what is underway. The intention is not to lock the country in the past or freeze the national identity but instead adapt and

modernise it in order to provide a launchpad for Kazakhstan's continued development. How this is to be achieved has also become clearer over the last 12 months.

The gradual switch to the Latin alphabet, with a target date for the change now set for 2025, is perhaps the clearest example of this determination. It was never going to be an easy or straightforward task but it will be worth the effort. The move will bring Kazakhstan into line with 70 per cent of the world's countries and will be invaluable in opening up new opportunities in business, education and science.

It is the same reasoning which lies behind the commitment to ensure the young generation have the education and skills they need to thrive in the decades ahead. The new emphasis on IT skills and English, for example, in schools and colleges shows a country with confidence in the ability of its young people.

We have seen as well over the last year significant progress in the two-way exchange of ideas and culture. On one side, we are seeing the programme to make the most significant global text books in the humanities available in the Kazakh language gather pace. Twenty of these important texts have already been translated and will soon be ready for use by students to broaden their education. It confirms that Kazakhstan will always be open to fresh, constructive influences and rejects a one-dimensional way of looking at the world.

At the same time, plans to give exposure around the world to the cultural strength of modern Kazakhstan are going ahead. They include international tours by the country's prestigious opera and ballet companies and the promotion of the work of Kazakh musicians, writers and artists. The richness of Kazakh culture deserves a wider audience and will help attract more investment, more visitors and more influence for our country.

In some ways, what is happening in Kazakhstan can seem out of tune with events elsewhere in the world. We seem to be in a period, across the continents, where countries are becoming more insular, seemingly trying to turn back the clock or shut the door on the rest of the world. But as we said last year, modern patriotism is about not just preserving what makes a country special but also being ready to adapt and engage. That is how Kazakhstan is preparing for the future.

Investments in manufacturing almost triple, positive dynamics in SEZs, says official

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – The share of investments in manufacturing has increased almost three-fold since Kazakhstan initiated the state programme on industrialisation, reaching approximately 24 per cent of foreign direct investments since 2006. The indicator was previously 8-8.5 per cent, said Investment Committee Chairman Yerlan Khairov in an exclusive interview with The Astana Times.

"The head of state set a task to increase the volume of foreign investment in the manufacturing sector. The total amount of investment remained an average of \$20 billion [a year], but the share in the manufacturing sector increased. We have an increase of investments in machinery, pharmacy, light and food production," he noted. The Investment Committee is part of the Ministry for Investment and Development.

According to the official, the total volume of foreign investments was \$264.4 billion from 2005-2017. "The investments grew more than 40 per cent in 2016 compared to 2015. We annually attract about \$20.8 billion and the indicator from 2017 showed the continuation of the same trend," he explained.

Kazakhstan employs a three-tier cooperation system among state bodies at the external, central and regional levels.

"We have special advisors in 10 priority countries including China, Germany, Japan, Italy, Iran, France, South Korea, the U.S., the U.K. and Turkey. The committee closely cooperates with the foreign policy bodies. We hold joint events on a regular basis with the diplomatic corps located



Yerlan Khairov

in Kazakhstan to discuss the mechanisms of interaction. We conduct business forums and seminars with the participation of the President, the head of our government and potential investors. We annually hold about 20 business forums in the country and worldwide," he said.

Kazakh Invest national company was established last year, with departments operating in national companies, the ministry and other state bodies. The company formed special investor councils and has representatives in the regions.

The Council of Foreign Investors with the participation of the President is a key annual event. The country's accelerated modernisation is the theme of its 31st meeting, to be held June 7.

"This year, we mark the 20th anniversary of the council. This is a unique opportunity to exchange opinions and ideas. We held forums, seminars and presentations during EXPO 2017. The unique expo site allowed us to show our developments and aspirations and to promote our investment potential. The Kazakh Invest office operated on the site," said Khairov.

"We provide state in-kind grants for industrial facility and customs duty exemption while importing equipment. There are five priority areas

including chemistry, petrochemicals, metallurgy, food production and machine industry. The preferences include property tax exemption up to eight years and land tax and corporate income tax exemption up to 10 years if the investment amount is more than \$14 million. The employment of foreign labour is permitted for the construction period and one year after commissioning. We also offer refunds to cover the construction, equipment and installation work costs up to 30 per cent," he added.

Single window provides for securing all documents, from visas to subsoil use and investment contracts, at one site. Last year, it recorded more than 8,000 public services.

"There's great interest from foreign investors in the logistics and the use of our transit potential. The growth of container shipments from China to Europe is annually growing by an average of 100 per cent," he said.

The Khorgos-Eastern Gate Special Economic Zone (SEZ) signed an agreement with the COSCO Shipping and Lianyungang port, which acquired a 49-per cent share in Khorgos Getaway dry port. Transit revenue is predicted at \$5 billion a year by 2020.

"We also attract investors to work in the field of the food industry, with further export to the Chinese and Russian markets as part of the Eurasian Economic Union. Large projects in chemistry and petrochemistry are under consideration," he said.

In 2017, the committee worked with the World Bank to develop and adopt the National Investment Strategy for 2018-2022, which identifies the mechanisms and roles of state authorities, national companies and regional ad-

ministrations. The current investment legislation is available in English.

"We constantly conduct satisfaction surveys and ratings of existing investors. We should not just monitor; we must give a critical assessment of the activities," he said.

The committee also launched customer relationship management (CRM), an information and monitoring system.

"There are 11 SEZs with different specializations in Kazakhstan. We have over 170 projects and 13,000 workplaces have already been created. We expect about 100 new projects and 10,000 jobs by 2020. We expect significant projects at the Khimfarm Taraz, Pavlodar and major gas processing projects in Atyrau. We submitted the draft law on SEZ to introduce the single window to the Mazhilis (lower house of Parliament) to simplify the procedures," said Khairov.

Kazakhstan joined the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) declaration on international investment and new national enterprises and the OECD Investment Committee invited the country as an associate member in 2017.

"We carried out a number of analyses for over five years. We now have an investment board under the Supreme Court. We have a visa-free regime with around 60 countries. We considerably simplified migration procedures. The customs and tax administration are also being simplified. We strengthened the protection of intellectual property. We plan to hold the Kazakh Invest forum, a platform for potential investors during the celebration of the 20th anniversary of the capital in July," he added.

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OPINIONS

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 11, 2018

Astana Process: one step closer to peace

By Adil Kaukenov

The most recent ministerial meeting on Syria in Astana on March 16 extended the ceasefire in the de-escalation zones and gave the guarantors an opportunity to compare notes.

This March marked seven years since the beginning of one of the bloodiest conflicts of our time, the civil war in Syria. The settlement of the protracted confrontation is among the top priorities not only for Syria and the states of the Middle East, but also for major world powers. Just as in Syria itself, interests and claims of the opposing forces have been closely intertwined, so "the Syrian knot" has become too tight for global and regional players. And there is no way to cut such a knot, since this allegory represents hundreds of thousands of human victims, growing in number every day.

It is for these reasons that the value of the negotiating platforms, where the opposing sides of all levels could discuss their demands and the vision of how to resolve the conflict and find some mutually acceptable positions on these issues, is incredibly high.

Ministerial meeting

Astana, which in a little more than a year has already held eight rounds of Syrian talks attended by the parties to the conflict, guarantors and international organisations, most notably the UN, became such a platform in 2017.

Furthermore, smaller, but equally extremely important meetings have also taken place as part of the Astana



Process. Thus, March 16 saw the ministerial meeting of the guarantors: Iran, Russia and Turkey. Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu participated in it.

The recent ministerial meeting became another step in the diplomatic struggle to resolve the Syrian conflict. Since the civil war in Syria has become protracted and apart from domestic disputes, global and regional players are being overactive there; Kazakh diplomacy has at some point demonstrated its willingness to exert every effort to bring together different parties to the conflict at the negotiating table.

It is, of course, impossible to deliver a result overnight in such a controversial conflict as there are a lot of parties, different interests and actors involved who have been tearing each other apart for years. Everybody understands this, so there should be no relaxing.

Artificial competition of platforms

Along with this, there is sometimes a certain competition be-

tween the two main platforms for Syrian talks: Astana and Geneva.

For the most part, this competition is artificial and even contrived since both processes fulfill the same task – finding common ground between the opposing sides. However, as external players actively confront each other, both on the battlefield and in diplomatic battles, there is a natural desire to get as many victories as possible, both military and diplomatic ones. And this gives rise to unnecessary controversies between the two platforms working on the same issue.

In recent months, the conflict in Syria has deteriorated and relations between the United States and Russia have deteriorated as well, particularly after the bombing of the Russian Wagner private military company (PMC) by U.S. military forces and violent clashes in Eastern Ghouta. Turkey's military operations in Syria and its confrontation with Kurdish forces are not an easy situation.

In this vein, the decision on the de-escalation zones adopted during the Astana Process becomes particularly relevant. The fact that several key external forces, namely Russia, Iran, and Turkey, have managed to reach a consensus to reduce the bitterness of hostilities, a recipe for helping the civilian population and a common vision on the conflict de-escalation, is worth a lot. Moreover, the day before Astana hosted the first meeting of the working group on the exchange of detainees, handover of bodies and identification of missing persons, established as a follow-up to the eighth round of the Astana talks.

De-escalation zones

As for the main practical achievement of the Astana Process, the de-escalation zones, one should note that the agreements created four such zones for six months.

The first zone, covering Idlib province, also includes the north-eastern regions of Latakia, the western provinces of Aleppo and the northern regions of Hama province. More than a million civilians live in this zone.

The second zone extends to the Rastan and Talbiseh enclave in the northern part of Homs province. About 180,000 civilians live in this zone.

The third one is the most problematic to date; the zone is located in the northern suburbs of Damascus in Eastern Ghouta. About 700,000 civilians live here.

Last but not least, the fourth zone includes the provinces of Daraa and Quneitra in the south near the Syrian border with Jordan. The number of civilians here is close to 800,000 people.

According to the Astana agreements, both government forces and insurgents had to stop all hostilities in these territories, including air strikes, for six months. These zones should be surrounded by security buffers, as well as observation posts of the guarantor responsible for a certain zone. Finally, the zones should receive precise and unhindered deliveries of humanitarian aid.

And except for the third zone covering Eastern Ghouta, these decisions managed to restore relative calm in the remaining three

zones. According to the collective statement of the foreign ministers published following the March 16 Astana meeting, all four de-escalation zones will continue to operate.

The zones were due to stop operating last year, but the measure has been extended; however, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov stressed that the zones could continue to operate depending on the situation on the ground.

Eurasian framework of Astana Process

The fact that the Astana Process has been launched, has become regular and its decisions are working contributes to the settlement of the conflict and saving human lives – this, of course, is a huge breakthrough for Kazakhstan's diplomacy, especially considering how difficult it is to take any joint decision in a zone of the Syrian conflict.

In this sense, the fact that there are two tracks, Geneva and Astana, is definitely a positive factor, because each of the processes unites its own blocks and creates successful examples which then could be used by other parties.

The unique nature of the Astana Process is mostly related to the Eurasian concept of Kazakhstan's foreign policy doctrine. Even if we consider the three players united by the Astana Process, Russia, Iran and Turkey, it can be noted that they chose Astana for a reason, as Kazakhstan has partnership and friendly relations with each of these countries.

The country has close historical, political, economic and military ties with Russia. With regards to Turkey, the proximity of the Turkic and Islamic world is multiplied by

cultural identity and many forms of economic and military cooperation; as for Iran, there are time-tested partnership and joint projects, from the Caspian Sea to the Kazakhstan-Turkmenistan-Iran railway.

That being said, there is a need to emphasise the importance of Turkey in the Astana Process. This is due to the fact that Turkey is a member of NATO, having one of the largest European military forces and a strong voice within the Western alliance and the Muslim world.

And, although Turkey, Iran and Russia have very complicated relations (one can recall a Russian pilot shot down by the Turkish military, the mutual criticism of Iran and Turkey and, if we look back in time, [Russian Ambassador to Persia] Griboyedov's murder or Ayatollah Khomeini's harsh criticism of the Soviet Union), Kazakh diplomats managed to create a point of trust in Astana for such complex partners.

The outcomes of the ministerial meeting, despite the alarming news from Eastern Ghouta, showed that Turkey, Iran and Russia agreed to continue the operation of the de-escalation zones and their responsibility for it. Despite the absence of breakthrough statements, the opportunity to compare notes and have a regular exchange of views on the development of the conflict is an important part of the restart of the peace process.

It is essential to continue searching for ways to resolve the conflict in a dynamic and constructive manner and, in this respect, it was good news that the leaders of the countries concerned decided to hold the ninth round of the Astana talks in May.

The author is an independent political scientist.

Never say never

By Igor Nevolin

Would Kazakhstan become a platform where US leader Donald Trump and DPRK's Kim Jong-un will hold talks at the end of May on the denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula?

The unexpected visit to Beijing by Chairman of the State Affairs Commission of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) Kim Jong-un for, as specially emphasised, an informal meeting with Chairman of the People's Republic of China (PRC) Xi Jinping gave rise to many speculations (the meeting of the heads of state held on March 25-27 was officially announced post factum).

That is why some people, including Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, diplomatically asked the Chinese side to explain the meeting's true reasons. However, the next day, when it became clear that the leadership of the United States, South Korea and the leaders of several other states had been aware of this event, all of Tokyo's questions were removed. The Chinese diplomacy timely helped in reducing the tension that was almost there.

In general, the whole world and especially the Far East look forward for the upcoming US-DPRK summit. It is obvious that none of



the regional countries would like to see the Korean Peninsula turn into another hot spot on the planet. Nevertheless, beyond that, each has its own expectations with regard to the negotiations on North Korea's nuclear disarmament.

For instance, Abe even vowed before his people to expand the talks' agenda with "the Japanese issue" – the country's problem with the citizens kidnapped by North Korean intelligence back in 1970s. During the period of thaw in bilateral relations, Pyongyang recognised the kidnapping of 13 people. However, the special commission stopped its work because of tougher sanctions against the DPRK caused by its nuclear programme.

Undoubtedly, South Korea expects that negotiations will not only resolve the issue of eliminating the neighbour's nuclear arsenal, but also something more. For example, it anticipates a union of

the two Koreas. Why not? Historically, there already was the reunification of the FRG (Federal Republic of Germany) and the GDR (German Democratic Republic); moreover, a certain semblance of dialogue between Pyongyang and Seoul should be taken into account.

Originally, there are no doubts that China is mainly focused on preserving peace in its neighbourhood and perhaps, it also wishes Seoul's dream of unification to remain just a dream for as long as possible, so that South Korea would not receive additional advantages in its economic rivalry with the PRC.

Indonesia, Malaysia and Australia, who are the DPRK's nominal neighbours, as well as adjacent Russia, have their own expectations. At the same time, foreign media fear that the summit itself can be cancelled at the last minute, emphasising that a venue for the May talks has not yet been announced.

Understandably, none of the contracting parties can become such a platform. The selection of a neutral territory is also complicated by the fact that the DPRK simply does not have diplomatic relations with most of the world countries due to the long isolationist foreign policy of Pyongyang.

Currently, Sweden is the window to the big world for North Korea.

As an alternative, the summit could be held in Stockholm. Still, there are no official statements so far.

Having this background, why doesn't Astana once again assume the role of peacemaker after successfully dealing with the tension between Russia and Turkey? After all, there is no such country that would have a strained relationship with Kazakhstan. Moreover, the republic actively advocates the universal prohibition of nuclear weapons around the globe and, historically, it is one of the first countries that voluntarily renounced the nuclear arsenal.

This was repeatedly emphasised by the USA during the recent visit of President Nursultan Nazarbayev to America. The then U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson specifically stated that our country serves as an exceptional example of wisdom in nuclear policy.

Tillerson said that, in partnership with the United States, Kazakhstan opted to remove former Soviet weapons and related nuclear technologies from its territory and joined the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty as a non-nuclear weapon state.

The former secretary of state also noted that the courageous decision of Kazakhstan's leadership was a key step towards engaging the country in the community of nations. "As a result of letting go of nuclear weapons, the world does not look on Kazakhstan as a potential nuclear aggressor or a rogue state," he said.

In essence, judging by Kim's attempts to bridge relations with the rest of the world in order to lift the sanctions and gain opportunities for the economic development of his country, the DPRK strives to become a full-fledged member of the community of nations, giving up on the image of an outcast.

By and large, the case story of Kazakhstan is an additional incentive for the successful holding of the U.S.-North Korean summit. It is unlikely that any of the great powers would not support Astana as a negotiating forum. In every case, it is clear from the assessments given to our country that the USA, Russia and China certainly would have no objections to this. Additionally, Kazakhstan is a good friend of both Koreas, since 100,000 ethnic Koreans live in Kazakhstan.

In February, during a meeting with Kazakh journalists, China's Consul General in Almaty Zhang Wei stressed that Beijing appreciates Astana's efforts to tackle the North Korean matter and said that Kazakhstan, despite being a regional country, has a very significant influence in the world and plays an active role in addressing acute regional problems. So, why not?

Generally speaking, if negotiations are held, they could be carried out in the first country of the world that had voluntarily renounced nuclear weapons. Meanwhile, there is no reason why they could not take place. In any case, no one argues that the DPRK does

not comply with the obligations to stop testing its weapons. The militant rhetoric against Pyongyang and its leader coming from the other side of the ocean has ceased to be. Kim has made his first ever visit to another country – China – and the visit was rightly understood by the international community. Preparations for his meeting with South Korean President Moon Jae-in were announced on Thursday. The possibility of a bilateral summit with the DPRK was also voiced by Japan.

So, the current forecasts are quite optimistic.

Moreover, after the meeting between Xi and Kim, Chinese news agency Xinhua distributed the official statement, where the start of a new era not only in bilateral relations but also in the Far East was mentioned, the general meaning of which is to grow in peaceful coexistence. In particular, the media quoted the words of the PRC's leader: "Under the new conditions, I am ready to maintain constant contacts with Comrade Chairman through mutual visits..." It is symbolic because the wording "mutual visits" in the context of international sanctions against North Korea means that Beijing is likely to believe in a successful denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula in the near future.

The author is an observer and journalist with Vremya newspaper.

Digitisation and strong civil society are antidotes to corruption

By Aizhanat Kushtarova

Every member of the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) has agreed to employ a proactive approach in promoting transparency and increasing public awareness in the fight against corruption. Since its ratification in 2008, Kazakhstan, by being part of the UNCAC, has changed its anti-corruption policy by dramatically shifting from the use of law enforcement measures to building a transparent and accountable government.

In this context, the digitisation of public service and active civil society plays a crucial role in deterring corruption. For instance, 10 years ago Kazakhstan transferred the public procurement system to an electronic format.



The new e-government platform Open Government has been launched. The platform consists of a number of portals, namely Open data, Open legislative acts, Open dialogue, Open budget and Effectiveness of state agencies. It discloses information on government expenditure, achievements of state agencies, statistics, etc. In

addition, drafts of legislative acts are being published on the platform in order to discuss them with citizens.

What's more important is that the feedback must be taken into account.

Open dialogue is the easiest and fastest way for state agencies to communicate with society. A number of activities such as Internet conferences, high-ranking officials' personal blogs and surveys are running on a regular basis.

Another important area is public service delivery. It received an impetus for its development in 2007 with the introduction of the legislation for standardisation, automation and government control over the quality of public services rendered.

One-Stop-Shops and the state corporation Government for Citizens have been created. The cor-

poration is a unified provider of socially important services.

The Kazakh public service delivery system is developing further. For instance, currently the issuance of birth certificates, applications for nursery school and maternity allowance are available by sending a text message to the corporation's special number once a child has been born.

Today, a key task is to shift the public service delivery system into electronic format. Last year, 72 percent of public services were rendered electronically (49 percent online, 23 percent through the corporation). These innovations have led to a two-thirds reduction in petty corruption.

In addition, annually, the Agency for Civil Service Affairs and Anti-Corruption, in partnership with the non-government sector, assesses the

level of citizens' satisfaction with the quality of provided services.

The assessment is not the only mutual activity with non-government organisations. For example, last year in cooperation with the National Entrepreneurs Chamber the agency analysed corruption risks in the supervisory, tax and customs areas, education, health care, land resources and so on.

In order to build large-scale public awareness of the principle of not giving and not taking bribes, voluntary clubs called Honest Generation and Civil control and the Open agreement projects have been introduced. The projects have brought together more than 40,000 organisations and 60,000 citizens.

With the support of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), a textbook

on the basics of anti-corruption culture was published and the subject is now taught in all higher education institutions in the country.

The next step is the use of crowd-sourcing. Therefore, the Public control map project has been recently launched.

The main idea of the project is to provide a platform for citizens to easily file a complaint regarding any issues in their regions or inappropriate civil servants' conduct.

These endeavours are expected to be continued and developed further.

The author is Director of the Department of Strategic Developments and International Programmes at the Agency of the Republic of Kazakhstan for Civil Service Affairs and Anti-Corruption.

EURASIA&WORLD

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 11, 2018

Afghan Public Health Ministry employees attend seminar in Astana

By Amir Khaidar

ASTANA – Afghan public health workers arrived in the Kazakh capital April 2 for a two-week capacity-building seminar on maternal and child healthcare organised by the Kazakh Ministry of Foreign Affairs in partnership with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA).

The inaugural panel session was attended by top-ranking officials from the Foreign Affairs and Healthcare ministries, UNDP representatives and Japanese and Afghan embassies, re-

ported the foreign ministry press office.

The seminar is in line with Kazakhstan's official development assistance to Afghanistan and is aimed at strengthening maternal and child healthcare in the Central Asian region. More than 80 percent of the participants are women.

Afghan health care specialists will become acquainted with the Kazakh healthcare system, focusing on child and maternal health and the organisational structure of prenatal centres. The sessions will include visits to the prenatal care and obstetrics and intensive care departments at the National Research Centre for Maternal and Child Health.

Lectures will be dedicated to technological advancements in treating obstetric complications during pregnancy and childbirth and medical support for newborns in rural areas. Minister of Healthcare Yelzhan Birtanov and professors from Nazarbayev University will be among the speakers, with the nation's leading research university serving as the main base.

Transferring Kazakh healthcare experience to Afghan women will be the country's important contribution to the efforts of the world community to help further develop Afghanistan.

Kazakhstan has long been engaged in strengthening Central Asian cooperation and actively



supports Afghanistan in developing public life. The first leg of the current programme, capacity building training in government

management and education for Afghan government workers and NGO representatives working in the country, was held last July.

Twenty-four individuals took part in that programme, gaining experience from their respective Kazakh colleagues.

Kazakhstan completes establishment of diplomatic relations with all Latin American countries

Staff Report

ASTANA – Kazakhstan established diplomatic relations with Barbados March 27 during the ceremony of the exchange of documents in Ottawa.

Barbados is 184th state globally and the last state of the Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) region to establish diplomatic relations with Kazakhstan, according to the press service of the Kazakh Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Kazakh Ambassador in Canada and Plenipotentiary Representative to CARICOM



Konstantin Zhigalov (L) and Yvonne V. Walkes (R).

Konstantin Zhigalov and Ambassador of Barbados in Canada

Yvonne V. Walkes exchanged diplomatic notes and accom-

plished the establishment of formal relations.

The states had regular dialogue working within the United Nation (UN), the Association of Caribbean States (ACS) and The Caribbean Community (CARICOM). Barbados also took part in EXPO 2017 in Astana as a part of the united CARICOM pavilion.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Barbados said Kazakh citizens can stay in the country without a visa for up to 28 days. Barbados is popular among tourists that choose Latin America and Caribbean region for its climate and developed transport infrastructure. There are a number

of year-round festivals. The state has direct air communication with large international airports in North America and Europe.

Kazakhstan developed diplomatic relations with the countries of Latin America in the first years of the independence. However, the first Kazakh embassy opened in Brazil, the largest country of the region, in 2013. Brazil has an embassy in Kazakhstan.

The long distance and time differences between Kazakhstan and LAC region are not the barriers, said Ambassador of Kazakhstan in Brasilia, Argentina and Chile Kairat Sarzhanov in an interview with bnews.kz last summer.

Kazakhstan exchanged lists of goods with the largest export potential with the Argentine side.

"The trade between the countries amounted to \$19.1 million for January-May 2017, although it was only \$5 million in the same period in 2016," he said.

The abolition of the consular fee for a Chilean tourist visa and free visa regime between Argentina, Brazil and Kazakhstan contributed to the business contacts and the growth of the tourist flow.

Argentina, Brazil and Chile, also known as the ABC trio, are the largest economies of the continent.

Kazakhstan seeks to be Central Asia's transport and logistic hub, officials say

By Aigerim Sadykova

ASTANA – Unified tariff conditions, technological schemes and participation in international alliances have furthered Kazakhstan in becoming the transport and logistics hub of the Central Asian region, said Kazakhstan Temir Zholy (KTZ) Vice President for Logistics Sanzhar Yelyubayev at a March 28 Central Communication Service round table.

As a member of Unified Transport and Logistics Company (UTLC) and Trans Caspian International Transport Route (TITR), Kazakhstan works to advance its transit potential. Successfully developing infrastructure logistics involves large world players in the transport market like China Ocean Shipping Company (COSCO) and Dubai Port World to Kazakh infrastructure facilities, he said.

Yelyubayev added large investments have been directed towards transport and logistics assets in recent years to build 2,500 new railway lines and completely renew the rolling stock, terminal and port infrastructure. Aktau and Kuryk ports are developing a high potential for multimodal transportation through the Caspian Sea and KTZ formed a transport and logistics centres network in key areas of cargo flow consolidation.

"Large transport infrastructure facilities implemented within the Nurlu Zhol programme ensured high capacity of the planned cargo volumes. It allowed us to grow the rate of transit traffic twice in the promising China-Europe-China direction in 2017," he said.

Moderator and Public Audit representative Murat Abenov supported Yelyubayev, saying the Nurlu Zhol programme and Chinese Belt and Road Initiative proposed in 2013 provided the

complementary synergy to implement the strategy. The project contributed to the growth of transit traffic through Kazakhstan.

The round table centred on the country's transport infrastructure efficiency. Experts deliberated using digital technologies in logistics and determined barriers and perspectives for developing transit traffic in the state.

The new Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) Customs Code coming into force in this year will simplify the procedures for vehicle border crossings and issuing document transportation for goods export, import and transit, said Kazakh Union of Transport workers (Kazlogistics) CEO Kanat Almagambetov.

Transport companies are attracting transit cargo transportation through Kazakhstan on the renewed and modernised infrastructure, as well as working on the Kuryk port route through the Caspian Sea using the Western Europe-Western China highway. The issue of increasing cargo transportation volume from and to Uzbekistan is relevant as the country has a favourable foreign policy, he added.

Almagambetov noted KTZ must increase its share of road traffic to support purchasing vehicles.

Atameken National Chamber of Entrepreneurs transport logistics committee chair Yerzhat Iskaliyev spoke about digitising and implementing supply chain management to improve transport industry efficiency.

The next issue is the importance of informing Kazakh business partners and citizens about the transport sector transformations, said Trans-Logistics Kazakhstan chief editor and TLK Media CEO Zhanna Isingarina. The company specialises in providing Kazakh transport information support and complex logistics work, she noted.

Astana hosts Annual Research Forum for Central Asia



By Amir Khaidar

ASTANA – Scientists and business people gathered in Astana April 6 to discuss sustainable development at the first annual Research Forum for Central Asia.

The forum was organised by

Kazakh students and scholars studying at universities in the United Kingdom. The forum includes two gatherings, a previous meeting in London and the April 6 event in Astana.

"The main purpose of the forum is to create unique platform for young researchers, to inspire

young researchers and to invite business representatives to the dialogue," said Forum organiser Adil Zharmukhambetov.

Government agency representatives, business people and scholars discussed sustainability and applicability of research into practice.

"I think it is a splendid initia-

tive, I really do hope that Nazarbayev University will serve as a good platform for all the future annual gatherings," said Nazarbayev University President Shigeo Katsu.

According to the UNESCO Institute of Statistics report, the 30 most developed countries of the world invest nearly 3 percent of their GDP into research and development. Kazakhstan is at the end of this list, with less than 1 percent of GDP invested between 1996 and 2005.

"The UK firmly supports Kazakhstan's ambition to be in the top 30 most developed countries of the world by 2050," said British Ambassador to Kazakhstan Michael Gifford. He also affirmed that the UK will be a partner to Kazakhstan in that effort.

Event participants also discussed including more researchers from around Central Asia, and panelists discussed the possibility of holding a forum in Kyrgyzstan or Uzbekistan. They also expressed hope that the number of active researchers in the Central Asia will increase.

Anti-corruption initiatives supported by international experts

By Almasbek Zhumadilov

ASTANA – A delegation from the Agency for Civil Service Affairs and Anti-Corruption recently visited Sweden and Switzerland to exchange experience in anti-corruption measures, the agency's press service reports.

The delegation met with representatives of the Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) Institute, Sweden, the World Economic Forum and the International Institute for Management Development (Switzerland) to present the results of Kazakhstan's three-year imple-

mentation of the Anti-Corruption Strategy for 2015-2025, as well as future plans.

According to the agency, international experts positively praised Kazakhstan's anticorruption efforts. In particular, Staffan Lindberg, political science professor and director of the V-Dem Institute at University of Gothenburg, noted the positive results of the constitutional reforms implemented in 2017. The results of this initiative will be highlighted in the V-Dem's study, which is scheduled for publication in April.

Grigory Shutko, Eurasia Regional Strategies lead at World

Economic Forum, expressed interest in Kazakhstan's anti-corruption experience and noted that it will be considered in the preparation of the Global Competitiveness Index for 2018. At the same time, Shutko noted that this year the methodology of the study will be changed, and the share of statistical data and surveys used in the preparation of the Global Competitiveness Index will be equal. Currently, the share of statistics is 71 percent, while the survey accounts for 29 percent).

Along with this, Dr. Christos Cabols, head of the operations department of the International Institute for Management Devel-

opment, noted the progress in improving the anti-corruption policy of Kazakhstan over the past three years, and emphasised that the agency's anticorruption measures correspond to the experience of Hong Kong and it will take time to achieve similar results. In this regard, he urged Kazakhstan to invest more in anti-corruption education.

Experts expressed interest in participating in the next International Conference on Anti-Corruption, which is scheduled for December 2018 in Astana, and agreed to cooperate further through Skype conferences.

Nation&Capital

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Kazakh-born writer addresses emigration, generational challenges in debut novel

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Astana Opera principal dancer performs at State Kremlin Palace

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Zhumagulov defeats American opponent in international MMA tournament in Almaty

B7

NU students drive self-made battery car at Shell Eco-marathon Asia



By Meruyert Abugaliyeva

ASTANA – A team of nine undergraduate students from Nazarbayev University (NU) designed, constructed and drove a car on electric battery at Shell Eco-marathon Asia, held March 8-11 in Singapore. The team placed 13th of 26 in the electric car prototype category.

Shell Eco-marathon is a student competition of energy-efficient cars held annually in Asia, Europe and America aimed at promoting sustainable transport. The winning team drives its car the farthest while consuming the smallest amount of energy.

“We are happy with our results. First, before taking to the track we managed to go through technical inspection, the first round of competition. Around 87 percent of participants were allowed to proceed further. Later, as we joined the track, we achieved a valid run.

In other words, we completed nine circles on the track within the time limit of 25 minutes. As a result, we were awarded 13th place in our category, which we believe is praiseworthy,” said driver Tamila Talasbayeva.

The event attracted 122 teams from 18 countries competing with cars driving on electric batteries, hydrogen and internal combustion engines. Kazakhstan was also represented by a team from Satpayev University.

“We heard about the competition for the first time from Young Zhao, a professor from the mechanical engineering department who suggested us joining the project last spring. The ultimate decision to participate was made after Shell Kazakhstan agreed to finance the car’s construction,” said NU team member Raushan Utemuratova.

The team was also supported by the university, its social development fund and the NU Research

and Innovation System (NURIS).

“We formed a team of nine students, with five students studying electric and mechanical engineering and one robotics student held primarily responsible for construction works. We also had an economics student responsible for PR and communications. Raushan and I are both studying civil engineering; however, while she took responsibility for project management, I was appointed as a driver,” added Talasbayeva.

Eco-marathon organisers provided students with two books on prototype requirements, paying special attention to fire safety and proper brake functioning.

“Our biggest challenge during preparation was time management, as we were falling behind the schedule. We had to finish working on some parts during the competition itself. Although there were several setbacks, overall, we did great,” said Utemuratova.

“Another obstacle was that we lacked some parts during the contest, such as fire-resistant gloves and special liquid for brakes and batteries, which we had to search for in Singapore,” noted Talasbayeva.

“Although the contest has been around for more than 80 years, Kazakhstan was represented for the first time. Some participants did not know much about our country, so we believe we created a positive image. Moreover, we proved that our university and students are highly competitive,” she added.

The project allowed participants to learn to work in teams, manage their time, practice communication skills and develop personally. Utemuratova plans to continue her studies at Columbia University, then return to Kazakhstan to facilitate industrial development. The project also helped Talasbayeva choose to study sustainability upon graduation.

Local architects focus on indoor comfort, create innovative design ideas

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – Architects are paying greater attention to sustainability in construction and design. INK Archi-

tect & Kamitov Project is following this global trend, bringing maximum comfort to its occupants, and The Astana Times spoke with company founder Nurlan Kamitov to learn about its activities and projects.

Formed in 2004, INK Architects offers architecture, interior design and master planning services throughout Kazakhstan and abroad.

“The functional purpose of

buildings is a priority. The aesthetic tasks are solved to provide a comfortable indoor environment. The solutions that reflect local traditions are used individually in decorative finishing,” he said.

INK Architects has received high praise for its work throughout the world. The company, with offices in Almaty, the capital, Foshan (China) and Miami (U.S.A.), employs more than 70 young, talented architects from China, Eastern Europe, Kazakhstan, Russia, Ukraine and the U.S.

The company was involved in constructing housing complexes and multifunctional, trade and business centres in Almaty, the capital, Atyrau and Shymkent.

“Over the years, the company has implemented more than 76 architectural projects and more than 300 interior design projects. We started working with 17 projects in 2017 and nine of these projects will begin construction this year. The construction of 10 projects that we developed in 2015-2016 also started in 2017,” said Kamitov.



BI City Seoul in Astana.

Continued on Page B2

East African designer and traveller enjoys Kazakh life

By Aigerim Sadykova

ASTANA – One tourist trip to Kazakhstan for Rwanda (East Africa) music label and clothes label co-founder and graphic designer Khalilu Rahman turned into two interesting years in Almaty. He shared details of his life in Kazakhstan, plans regarding the country and the Kazakh music industry in an exclusive interview with The Astana Times.

The African region has a custom where at age 18, a young man must leave his parent’s home and live independently. Nine-year old Rahman departed his native land to study at a high school in neighbouring Uganda, a move which started his journey around the world.

With the opportunity to travel after graduating from a South African university, Rahman visited Turkey, Kenya, Malaysia, Mali, Qatar, Senegal, Tanzania and the

United Arab Emirates, but decided to stay in Kazakhstan. Kazakh friends in Istanbul told him about Almaty, inspiring him to visit the city. Rahman now works there as graphic designer for the website hommes.kz.

“I tried to get used to people and to learn the language in Almaty. Most of the time I speak English, but I try to use the little bit of Russian I have learned,” he said about the language barrier.

Rahman studied different aspects of Kazakh lifestyle and has visited Aktobe, Aktau, the capital and Kostanai since his arrival in 2016.

“I was in Astana for about a week. I enjoyed it, but it was a little bit cold and empty at the same time. There, I visited the expo exhibition and was amazed a lot. The Russian and Serbian pavilions were nice, but I think the Kazakh one was the best,” he said.

Continued on Page B2

Opera singer awarded Italian order

By Zhazira Dyussebekova

ASTANA – Astana Opera principal soloist and Honoured Worker of Kazakhstan Medet Chotabayev received the award and title Knight of the Order of the Star of Italy March 26 for strengthening cultural ties between Italy and Kazakhstan and promoting the Italian language, according to the Astana Opera press service.

“It was a great surprise to learn that I was named a recipient of such a high award. I am experiencing the most joyful feelings, since my work was noticed and appreciated. It is truly wonderful that I was not working in vain all these years. I perform in Italy a lot and feel very comfortable in this country. I always respond to the invitations of the Embassy of Italy with pleasure to take part in concerts. Recently, we have held musical evenings in Astana and Almaty with my Italian colleagues; they masterfully played the violin, viola and piano, but especially soulfully, the mandolin. The sound of this instrument in combination

with the vocals had a tremendous effect; the audience felt as if they were in Italy. It is my pleasure to support the projects organised by the Embassy of Italy, I think this also serves to strengthen bilateral relations between our countries,” he said.

In addition to often performing in Italy, Chotabayev has studied at the Accademia Internazionale di Canto “Renata Tebaldi. Mario Del Monaco” in Pesaro, where in 2008 he received the Beniamino Gigli International Singing Competition diploma in Porto Recanati.

The audience is very fond of Chotabayev, noted the release. Italians recognise him on the street, where they ask for his autograph, and entire families attend his performances.

The artist performs leading roles in the world’s foremost venues, including in Brazil, Finland, France and Romania. He recently returned from Bratislava, where he performed the part of Alfredo Germont in Giuseppe Verdi’s “La Traviata” at the Slovak National Theatre.

Continued on Page B3

THINGS TO WATCH & PLACES TO GO

ASTANA OPERA

April 13 at 7 p.m.	Obra maestra Astor Piazzolla, concert
April 18 at 7 p.m.	A Delightful Sound of Cello, concert
April 19 at 11 a.m.	The Journey of Peer Gynt, concert for children
April 20 at 7 p.m.	Birzhan – Sara, opera
April 22 at 6 p.m.	My Love is Opera, concert

ASTANA ARENA

April 14 at 4 p.m.	FC Astana – FC Kairat
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SARYARKA VELOTREK

April 22 at 3 p.m.	PBC Astana – BC Kaley
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PEOPLE

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 11, 2018

Kazakh-born writer addresses emigration, generational challenges in debut novel

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – Olia Breininge's debut book "There Was No Adderall in the Soviet Union," released by AST in 2017, became a huge success. The publisher and critics called the work "a generation-

I like to say that the novel is about loneliness in the globalised world, on the one hand, and the experience of integrating post-Soviet [life] into the increasingly globalising and digitising world, on the other hand.

defining novel." The Astana Times interviewed Breininge to learn about the book and what inspired her creativity.



Olia Breininge

"I was born and grew up in central Kazakhstan, in Karaganda, and an important part of my novel is set in my hometown as well. I currently reside in Makhachkala, Dagestan, where I am working in the archives collecting materials for my doctoral dissertation and also learning the Arabic language and Islamic theology – for the dissertation as well as for my next novel in progress," she said.

Born to a Russian-German family, Breininge lived for some time

in Hungary and the Czech Republic. After graduating from Gorky Moscow Literary Institute, she moved to Germany.

She started writing the novel while studying at Harvard University.

"Usually, I like to say that the novel is about loneliness in the globalised world, on the one hand, and the experience of integrating post-Soviet [life] into the increasingly globalising and digitising world, on the other hand," she said.

"It is a first-person female narrative describing a series of different life episodes and experiences contributing to the formation of what I think of as global identity. It is also a story about freedom and responsibility, about belonging and certainly about love. I hope that different themes within the novel may appeal to different audiences – but certainly, I was thinking about people like myself as I was writing the book – those in their 20s and 30s striving to understand their role and place in the world as well as handle a certain historical experience," she explained.

The book tells the story of a young woman growing up in former Soviet Kazakhstan who embarks on a "chain of emigrations" in search of freedom and happiness, only to experience losses. She joins the army of the new angry young men – ambitious, obsessively perfectionist and disillusioned with nothing being real in the post-truth world.

"The book is largely based on my personal experiences," said the author. "However, it is not an autobiography in any way, but a proper work of fiction. There is a thin but distinct line separating the protagonist of the novel and my-

self and we are in no way the same person. Moreover, often times we are at conflict and the very tension between my real self and my imagined persona is very important for the narrative universe of the novel."

Breininge admitted the feeling of despair inspired her writing.

"The novel sums up some of the most difficult and indeed hurtful times and experiences of my own life – and I know those are shared by many other people of around my age facing and struggling with exactly those challenges – fighting for your identity and belonging; defining public and private, real and fake. I believe that literature exists where there's pain and conflict and anger – and this is what my novel is about," she added.

The book was included on several award lists including National Bestseller, The Big Book, and Russian Booker.

"I am struggling to understand what 'big' is for the contemporary literary scene and for a work of fiction in general, especially when it is a text as personal and strained as mine is. I really appreciate the nominations or the long and short lists of the awards and I am grateful for the opportunity to share

Moreover, often times we are at conflict and the very tension between my real self and my imagined persona is very important for the narrative universe of the novel.

what is important to me with more readers. But I did not really think of the 'institutional' aspects of publishing a book as I was working on it and I keep my priorities clear: I write exclusively because I need to tell things, because I can't help writing," she said.

Breininge shared the vision of her next novel.

"I am working on my second novel at the moment. In part, it will be thematically connected to the first book, but on the whole, it will be entirely different. It will be a dystopian novel about conspiracy theories, underground movements and fake ideologies," she said.

Local architects focus on indoor comfort...



Nurlan Kamitov

Continued from Page B1

INK Architects is recognised for the conceptual design solutions, aesthetics and comfort of its structures.

"We welcome creativity and strive to bring our ideas to the potential customer. We set high standards for our project activities taking into account the needs of society. We defend our ideas regarding construction and design issues. We know the construction industry trends and monitor all innovations," he noted.

With their practical experience, the specialists take note of architectural heritage worldwide.

"We create different style directions in synthesis with domestic regional themes in design. We are not afraid to combine various styles, but minimalism and simple forms of expressiveness that have always characterised the traditional culture of the peoples of the East are used in the design of architectural projects," he added.

The company uses advanced design technologies and have BREEAM and LEED accredited professionals. The certifications allow their staff to work on international projects.

"We introduced some new stylistic solutions in architecture in the country, but the most complex projects are still on paper. We monitor author supervision throughout the entire process from design to construction. Functionalism, uniqueness, simplicity and maximum comfort are main principles of the architectural workshop," he said.

INK Architects has collaborated with private investors and developers on several projects in Barcelona and Miami.

"This is a new market, new challenges and new standards for

us. Constant growth is one of our principles. The American and European markets are not only new markets, but also the growth of our knowledge, skills and projects," he said.

Since 2013, the company has also been working with BI Group, Kazakhstan's largest construction holding, bringing more than 20 projects to life.

"We work mainly with the multifunctional and residential complexes in Astana and Almaty. We are proud that our projects are the most successful in sales in the BI Group portfolio," he added.

Expo Boulevard and Green Quarter are considered to be among the most beautiful residential buildings in the capital.

"The Hilton is one of the most important projects of our company. The design of the international hotel was entrusted for the first time to a local company. The interior design of the hotel was made in a record 90 days and the entire construction process took eight months," said Kamitov.

The company organises training courses and study tours for its employees.

"Recently, our team of architects and designers visited Abu Dhabi and Dubai. We visited the Burj Khalifa complex, the financial centre and the Kayan Tower skyscraper. We studied the buildings under construction of major development companies including Damak, Emaar and Ellington Properties. The visit to Jean Nouvel's Louvre Abu Dhabi was one of the main priorities of our trip. We also went to Norman Foster's Masdar City. It is the world's most sustainable, zero-waste, car-free, carbon neutral city. These projects are useful for our work and serve as a source of new product ideas," he said.

Togyz kumalak champion among nation's 100 New Faces

By Dana Omirgazy

ASTANA – Assel Daliyeva, Kazakh champion of the ancient national board game togyz kumalak, has been named one of the country's 100 New Faces. The 28-year-old Kyzylorda native is the first and only person awarded the title of Honoured Master of Sports of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

"Intellectual games play an important role in the formation and development of the national culture. This is not only a sports event that reveals the strongest, but it is also an important phenomenon in educating the younger generation and increasing the intellectual level of nations," she said in an interview for this story.

Daliyeva, whose mother inspired her love of board games by teaching and encouraging her daughter, started playing togyz kumalak at age 9. Three years later, she became a master of sports and at 16 became the youngest togyz kumalak athlete to fulfil the international standards. She became a six-time champion under 20 and in 2013 was entrusted to light the torch at the Asian Games.

Daliyeva competes with both women and men, noting the ad-

vantage of togyz kumalak is that it requires no strength. Instead, one needs to make the right decision and chose the correct strategy.

"I think any athlete can be defeated. I also lost, but after every defeat, I made the right conclusions and corrected my mistakes. All athletes should work hard and



Assel Daliyeva

train, think and analyse. My ranks did not fall from the sky. I earned them thanks to tireless work," she said.

She has trained several athletes in togyz kumalak, who now take part in international competitions and become champions. In September, her trainee Lina Karimova became the world champion at the fourth World Togyz Kumalak Championship held in the Kazakh capital.

Togyz kumalak (from the Kazakh for "nine pebbles") is the Kazakh name for the mancala game played on a board with two rows of nine holes. The number nine has high significance in the folk beliefs and mythology of Central Asian peoples. The intellectual game is as popular as chess or backgammon and is one of the valuable contributions of the Kazakh people to world culture. Such championships are not only intellectual competitions and cultural events, but also opportunities to promote the national cultural heritage, said Togyz kumalak International Federation President Alikhan Baimenov.

Daliyeva expressed her pleasure as one of the nation's 100 New Faces.

"I am so happy that the people voted for me. I am very pleased

that Kazakhstan citizens know who I am. The Togyz kumalak International Federation, namely Alikhan Baimenov, offered my candidature for the 100 New Faces project. I was very happy with my victory. We met with President Nursultan Nazarbayev and this event has become a great motivation for new victories," she said.

"Intellectual games play an important role in the formation and development of the national culture. This is not only a sports event that reveals the strongest, but it is also an important phenomenon in educating the younger generation and increasing the intellectual level of nations."

East African designer and traveller enjoys Kazakh life

Continued from Page B1

Rahman witnessed the Nauryz holidays twice. Each year, the festivities astonished him with their grandiose events.

"We don't have such holiday festivals in Rwanda. We have old holidays, but not something like Nauryz. I enjoyed it. A lot of meat – it was cool," he said.

Speaking about Kazakh cuisine, he tasted horsemeat and kumys (fermented mare's milk) for the first time. Kazy (horsemeat sausage) became his favourite dish and he also enjoyed fried fish in Aktau.

The hospitality of Kazakh people surprises him.

"Everyone wants to talk with me and be friends. I have a friend from Rwanda who studies

here. We think Kazakhstan is the place where you can feel a special attitude towards Africans. I have not seen the same in other countries," he said.

He feels graphic design is not a profession with career growth, but he can work in different areas. Before coming to Kazakhstan, he founded Nkunda Swagg, a clothing line based in Rwanda. Rahman draws the designs and his partner manages the operation in Turkey, where the garments are made and then sent to Africa. Customers can purchase the items through an online store.

"My soul is young. I design and create urban style with hip-hop elements, clothes for the young generation – T-shirts, snapbacks and sweatshirts with my original design," he said.



Khalilu Rahman

He showed the clothes to his Kazakh friends, one of whom liked the jacket and got it as a gift. Now, he wants to expand his business opportunities by selling clothes in Kazakhstan, starting in Almaty as he studied the city and has acquaintances there.

Rahman is the co-founder of Kigalicious, a music label in Rwanda. As a result, he has an interest in Kazakh music and plans to invite artists on his label to collaborate with Almaty DJs and show them the city.

"I had been studying the Kazakh music industry and Kazakh musicians. My favourite – mostly because it refers to hip-hop culture – is Kazakh rapper Skriptonit. The nightlife of the city is exciting and energetic," he said.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 11, 2018

Kazakhstan to celebrate horse milk with Kymyz Muryndyk 2018 festival

By Dana Omirgazy

ASTANA – The holiday Kymyz Muryndyk, devoted to the traditional Kazakh drink kumys (fermented mare's milk), is set to bring locals and visitors, Kazakh officials and professors, foreign diplomats and scientists, as well as Kazakh sports champions together May 11-12 in Taraz.

Since ancient times, hospitality has been a defining feature of the Kazakh people. For the first time, the kumys festival will be held at the national level and even international level under the Rukhani Janghyru (Modernisation of Kazakhstan's Identity) programme.

"The Rukhani Janghyru programme has made our idea real.



Lyazzat Ilimkhanova.

Kymyz Muryndyk directly refers to this programme. This holiday is nothing more than the revival of our cultural values. This is one

piece of our spiritual heritage," Kymyz Muryndyk 2018 main coordinator Lyazzat Ilimkhanova told The Astana Times.

The Kymyz Muryndyk 2018 programme includes a scientific conference and an ethno-festival. The kumys producers in Taraz are to present exclusive achievements and developments in the field of dairy and meat horse breeding and selection, as well as unique technologies for the production of kumys and other agricultural products for export. The largest kumys producers from different regions of the country will join the festival.

"On the first day, May 11, we have scheduled a scientific conference on the benefits of kumys involving 50 to 70 people, including 17 foreign scientists and profes-

sors. This event aims at promoting kumys and its medicinal properties, increasing the number of tourists and making this festival an annual tradition at the state level," Ilimkhanova said.

The second day of the festival will feature Kazakh dances and songs; cultural events; various competitions, including one for the best kumys; Kazakh national games and horseracing competitions.

"Famous Kazakh boxing champion Yermakhan Ibraimov is expected to join the celebration. Ibraimov believes that one of the secrets of Kazakh boxers' success is the legacy of nomadic life: horsemeat and kumys," she revealed.

Organisers hope that the festival will popularise kumys in Kazakh-

stan and abroad, educate the youth in the spirit of patriotism through the promotion of national values and assets and create a new international platform to implement key tasks of Kazakhstan's third stage of modernisation under the Rukhani Janghyru programme.

"In general, kumys, as a drink of my distant childhood, has a long history, and young people and children should know about this ancient festival. My efforts made to organise this festival in the wonderful city of Taraz are devoted to the memory of my father who taught me to fight, go ahead, do good deeds and help people," she said.

The idea of holding a kumys festival initially belongs to Duisenbek Ybnyaliyev, manager of the ZAN Company, which has been making kumys since 2006, Ilimkhanova said. Over time, the company has made a breakthrough in the storage of kumys. The company's products have a shelf life of 60 days.

"The production of Mr. Ybnyaliyev is not huge, but the quality

of his kumys is not inferior to all other kumys producers. He sincerely loves his work. He dreams of producing kumys for export. At the festival, the ZAN Company intends to hold master class on main stages of kumys production. Ybnyaliyev will also talk about new types of horses," Ilimkhanova added.

According to Ilimkhanova, First Deputy Chairman of the World Association of Kazakhs Zauytbek Turysbekov and his advisor Denis Kim are also playing a major role in preparing for the event.

In Kazakh, "kymyz muryndyk" means the tasting of the first harvest of kumys. Traditionally, the festival falls on the last Saturday of May. This year, that date will fall among the holiest days of Ramadan, prompting organisers to shift the timing of the festival to May 11-12 so all people, including those who are fasting, are able to enjoy the celebration fully.

The festival will be held at the ZAN Company, 28 Tauke Khan Street in Taraz.

Concert to commemorate work of Russian composer Rachmaninoff

Staff Report

ASTANA – The Spring Waters concert dedicated to the 145th birthday of Russian pianist, composer and conductor of late Romantic period Sergei Rachmaninoff took place April 4 at the Astana Opera Chamber Hall.

According to the Astana Opera press service, laureate of international competitions Aizada Kaponova (soprano), Honoured Worker of Kazakhstan Talgat Mussabayev (baritone), Honoured Artist of Kazakhstan

Makpal Bekmagambetova (violin), laureates of international competitions Balzhan Saparova (flute) and Askar Mukanov (cello) performed at the concert. Laureates of international competitions Raushan Beskembirova and Aikerim Yessimkhanova played the piano.

Rachmaninoff's compositional style is an expression of his individuality and originality. According to the conclusion of musicologists, it has no analogues in the world art. His work is permeated with love for the motherland, spirituality and

the inviolability of ethical principles. Rachmaninoff's rich heritage includes symphonies and symphonic poems, instrumental concerts, especially the famous piano pieces, as well as operas, suites, preludes and etudes.

Rachmaninoff's romances enjoy special love of the audience. Listeners and musicians of Rachmaninoff's work appreciate its sincerity, emotional openness, spontaneity of expression, brightness of melodic images and accuracy in conveying the mood of a poetic text. Being a brilliant pianist, the composer pays great

attention to the rich and diverse piano part in the vocal lyricism. All this is fully reflected in the works that were included in the programme of the event.

Trio *Élégiaque in D Minor for Piano, Violin and Cello* "In Memory of a Great Artist", dedicated to Tchaikovsky represented the instrumental part of the concert. This work is characterised by its immense scale, which is unusual for the chamber genre, as well as the presence of improvisational elements, contrast and detailed dramaturgical concept.

Medet Chotabayev becomes Knight of the Order of the Star of Italy

Continued from Page B1

Chotabayev made his professional debut at the Abay Opera House in Almaty. In the 2013-2014 season, he became a principle soloist of the Astana Opera, where he performs Duca in "Rigoletto," Nemorino in "L'elisir d'amore," Rodolfo in "La Bohème," Pinkerton in "Madama Butterfly," Cavaradossi in "Tosca," Lensky in "Eugene Onegin," Rodolfo in "Luisa Miller" and Alfredo in "La Traviata."

He was awarded the grand prize at the 2009 Art of the 21st Century International Competition in Finland, first prize and "The best tenor of the competition" special prize at the 2009 Glinka International Singing Competition in Moscow, third

prize at the 2010 International Opera Competition in Paris and first prize at the 2013 Arena di Verona Concorso Internazionale di Canto.

The Order of the Star is given to Italian citizens residing abroad and foreigners for special merits in developing friendly relations and cooperation between Italy and other countries. The award is conferred by the President of Italy on the proposal of the Minister of Foreign Affairs and after consulting the Council of the Order, composed of four members and chaired by the minister.

This year, the order was also given to Lucia Beltrami, an Italian language teacher in Almaty, and Giancarlo Olivieri, entrepreneur and former honorary vice-consul of Italy in Aksai.

Astana Opera principal dancer performs at State Kremlin Palace

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – Bakhtiyar Adamzhan, principal dancer of the Astana Opera, brilliant Kazakh artist and Grand Prix winner of many international competitions, has won over the audience of Moscow's State Kremlin Palace. He performed March 24 at "Rudolf Nureyev, From the Past to the Future," a gala concert of world-famous ballet stars.

"It is a great honour for me to participate in this wonderful concert together with my colleagues – famous dancers – at the world-renowned venue. This is

undoubtedly the joy of meeting with other dancers, the exchange of experience and the representation of the Astana Opera and our country in such a prestigious project," he said in an exclusive interview with The Astana Times.

The concert, dedicated to the 80th anniversary of the legendary artist, was presented as a tribute to the brilliant dancer and choreographer under Andris Liepa's Autographs and Images project.

Adamzhan performed the Diana and Actaeon Pas de Deux from "La Esmeralda" (music by Cesare Pugni, choreography by Agrippina Vaganova) and the Quasimodo and Esmeralda Ada-

gio from "Notre Dame de Paris" (music by Maurice Jarre, choreography by Roland Petit). His partner was Kazakh Honoured Worker and Astana Opera principal dancer Madina Basbayeva. The audience greeted each number with a standing ovation.

The brightest dancer of the 20th century, Nureyev masterfully performed the roles, creating a revolution in male dance. He was a legend during his lifetime, remaining equally convincing both in classical ballet and modern choreography.

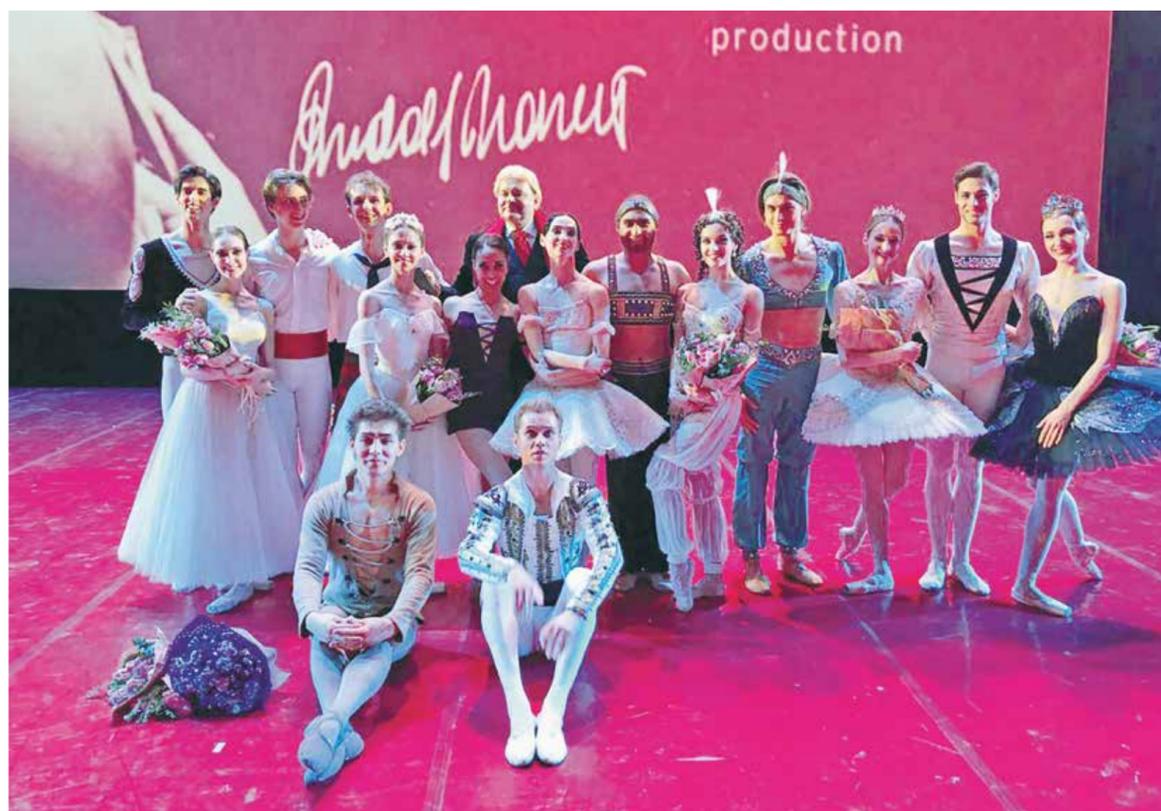
The stars gathered to express their respect and appreciation for the brilliant dancer. The best rep-

resentatives of present-day classical male dance and their magnificent partners took part in the concert, including Ivan Vasiliev (Mikhailovski Theatre); Semyon Chudin, Denis Rodkin and Jacopo Tissi (Bolshoi Theatre of Russia); Vadim Muntagirov (Royal Opera House); Xander Parish (Mariinski Theatre) and Adamzhan.

"Rudolf Nureyev, From the Past to the Future" is the first concert of the new annual project, where a broad audience has begun its acquaintance with the work of outstanding 20th century dancers whose names will forever remain in the history of world ballet.



Medet Chotabayev receives the award and the title of Knight of the Order of the Star of Italy.



Concert of Argentine music to be held in the capital

By Amir Khaidar

ASTANA – An ensemble will perform at the Astana Opera April 13 the works by the late and renowned Argentine composer Astor Piazzolla.

Original interpretations of tango music will be presented by the instrumental ensemble Ritmos de Amor in the Chamber Hall of the Astana Opera. The ensemble includes Konstantin Strigin on accordion, Kirill Krasnyukov on violin, Kairat Aristanov on guitar, Anatoliy Yakushkin on double bass, Alexander Malinovskiy on harmonica, Zhanybek Bekmadiyev on drums and Yelena Sakhno at the piano.

For the first time in the capital, well known tango hits, such as "Mumuki," "Soledad" and "Triunfal" will be performed. As reported by Astana Opera press office, the ensemble will also perform compositions such as "Milonga," "Escualo," "Ave Maria" and "Addios Nonino." The audience will also experience

a guitar solo and two pieces for violin and guitar, including "Café 1930" from the cycle "History of Tango."

The composer, who once was called the enemy of tango, revolutionised tango music, adding to it elements of jazz and classical music. Some consider Piazzolla the most important tango composer of the 20th century.

Piazzolla's music was strongly opposed by tango traditionalists, who believed it should remain without changes in rhythm and melody. He was able to combine in his compositions various musical genres and created unique tango style. Calling his music contemporary music of Buenos Aires, Piazzolla broadened the public perception of tango.

Known in Argentina as "El Gran Astor" ("The Great Astor"), he performed tango of his native Buenos Aires to the standing ovations in South and North America, Europe and Asia. In his last decade, he wrote more than 300 tangos, as well as scores to films, theatre performances and ballets.

COUNTRY

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 11, 2018

KTZ introduces Digital Railway programme, improves customer service

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – Kazakhstan Temir Zholy (KTZ) has introduced digital route diagnostics, a traffic management centre and digital services at 17 stations as part of the Digital Railway information technology development strategy. The projects are being incorporated in cargo, passenger and multimodal transport at railway infrastructure facilities and in corporate tasks.

“The Digital Railway strategy envisages digitisation of the company’s business models and introduction of new technologies in all key operating segments – freight and passenger transportation, infrastructure and transport logistics,” said Arman Nurushev, KTZ Vice President for Information Technologies, at a March 29 Central Communications Service briefing.



The task is set to boost a customer-focused culture. An online ticket sales system has been launched and there are plans to present a dynamic tariff management system and centrally-manage customer requests round-the-clock.

“Digitisation of the transport and

logistics sectors ensures transparency in the organisation of transportation, increases efficiency and reduces operating costs,” he said.

Introducing and operating cargo movement information systems is aimed at increasing the organisation’s transportation efficiency, said KTZ-Cargo Transportation Integrated Planning Executive Director Vladimir Petrov. The automated systems enable operational transportation management, integrate train-wagon route processing, planning and forecasting, as well as control diesel fuel consumption and electric power.

The contract and commercial work automated management system is considered to be one of the cargo sector’s successful projects. It operates based on a single electronic window used in planning, organising and implementing transportation and electronic payment for services related to goods transport.

“Shippers are able to plan transportation by submitting an application, issue a transportation document and calculate the preliminary document through this system. Currently, more than 20,000 customers and more than 5,000 employees of freight stations are registered and work in the system,” said Petrov.

The digitisation processes also benefit the corporate sector, such

as the positive results seen from the integrated planning system with Machine Learning. The system provides for allocating resources and making effective decisions in operational, commercial and investment planning. Cost optimisation related to the transportation process is predicted at 3-4 percent by 2021.

Due to the major work carried out in transport and logistics infrastructure, transit traffic growth rates in the China-Europe-China direction increased two times in 2017.

The large transport infrastructure facilities implemented as part of the Nurlu Zhol programme ensure high cargo throughput. The infrastructure logistics attract major global transport market players to Kazakhstan, including COSCO Shipping and DP World.

Unified Transport and Logistics Company (UTLC) and the Trans-Caspian International Transport Route International Association operate in the region. Unified tariff conditions were established and technological schemes introduced, contributing to making the country the transport and logistics hub of the region.

N. Kazakhstan official reviews region’s work within state programme

By Zhazira Dyussebekova

ASTANA – The North Kazakhstan region, particularly Petropavlovsk, has introduced several projects within the Digital Kazakhstan Programme launched last year, including initiatives in transport and public health, according to deputy akim (governor) Madiyar Kozhakhmet, reported zakon.kz.

“In general, even before the adoption of the programme, we, as well as the whole Kazakhstan, already used the benefits of digitisation. We are talking about using the most common electronic services to get, for example, banking services. Electronic bookkeeping, government for citizens, a simplified format for obtaining documents – all of that already existed. The population got used to the new format. The catch was that at that time there was no common image in the form of the Digital Kazakhstan state programme. You see, people saw and felt that changes were taking place, but they did not focus on this. Today, thanks to the programme, Kazakhstan residents have a structured idea of the benefits of digitisation,” he said.

Kozhakhmet believes the population is involved in the process not only as users of new digital services, but also as they strive to create something on their own.

He noted a Petropavlovsk transport company started a system of GPS navigators, allowing riders to track the bus route with an app and prevent them from standing in the cold. The buses now use counters that record the number of passengers per day.

“This imposes a responsibility on the conductor, who, say figuratively speaking, can no longer steal. Therefore, the company will receive its profit in full, which will allow it, if necessary, to purchase new quality buses. You see how everything is interconnected in a compartment and it benefits society,” said Kozhakhmet.

The region has also introduced AntiInsult (AntiStroke) and OncoScreen apps created by local doctors working with programmers.

“The applications are available not only for Petropavlovsk residents, but also for all Kazakhstan people. How do they work? You answer certain questions and subsequently the programme determines whether you

are sick or not. It turns out that a person tests himself. If a user has registered before passing this test, then information about him or her automatically goes to the hospital,” he added.

The regional administration has determined 59 projects representing eight priority areas to be implemented this year in the Quick Wins format.

“You know, one day is not enough to tell you in detail about each of them. For example, in the sphere of agriculture, the main economic effect is observed in the introduction of elements of precision farming. Also, a herd management system is functioning, implying control over their health and productivity. Satellite monitoring of fields, the use of drones, electronic chipping of animals – this and much more from the category of fiction goes into reality,” said Kozhakhmet.

Tourists are aided by a mobile app showing picturesque sites in the region and the 3D tours of sacred places promise to increase awareness.

Following the example of the capital, Petropavlovsk is preparing to launch Smart Petropavlovsk, which involves developing areas such as education, healthcare, city administration, security, transport, housing and communal services. Smart lighting is one of the projects currently under discussion.

“We do not have round-the-clock traffic flows; that is, traffic is not the same as in Astana or Almaty. Therefore, round-the-clock coverage is simply impractical. Now, when a car passes, the light on the street just becomes brighter,” said Kozhakhmet.

Within the Digital Kazakhstan programme, the region will also focus on training students in information and communications technology. With state support, the region is building the country’s first school emphasising IT.

“It will be a huge complex with the most modern equipment. Construction is gaining momentum and somewhere in early August there are plans to complete it. I’m not afraid of such big words, but it really is a chic project, implying a grand infrastructure for nurturing the digital generation. In the classes of chemistry, biology, physics, programming, 3D modelling, 3D printing and cyber security, we will train future specialists,” he added.

Country’s first robotic surgery performed in Ust-Kamenogorsk

By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – Kazakhstan’s robot surgery and transplantology centre based in the city hospital in Ust-Kamenogorsk recently performed the nation’s first robotic surgery, removing gallbladder of a 50-year-old woman, reported inform.kz.

Italian surgeon and D’Annunzio University of Chieti-Pescara Professor Stefano Gidaro managed the operation and Kazakh surgeons Nartai Turakhanov and Rinat Muzdybayev assisted.

Robotic surgery refers to a minimally invasive operation that, unlike traditional open surgeries,

make small incisions with the help of robotic devices resulting in a less blood loss, minimal pain after a surgery and faster recovery.

Gidaro commended the work of local surgeons stressing the importance of coherence in team work. He was invited to Kazakhstan as a surgery consultant to North Carolina-based TransEnterix company that supplied the robotic equipment to Ust-Kamenogorsk hospital. He has been teaching the use of innovative equipment to specialists across Europe and Asia.

Turakhanov and Muzdybayev completed an internship in Milan last year in December. The training of local specialists is envisioned in the

agreement of equipment purchase and does not stipulate the allocation of additional funds from the budget. Four Kazakh specialists were trained abroad and another four are expected to be taught in the near future.

In Ust-Kamenogorsk, Gidaro is expected to take part in a wide range of surgeries, including ventral hernia, kidney cyst, appendectomy and cholecystectomy. The Italian professor will continue training the specialists in Kazakhstan for the next two weeks.

Two or three surgeries will be performed per day, said East Kazakhstan Regional Health Department Head Marat Shoranov. One more robot-assisted surgery was

conducted the same day by Turakhanov and Muzdybayev with Gidaro’s assistance, he added.

Head of Surgical Unit in the hospital Sergei Belykh said the surgeons might switch to a traditional open surgery in the process in case complications arise.

East Kazakhstan Region Akim (Governor) Danial Akhmetov congratulated the surgeons on a successful completion of the innovative surgery and expressed confidence in the region turning into the nation’s leader in high-level medicine in the next three years.

The opening of the centre, he noted, is an “example of an innovative approach.” In the future, the centre will be cooperating closely with national science and research centres in Almaty and Astana and medical university in Semey seeking to amalgamate treatment, science and education into a single model of an innovate healthcare system.

Dutch company to build potato processing plant in Almaty region

By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – Dutch company Farm Frites, one of the world’s largest potato processing companies, will build a potato processing plant in the Almaty region. The cost of the project is forecast to be \$165 million and the construction is expected to begin next year.

Founded in 1971 as a family business, Farm Frites is now a leading transnational company with 40 offices and six plants around the world. Its products are exported to 80 countries worldwide.

The plant in the Almaty region

will focus on cultivation of 11 elite sorts of potato with its annual capacity reaching 70,000 tonnes. Farm Frites and Kazakh Eurasia Gold company will work together to establish the Farm Frites Eurasia company that will run and manage the plant.

The Kazakh Invest national company, that seeks to attract investors, set up contacts between potential investors and local businesses and assist them throughout the process, has played an important role, said Kazakh Invest representative Saule Sabyr.

“The negotiations have been going on for two years. We were

working on financial mechanisms. We have found a local partner (for the investor),” said Sabyr.

Kazakh Invest and its regional branches support the investor at both ministerial and local administration levels.

Last year Farm Frites was testing various sorts of potato in three regions and selected the Almaty region to host the plant.

This year, the company will continue testing and finalising the preparatory works to launch construction next year, according to the Kazakh Invest representative. “The land plot was selected, and we are now

working with local farmers,” she added.

The Netherlands has been the largest investor to Kazakhstan, investing more than \$73 billion in the Kazakh economy. This accounts for nearly 30 percent of the total foreign investments injected in the economy.

Farm Frites Eurasia will join nearly 950 other joint Kazakh-Dutch enterprises operating in Kazakhstan at present. Though the main focus is on the oil and gas sector, the Kazakh agricultural complex is drawing increasing interest among Dutch companies.

Atyrau region to develop polymer manufacturing processes

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – With the creation of the special economic zone (SEZ), the Atyrau region seeks to focus on polymer manufacturing. To aid in the effort, the Kazakh Ministry of Energy, United Chemical Company and Borealis, an Austrian company, signed a term sheet outlining cooperation on a polyethylene production project, the ministry’s press service reported March 27.

The agreement considers the state support measures and stipulates transition to the design stage. A feasibility study will be completed this year.

“The project will produce up to 1,250,000 tonnes of polyethylene per year that will fully cover domestic demand and ensure stable export earnings. There are plans to

create about 4,000 workplaces for the construction period, 560 permanent workplaces in the period of operation and up to 3,000 jobs for related industries. The items produced will become the raw material for more than 50 types of polymer products for further redistribution and promotion of local polymer technology products. The contribution to the gross domestic product (GDP) is expected at an average of 1.2 percent per year,” said the release.

Borealis will also conduct a feasibility study and provide legal expertise. The \$2.6 billion project includes building a plant with an annual capacity of 500,000 tonnes of polypropylene. The construction completion date is 2021.

Deep processing of hydrocarbon raw materials, a value-added area of petrochemical products,

is one of the directions of the oil and gas industry. As a result, the petrochemical zone with tax and customs preferences was created in the region. The procedure for attracting foreign workers has been simplified, as design and construction will be conducted using international standards to significantly reduce costs.

The government will allocate financing to build the SEZ infrastructure, considering the provision for ready infrastructure projects allows reducing up to 20 percent of capital expenditures and up to 15 percent of operating costs.

According to international analytical companies, population growth and increase in per capita income will lead to a two-fold increase in oil and gas product consumption from the current \$1 trillion to \$1.8 trillion by 2030.

Polypropylene and polyethylene, the most demanded polymers, represent 60 percent of total consumption and may lag behind demand, even if all the announced projects are launched by 2030.

Platts and IHS international marketing companies reported demand for polypropylene is predicted to be more than 98 million tonnes by 2030 with a supply of 90 million tonnes. The demand for polyethylene is expected to reach 160 million tonnes with a supply of about 120 million tonnes.

“A positive assessment of the petrochemical industry development in the country is confirmed by numerous studies performed by international oil and gas companies including Exxon Mobil, Shell and Nexant consulting company. The petrochemical industry will be the main consumer of oil and gas produced in the future taking into account the search for alternative sources of energy for hydrocarbons. The Kazakh government pays special attention to oil and gas chemistry to sustain the oil and gas industry growth,” said the ministry representative.

SOCIETY

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 11, 2018

Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan to have own media platform

By Zhazira Dyussebekova

ASTANA – The new multimedia portal of the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan was presented March 1. The project, called the People of Kazakhstan's historical map, covers the history of the country's multi-ethnic population from ancient times to the present day. It will also be used as a platform for ethnic media, according to inform.kz.

"All of them [ethnic communities] will have their pages based on the basis of the portal. They will use the multimedia services of the portal – studio recordings and live broadcasts. We are talking about the fact that ethnic media are entering the information space of

the country at a new level, becoming more accessible to young people and also continuing to publish paper versions for the older generation. In June, the team of the new multimedia portal will start working in full swing; until this time, we will talk with the Ethnic Media Journalists Club about how to maximise all opportunities," said Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan Secretariat head and Deputy Chairperson Leonid Prokopenko at the recent assembly meeting in Almaty.

In light of the upcoming major meeting, the assembly is now preparing important documents.

"The regular meeting of the working group of Parliament is discussing a new draft law 'On

the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan.' We hope that the next discussion will take place at the plenary session of the Mazhilis and in April at a meeting in the Senate. In addition, we need to work out a new plan of the assembly's activities and conduct active preparations for the April 26 session of the Assembly with the participation of the President," he added.

The meeting also addressed the importance of the work by ethno-cultural centres, explanatory projects by ethnic media and the tasks set by President Nursultan Nazarbayev.

"The Assembly always supports the efforts of the head of state, whose decisions and proposals are balanced and strategic. Today, we

are once again convinced of the consistency and correctness of the course chosen by the President. The idea 'Kazakhstan is our common home' and long-term joint living of representatives of different ethnic groups contribute to the formation of a special Kazakhstan mentality with an atmosphere of peace, friendship and interethnic accord. We, the ethno-cultural public associations, support the social initiatives of the President aimed at further improving the well-being of Kazakh citizens, realising that the new initiatives are aimed at improving the lives of citizens and confidence in the future," said Uighur National Cultural Centre Honorary Chairperson Akhmetzhan Shardinov.

Ministry reviews positive results of state education programme



By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – About 70,000 teachers participated in the qualification upgrading courses as part of the 2017 state programme to develop education and science, said Minister of Education and Science Yerlan Sagadiyev at an April 3 government meeting.

Last year, 849 pre-schools, 717 of which are private, were opened to accommodate 64,400 children. As a result, the enrolment queue for three-four-year olds reduced by 25.3 percent compared to 2016, accounting for 125,200 children. Approximately 15 percent of kindergartens created conditions for inclusive education.

The transfer to updated secondary education content is underway, as the first, second, fifth and seventh grade curriculums have already been revised. Beginning in 2019, 10th–11th grade biology, chemistry, physics and IT courses will be taught in English. A five-day week was also introduced.

New approaches have been developed to improve the accessibility and quality of vocational education. The 260 free training programmes offering up to three qualifications are being implemented in 583 colleges.

The draft law expanding university academic and managerial autonomy is under consideration by the Mazhilis (lower house of Parliament). Eight Kazakh universities were included in the 2017 QS World University Rankings.

"We are working to increase interaction between scientific re-

search and economy and to promote commercialisation of research results. Twelve projects implemented received fellowships at the International Science and Technology Centre," said Sagadiyev.

The ministry seeks private investors to solve the school shortage.

"At present, 45 schools are in a state of disrepair and 127 schools with three shifts operate in the country. This is caused by population growth and urbanisation. In 2017, 68 billion tenge (US\$212 million) was allocated from the National Fund for the construction of 118 schools and 73 schools were put into operation. The remaining schools will be commissioned this year," he added.

Minister of National Economy Timur Suleimenov presented the state programme's monitoring results. Seven of its eight target indicators for 2016-2019 were executed and 161 of 166 events were organised last year.

Investment in education increased 23 percent to 265 billion tenge (US\$829 million) due to the state-private partnership. Agreements for 101 projects worth approximately 31.2 billion tenge (US\$97 million) were concluded in 2017 compared to eight agreements worth 4.3 billion tenge (US\$13 million) the previous year.

As part of the Five Social Initiatives, Prime Minister Bakyrtan Sagintayev requested accelerating work on the state programme, increasing the accessibility and quality of higher education and improving living conditions for students.

PPPs finance 25 projects in Zhambyl region

By Meruyert Abugaliyeva

ASTANA – Twenty-five projects in the Zhambyl region in sports, agriculture, education, social protection, logistics, public order and security will be financed in 2018 through private-public partnerships (PPP).

A three-year project to provide training for 350 children in boxing, taekwondo, heavy athletics, wrestling and judo is underway in the Tarlan sports complex in Shu. The contract is worth more than 167 million tenge

(US\$522,710), including 55.7 million (US\$174,341) to be spent in 2018. Cost of training process organisation for one athlete equals 159,196 tenge (US\$500).

The Kazakhstan Boxing Federation funded the construction of the sports complex, which is dedicated to Kazakhstan's 25th anniversary of independence. The facilities were the first project built under a PPP agreement in the region.

In agriculture, 15 veterinary clinics in 10 districts and Taraz city will be launched as a result of public-private partnerships.

The programme will also facilitate six projects in education, including construction of five kindergartens in various districts and management of an existing kindergarten in Taraz. Measures to attract private investors are underway.

Another PPP project involves service provision to a centre for the adaptation and rehabilitation of people with disabilities, executed by Tabys and the Department of Employment Coordination and Social Programmes.

A section of the Zhanatas – Shymkent bypass stretching for 4.8 kilometres is under construction.

The work is being done by EuroHim Karatau and the Department of Construction and Public Transport of regional akimat (government administration).

The documentation for the "Safe City – Taraz" project is being developed by IT Logistics and Department of Internal Affairs of the region.

The law on private-public partnerships, adopted in 2015, expands opportunities for business and government to cooperate and launch projects through funding from entrepreneurs, the government and national companies.

More than 20 percent of Kazakh citizens speak three languages

By Dana Omirgazy

ASTANA – Approximately 83 percent of the country's population speak the Kazakh language and 22 percent of the adult population can speak three languages, Minister of Culture and Sport Arystanbek Mukhamediuly said at a March 27 government meeting, quoting a 2017 census.

"To implement the project on promoting the trilingual education policy, 610 civil servants of central executive agencies attended state language courses last year. In 2016, their number was 300 people. Last year, 58,348 trainees underwent state language courses in the Language Training Centres. As of today, 89 regional state lan-

guage centres operate throughout the country," the minister said.

Trilingual education policy refers to a state policy initiated several years ago by President Nursultan Nazarbayev to ensure language proficiency of the population in Kazakh as the state language, Russian as the language of interethnic communication and English as the language of international business and communications.

Approximately 94,455 people, including 22,837 civil servants, passed the Kazakh language proficiency test in 2017. A year earlier, the number of test-takers was 73,732 people, the minister said.

Last year, 92 percent of documents were processed in the state language. Of these, 89 percent

account for the central state agencies, 93.3 percent of document circulation are at the local executive agencies and 49.1 percent at national companies. According to the Ministry of Information and Communication, the share of media content in the Kazakh language reached 72 percent in 2017.

A trilingual website tilmedia.kz aimed at promoting Kazakh, Russian and English languages and children's website balatili.kz were created last year, the minister noted.

"The National Terminology Commission has approved 3,000 terms. Thus, the terminological fund of the Kazakh language contains about 21,000 terms," he said.

According to Minister of National Economy Timur Sulei-

menov, the State Programme of Development and Functioning of Languages of Kazakhstan for 2011-2020 envisages nine target indicators, the interim results of which have been achieved in all respects.

"In general, the monitoring results of the programme implementation show positive trends," Suleimenov said.

Following the meeting, Prime Minister Bakyrtan Sagintayev instructed the Ministry of Culture and Sports to intensify work to provide the public with free Kazakh language courses and increase the availability of training courses in other languages, including through special information resources on the internet.

To ensure the gradual transition of the Kazakh language to the Latin-based script, state agencies were instructed to provide adequate explanatory work. Sagintayev reiterated to the government officials the need for timely implementation of key related initiatives.

Digital Mama provides job opportunities for women on maternity leave

By Meruyert Abugaliyeva



ASTANA – Tamilya Anchutkina, a mother of two children, entrepreneur and founder of UrbanMama Space, has launched Digital Mama, a programme designed to provide women on maternity leave with training and employment in social media marketing (SMM), graphic design and website construction.

Participants will learn professional skills such as creating mobile applications, marketing and programming, allowing them to work remotely. The key feature is that training will be held at UrbanMama Space, where participants can leave their children with professional nannies.

"First of all, the project aims to change the perception of a woman in Kazakhstan. Mostly, women are perceived either as a mom who is sitting at home looking after babies, sewing and cooking or as a woman actively pursuing a career. We want to show that a woman is capable of working in IT or math and looking after babies at the

same time. The programme also allows a woman to earn money working remotely and still be competent," Anchutkina told The Astana Times.

Women will undergo one and a half months of training and practice while simultaneously working for a real employer. Upon completion, they will have a portfolio and job offer if the employer is satisfied with their work.

The programme costs 70,000 tenge (US\$218) to ensure women take it seriously.

"We received a lot of applications, but we selected six women for our pilot project. We need responsible women willing to take initiative, as we are responsible in front of our business partners. For now, we work on programme mechanism, as we need to decide how we can prepare highly qualified and competent workers. Moreover, we want employers to provide mothers with jobs not because of their children, but because they are qualified," said Anchutkina.

The team of ten plans to train and employ approximately 40-70

mothers each month, or nearly 600 women per year.

"To date, our trainees practice SMM in six different projects, including social media accounts belonging to beauty salons, centres holding various trainings and centres for pregnant women. In the future, we would like to add other

"First of all, the project aims to change the perception of a woman in Kazakhstan."

skills and projects such as website construction, mobile applications, digital design and photography. Currently, we are looking for business partners who are willing to employ women as freelancers or allow them to work remotely," she added.

The programme is currently based in Almaty, but Anchutkina wants to expand its geography and launch a branch in the capital.

Anchutkina has two commercial projects and also founded an entrepreneurship school for women, which allowed 40 percent of its graduates to launch a successful business. Other plans are to establish an employment centre and business incubator for women.

NATION&CAPITAL

TOURISM

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 11, 2018

Aktobe – eclectic city in western region

By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – Aktobe city in western Kazakhstan is one of the nation's rapidly growing cities.

Founded in 1869 as a fortress to protect the then Russian Empire, the city is now home to more than 417,000 people, making it the fifth largest city in Kazakhstan after Almaty, Astana, Shymkent and Karaganda.

Major enterprises are based in Aktobe, including ferroalloys, chrome compounds, agricultural machinery and X-ray equipment plants. Many of these and other factories were evacuated to the city from the then Soviet Union during the Great Patriotic War later spurring the industrial growth of the city.

Chromium and phosphate reserves in the region also contribute to the development of the industry.

While cities in southern Kazakhstan and their architecture reflect the motives of Central Asian khanates that once had a significant influence on that region, Aktobe re-



St. Nicholas Cathedral.

minds more of a Russian provincial city, primarily because Russian architects were in charge of the city's general plan back in 1874.

This mix of buildings pertaining to pre-Soviet, Soviet and independent Kazakhstan periods ascribes an eclectic nature to the city and its architecture.

The city, witnessing a vibrant

cultural development in the same period as a rapid industrial growth, hosts museums and theatres that welcome visitors up to present days.

One of the oldest cultural sights is the Aktobe Regional Museum of Local History that opened in 1929 and offers more than 90,000 exhibits of different periods of regional

and national history. Among the exhibits are jewellery discovered in ancient Besoba and Syntas kurgans (burial mounds) belonging to Sarmatian nomadic tribes that inhabited the territory of modern western Kazakhstan in the 7th century BC – 5th century AD.

Close to the museum is the Memorial Museum of Aliya Moldagulova, an Aktobe region native and Kazakh sniper and war hero who fought in the Great Patriotic War and lost her life fighting the Nazis. She was only 17 when she joined the army.

Visitors can walk through Unity and Accord Boulevard unveiled nine years ago featuring an amphitheatre, Shanyrak monument and two fountains. The boulevard connects the city's Nur Gasyr central mosque and St. Nicholas Cathedral.

Getting to the city is not difficult, as it has an international airport with flights to Astana, Almaty, Atyrau, Shymkent and Moscow. The city is also accessible by train.

BurabaiLand amusement park to be launched in summer



Staff Report

ASTANA – The BurabaiLand amusement park will open at the beginning of summer in the Shchuchinsk-Burabai resort zone north of Astana. The Kazakh Lapland winter court is under reconstruction to function further as BurabaiLand. The new park will be open for all four seasons, instead of just the winter period, said head of the Marketing and Tourism Department of Burabai Damu LLP Azamat Yerbatyrov.

"After the rebranding of Kazakh Lapland, we will become BurabaiLand amusement park. People thought it would be something like Disneyland, as there is the similarity of names. However, it is not an analogue of Disneyland. Our amusement park will be interesting not only for children, but also adults. There will be carousels, Hobbiton houses, a House of Fear, quest rooms and six houses with interesting mirror and laser labyrinths," he explained.

Prices may also be cut. Kazakh Lapland was expensive, but the organisers lowered prices to include a package offering a visit to Santa Claus' residence and the shamans' village for 3,000 tenge (\$10). BurabaiLand organisers will try to reduce their prices also, according to Yerbatyrov.

Kazakh Lapland launched in 2012 as a representation of Finnish Lapland winter festive zones. Yerbatyrov described Kazakh Lapland as a smaller version of the real Lapland, with activities like dog sledding, skating, skiing, and horse and pony rides. The Burabai Damu company wanted to extend the entertainment into the summer, and came up with the BurabaiLand project.

The Shchuchinsk-Burabai resort

zone is also preparing an area for ethno tours, which will include demonstrations about making the national drinks kumys and shybat and brief presentations about their healing features. The drinks, of course, will be offered to guests.

A unique museum similar to the EXPO 2017 facilities will be built in the Abylai Khan meadow.

"There will be everything in 3D. Tourists wearing glasses will get acquainted with Kazakh culture," added Yerbatyrov.

He claimed the interest of foreign tourists in the Shchuchinsk-Burabai resort zone is growing each year. Representatives of 20 countries, including India, Turkey, France, Germany and Italy visited Borovoe in February.

BurabaiLand is a part of the Four Seasons \$191.2 million plan to develop the Shchuchinsk-Burabai resort zone, with some funds coming from private investment. The project is devoted to expanding year-round opportunities at the resort. Income from the resort to the budget of the Akmola region amounted to \$3.1 million last year, according to the regional government. They expect double that this year.

"The development of the most attractive areas for investment will create a competitive tourist centre directed at domestic market service and foreign tourism," said Akmola Deputy Akim (Governor) Vasiliy Krylov.

Some 125,000 tourists visited Borovoe in the first nine months of 2017, when the volume of provided services exceeded the amount of \$10.3 million, according to regional government figures. Analysis of the last seven years shows that the number of visitors is growing annually from 10 to 26 percent.

Boeing supplies first 737 MAX aircraft to SCAT

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – Boeing delivered the first 737 MAX 8 to SCAT, one of six such aircraft the airline is acquiring under its fleet and route network expansion plan. With the new planes, the airline will be able to achieve double-digit improvement in its fuel efficiency and environmental performance. In addition, SCAT will be the first airline in the Central Asian region to operate the MAX series aircraft.

"Last year, SCAT celebrated its 20th anniversary, and for us the fact that we enter adulthood with the purchase of the latest aircraft models is very important. We are sure that the acquisition of the Boeing 737 MAX 8 will not only raise the level of service in the company, but will also give a new impetus to the development of the aviation industry of Kazakhstan," said SCAT Airline President Vladimir Denisov, Tengrinews reports.

"Today is a new milestone in our long-term partnership with SCAT

airline. We are proud of our contribution to its growth and look forward to the 737 MAX allowing the airline to reach new heights," said Vice President of Sales in the Middle East, Turkey, Russia, the Central Asia region and Africa Marty Bentrott.

SCAT has been flying Boeing planes for a long time now, and the purchase of the next generation 737 was the result of this long-term cooperation. The company announced its order of six 737 MAX 8 aircraft at the Dubai Air Show in 2017. The agreement, worth \$674

million according to Boeing catalogue prices, includes the right to purchase five additional 737 MAX 8s.

During the official visit of Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev to the US in January 2018, the airline confirmed the purchase order.

The 737 MAX family of planes will help SCAT by reducing passenger costs and increasing flight ranges. The aircraft will allow SCAT open new directions in the narrow-body segment of the market and provide passengers with competitive prices for flights. The 737 MAX airplanes are equipped with the latest CFM International LEAP-1B engines, Advanced Wing tips, Boeing Sky Interiors, increased displays in the cockpit, and other improvements that aim at ensuring efficiency, dependability and maximum passenger comfort. The 737 MAX is the fastest-selling aircraft in the history of Boeing, having received more than 4,300 orders from 95 customers worldwide.

As of today, SCAT operates 44 domestic and 25 international routes. With the MAX aircraft, the company is ready to significantly expand its route network and reach new cities and countries.



Photo credit: tengrinews.kz

New York CEO dreams of launching tours, volunteer programmes to bring US to Kazakhstan

By Aigerim Sadykova

ASTANA – As CEO of the international business Global Government Partners Corporation (GGP) David M. Valera was celebrating his 12th trip to Kazakhstan this year, the American came up with an idea to contribute to tourism in the country. Americans will be invited to discover Kazakh culture, he told The Astana Times.

Valera is interested in developing educational and cultural tour programmes for students with the cooperation of the Global Leadership volunteer organisation, which has 20,000 students at the age from 13 to 17. Negotiations with Global Leadership are underway.

"Students will do volunteering and get to know Kazakh culture. I want them to stay with Kazakh families; they will eat Kazakh food, interacting with the families. I want dollars being spent in the country to go directly to these families," he said.

The programme will include a trip to Almaty for sightseeing, learning Kazakh culture and experiencing the breath-taking nature of forests, canyons, mountains and rivers in the region.

On his trip this year, Valera visited an old Soviet Union vil-

lage frozen in time with cars back from the fifties or sixties. That amazed him, as did a local village with yurts. He is going to add these villages to his tour list. The Borovoe resort zone fits adults, while Almaty and Shymkent are great places for children to visit, he claimed.

"I noticed a lot of people talking about visiting Baiterek tower. We have all those things at home – I think the biggest thing you can do is to promote your culture and your rich history; that's what I love," Valera advised.

Though he has no experience in tourism, Valera perceives this as an advantage.

"Speaking about tourism and cultural education of Kazakhstan, I found that people believe me more than someone who talks with them through a touristic sort of mentality. But there are many issues I've had in New York – people ask me 'Is [Kazakhstan] safe?' They do not realise it's nothing to do with this 'stans' countries," Valera noted.

EXPO 2017, he thinks, helped to change the world's attitude about Kazakhstan.

Next up is a project to promote Kazakhstan's image in the public health world. As a CEO of a global business advocacy firm and a strategic consultant, Valera develops

key partnerships for firms that hire him and helps expand their reach into new world markets.

For now, Valera is lobbying the John Hopkins medical centre in the US to establish an experience exchange programme focusing on heart disease and sexually transmitted diseases with Astana hospitals. If successful, the project will

be expanded throughout Kazakhstan.

"I took it upon myself to develop relationships and contacts in this part of the world, and so far it has worked very well. The hardest part for me working, trying to do things and establishing roots in this country is the people I've met who can't believe I'm doing this

out of genuine love and passion for Kazakhstan," he said.

Valera first came to Kazakhstan six years ago, when a friend he met in New York invited him to discover the country. The hospitality Valera encountered from the moment he landed inspired him to explore the country further.

"I was very amazed at how all

of my perception as an American were completely off about the country. As Americans, we live in a shell. America is the only country where you can get away with speaking one language, know little about what is going on in the outside world and still be successful. In other countries, most people speak three to five languages, that's the norm," he noted.

Born in Spain to a diplomatic family, Valera spent his childhood traveling across United States, South America and Europe, attending many political events. When he decided to work in international business relations, Kazakhstan seemed an obvious fit for him.

"At home, I'm Spanish; outside, New Yorker; while in Kazakhstan, I'm a new type of Kazakh," Valera noted.

He also commented on Kazakhstan's Bolashak scholarship programme, calling it a very smart move by the Kazakh government.

"I met great intellectually minded people that are going through or finished the programme. Your government made an amazing thing by creating it. Kazakhstan has contributed so much to the world, but somehow as foreigners, we are still behind in recognising it. I feel very blessed to be in the position to recognise that and to do my small part in changing it."



David M. Valera (C).

SPORTS

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 11, 2018

Astana Arlans defeat China Dragons in WSB

By Anuar Abdrakhmanov

ASTANA – Kazakhstan's Astana Arlans took a confident win over the China Dragons in the away match of the World Series of Boxing (WSB).

The match in Guiyang started well for the Kazakh club. Due to the absence of the Chinese boxer in the weight category of up to 91 kg, the victory was automatically awarded to Anton Pinchuk of Kazakhstan.

The team contest began with a bout in the 49 kg category, where Kazakhstan's Temirtas Zhussupov defeated 3-0 China Dragon Quan Yang. In another fight, Ilyas Suleimenov of 56 kg category beat Qingxian Mai with a technical knockout.

"I think I managed to win because I had a clear plan for the



fight and followed it. My coach gave me clear instructions to defeat the opponent. I want to thank the coaches for helping me prepare well and choosing the right tactics. I hope we will keep it up," said Ilyas Suleimenov.

Two more Kazakh boxers, Bekdaulet Ibragimov (64 kg) and Abilkhan Amankul (75 kg) also defeated their opponents.

"The guys did really well. The World Series of Boxing is quite a competitive tournament, where you have to be very serious and

prepare hard for every fight. I think that good preparation was the key to success. Everyone knows that Kazakhstan's boxing school is considered one of the strongest in the world, so there is every reason to believe that this season we will also be able to reach the final stage of the tournament and represent Kazakhstan on the world arena," said head coach of the Astana Arlans Nurlan Akurpekov.

The last match was the fifth match for the Astana Arlans in the season. Earlier, the Kazakh boxers defeated the Patriot Boxing team and the Indian Tigras in home matches and lost to the Russian team and won against the Indian Tigras in away matches. The Astana Arlans is the current tournament champion and the most titled in the history of the WSB with three titles.

75-year-old anti-nuclear activist to run his 305th marathon in Almaty



Harald Sel and his grandchildren.

By Dana Omirgazy

ASTANA – Nine riders led by Bike for Peace (BFP) President Tore Naerland will participate in the April 22 Almaty Marathon. This year, 75-year-old Harald Sel from Bryne, Norway will join the peace initiative.

"The Almaty marathon will undoubtedly become one of my most exclusive. Of my over 300 marathons, I have run almost half of them in Norway, Hawaii, New York, Moscow, Beijing and Pyongyang. Almaty means 'apple' and Almaty has the best apples in the world and great parks. In addition, the city's skating history is known worldwide. Therefore, I agreed at once, when BFP invited me to the marathon in Almaty. I am looking forward to visiting and running the marathon, together with my two grandchildren, in Almaty. In addition, Kazakhstan is a new country for me, a country I look forward to experiencing," he said in an interview for this story.

Sel has biked with BFP in Cuba and Vietnam and since 2000 has participated more than 25 times in the Trondheim-Oslo race. In recent years, he has been running marathons with his grandchildren. Five of his six grandchildren participate in various marathons and the youngest (17 years old) plans to debut in Berlin in 2019.

"As a child and youth, I ran in a lot of forests and mountains. I was an active midfielder. Later, there was also a lot of cycling and participation in long runs. I was 46 years old when I ran my first mara-

thon. After that, marathon running became a dear hobby. I have run over 300 marathons in 30 years. I am very grateful; I feel very fortunate to be able to do what I love. I have good health and I have never been injured," he said.

BFP has been organising races in different parts of the world for the past 40 years and any volunteer, sportsperson, activist, public figure or concerned individual can participate in the rides. BFP has been in Kazakhstan several times since 1988. The anti-nuclear activists cycled the Semipalatinsk-Almaty-Astana route in 2011 and toured Bishkek-Almaty-Astana in August.

In spring 2015, BFP together with Mayors for Peace and The ATOM Project organised the Washington DC-New York peace ride. Naerland and The ATOM Project Honorary Ambassador Karipbek Kuyukov gave lectures about the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons at different locations including schools, universities, baseball games, the United Nations (UN) and peace rallies in New York.

"I am not a specialist in the work of nuclear disarmament, but, as I understand, Kazakhstan has been a pioneer country. Unlike Norway, the country has unconditionally advocated the UN Treaty prohibiting nuclear weapons. I have a lot of respect for this. In this question, everyone, including Norway, should listen to Kazakhstan. The country is among those that, more than most, has experienced the damage of the Cold War's nuclear weapons race," said Sel.

Athletes with visual impairments to bike to Paris

Staff Report

ASTANA – Kazakh athletes with visual impairments plan to bike this year from Astana to Paris. The tour aims to highlight the problems of accessibility and popularise sports among those with disabilities.

"We want to draw attention to the problems of sports accessibility for people with disabilities.

Also, in our opinion, the exchange of experiences with athletes of other countries is very important for this issue; it helps to motivate our athletes to communicate more and, of course, to develop their level of preparation. This is a great way to popularise sports. We encourage people with disabilities to be active," said organiser Bakhtiyar Bazarbekov.

He noted amateur cyclists are actively preparing for IRONMAN

70.3, the most popular international triathlon in the world, to be held in the city in June.

"This will be one of the most important sporting events of the year, so we decided to take part in it. We have been improving the technique of swimming and running during the winter and now, with the opening of the bike season, there is an opportunity to improve cycling in the open air," he added.

The team is organised under the

banner Sports without Borders, a social project intended to popularise sports among people with disabilities, according to the KazGeo press service. The cyclists recently held their first open training session at the Park of the First President to launch the new season. Friends, relatives and sports fans came to support them and they demonstrated good technique with a volunteer pilot in the tandem.

Since creating the project in 2016, activists have conducted two special cycling marathons for blind and visually impaired participants. Accompanied by experienced volunteer pilots, they have ridden from Almaty to the capital and Almaty to Issyk-Kul, Kyrgyzstan.

Zhumagulov defeats American opponent in international MMA tournament in Almaty

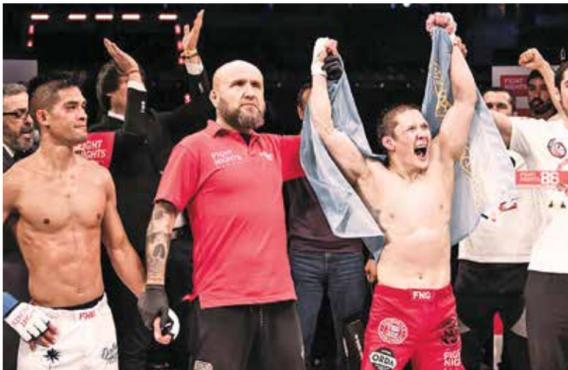
By Anuar Abdrakhmanov

ASTANA – Kazakhstan's Zhalgas Zhumagulov defeated Tyson Nam of the US in the main event of the mixed martial arts tournament MMA Fight Nights Global 86 in Almaty.

From the first seconds of the fight, Zhumagulov made it clear who was the leader and interrupted his opponent in his own elements, landing a series of accurate punches while standing. The Kazakh fighter also showed his endurance, constantly pressing his opponent. Nam tried to work on standing, but surprisingly did not use kicks. Instead, the American tried to strike the Kazakh in the body from a distance, but met strong counterattacks.

After five rounds, Zhumagulov won by a head. This victory means Zhumagulov can get a title bout for his next fight.

"Today we are witnessing the



most significant victory of the Kazakh fighter in the history of Kazakhstan's MMA. I have been monitoring the development of this sport in Kazakhstan for a long time. There are a lot of good fighters in our country, but defeating such an opponent, whose strength is known to everyone, and when you are not a favourite, can make

history. I am sure this is not the last time Kazakhs will witness a historic win," said head of Fight Nights Global Kamil Gadzhiyev.

"I did everything I worked out in training. Although I could not fight, because I broke my finger two days before the fight. I wanted to fight in a standing position, because everyone heard the op-

ponent's statement that he was going to knock me out. I'm glad I did not disappoint my country and defended the honour of Kazakhstan. I represented our MMA and proved that Kazakhs are fighters," said Zhumagulov after the fight.

Responding to questions from journalists at a press conference, Fight Nights Global's promotion producer Sangadzi Tarbayev noted the growing interest in mixed martial arts in Kazakhstan.

"It's great to see that there were few people at the press conference three weeks ago, but today the hall is packed. This shows that we have achieved our goal to attract Kazakhstan's public to the world of mixed martial arts. A live broadcast of the tournament in social media was watched by 1.9 million people. I want to congratulate Zhalgas and Kazakhstan on their victory. We like to come to Kazakhstan and hold tournaments of this level," he said.

Golovkin-Canelo rematch called off, GGG seeks different opponent for May 5 bout

By Anuar Abdrakhmanov

ASTANA – The bout between Kazakhstan's Gennady Golovkin, the WBC, WBA (Super), IBF and IBO belts holder, and Mexican Saul Alvarez, has been officially called off.

The rematch, which was scheduled for May 5, was cancelled by the Mexican boxer. This was announced at a special press conference by President of Golden Boy Promotions Eric Gomez.

Golden Boy Promotions received a notice from the Nevada Athletic Commission (NSAC) that Saul Alvarez would likely not be allowed to fight on May 5. Earlier, the NSAC suspended Canelo from fighting due to finding a banned drug clenbuterol in his doping test.

Gomez also said the rematch between Saul Alvarez and Gennady Golovkin can take place in August or September, but the decision can be made only after the NSAC meeting, which is scheduled for April 18.

Golovkin's promoter Tom Loeffler previously said the Kazakh boxer will still fight on May 5 in Las Vegas. His potential opponents include Demetrius Andrade, Sergey Derevianchenko, Gary O'Sullivan and Yamaguchi Falcao.

"Golovkin wants to fight on May 5 in Las Vegas, so we should undergo an official procedure within the commission. We ask those who ordered tickets to Las Vegas or planned to come there for the Golovkin's fight not to cancel their plans, because we are planning a fight on May 5. The opponent will be determined later," said Loeffler.



On April 3, the WBO world champion, British boxer Billy Joe Saunders announced his intention to fight against Golovkin.

"GGG, Tom Loeffler, right

time and place. Let's go champ! #AllTheBelts. Let the king be crowned!" Saunders tweeted.

"The talk that the fight would be off has been going on for a

while. They said fans started to return tickets, and TV channels refused to pay for the match broadcasts. So, I think it was expected. Another thing is that

there are still a lot of questions. Why did this happen, and who is to blame for this? I think that Golovkin's team did everything to wait for a more suitable moment and get better terms of the contract for the fight, to negotiate on the details regarding judges for this fight. The fight may take place in 5-6 months. Now Golovkin needs to have a fight on May 5 to keep in shape. It's hard to say who will be Golovkin's opponent on May 5, but I hope there won't be any talks that Gennady picked up a weak opponent. This should also be considered," said a well-known Kazakh expert and Vice-President of the Professional Boxing Federation of the Republic of Kazakhstan Viktor Demyanenko.

The first bout between Golovkin and Alvarez took place on Sept. 17, 2017, in Las Vegas and ended in a draw. Golovkin defended the world champion titles according to the World Boxing Association (WBA, "super"), the International Boxing Federation (IBF) and the World Boxing Council (WBC) in the up to 72.6 kg category.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 11, 2018

New amusement park to be built in the city



By Meruyert Abugaliyeva

ASTANA – Capital residents should get ready to have some fun. Meruyert Theme Park, planned for 180 hectares near Korgalzhyn Highway, will be constructed by 2025. Financed by local and Euro-

pean private investors, the project will include numerous entertainment facilities, hotels, restaurants and a ski resort.

“We understand that a single local company will be unable to finance the project on its own; therefore, we entered into negotiations with foreign investors. The

project will be launched in stages, since such parks are not built in five-seven years. For example, Disneyland was under construction for 60 years. The first stage of construction will include children’s rides and attractions and parking lots. We also decided to construct a water park, since



Photo credit: etoroda.info

there is no such huge water park in Astana,” said investors’ representative Maxim Yun during a presentation to the city planning council.

The project will be executed in four stages beginning this year. The first stage includes a trade and entertainment centre, hotels and restaurants, a Ferris wheel, roller coasters, virtual reality pavilions, an artificial island with a pirate theme and an artificial ice maze.

Approximately \$180–\$200 million, including \$40 million for the 26,000-square metre water park,

will be invested in construction. The project will be completed by local Mega Construction in a consortium with Renovation Construction.

The land will also host various entertainment pavilions, theme areas, a space exploration site, equestrian sport complex, hotel, cinema and concert complex, ski resort, medieval castle, rides and roller coasters, dolphinarium and oceanarium.

The Kazakh Tourism company and the Ministry of Culture and Sports initiated the project, meant to enhance the city’s image and

attract tourists. The agencies have expressed willingness to finance design and estimate documentation.

Yun noted the companies will need local authorities to provide landscaping and necessary nearby infrastructure.

“Such projects are appealing for the city and tourism. The project is beautiful and interesting; however, we need to understand the financial involvement of the investors. For our part, we will provide landscaping and required infrastructure,” said city Akim (Mayor) Asset Issekeshiev.

Popular cafés and restaurants with delivery service

By Meruyert Abugaliyeva

ASTANA – Many of Astana’s restaurants and cafés now offer home delivery. Here is a sampling of the restaurants that let you eat out while eating in.

Damdes

Given the number of nationalities residing in Astana, Damdes does not focus on a particular cuisine but seeks to provide “local taste” of the food because local residents equally like borsht, plov, manty and shashlyk.

The café offers several types of plov, manty, lagman, salads, samsa, shashlik and Kazakh traditional beshparmak and kuyrdak. The full menu is available at damdes.kz. The prices are reasonable and the portions are large.

Type of food: Russian, European, Central Asian

Address: 4 Dostyk Street
Delivery hours: from 9 a.m. to 11 p.m.

Average check: 1,800 tenge (US\$5.6)

Terms of delivery: the minimum order of 3,000 tenge (US\$9.4).

Delivery cost:

* 500 tenge (US\$1.6) for the order of 3,000 – 4,999 tenge (US\$9.4-15.6)

* 200 tenge (US\$0.6) for orders of 5,000 – 6,499 tenge (US\$15.6-20.3)

* free for orders exceeding 6,500 tenge (US\$20.3).

Contact number: 8 (7172) 64-34-44, 8 (747) 894-80-11, 8 (776) 264-34-43

Website: damdes.kz

The Mamashvilli Georgian restaurant offers traditional cuisine, including delicious khachapuri and khinkali cooked using authentic recipes.

The menu can be found on the restaurant’s Instagram page.

Type of food: Georgian

Average check: 5,000 tenge (US\$15.6)

Address: 65 Kenessary Street

Hours: from noon till midnight

Terms of delivery: delivery cost starts from 500 tenge (US\$1.6), depending on the delivery address. Average time is 40 minutes

Rafe Coffee & Food

Rafe, a popular café among Astana residents, serves European food in six locations. It also delivers a variety of hot dishes, pizza, salads, pasta, desserts and coffee to any part of the city.

Generous portions of well-prepared food make Rafe popular. The rafe.kz website offers a comprehensive menu with dish photos and short descriptions.

Type of food: Italian
Average check: 2,000-5,000 tenge (US\$6.3-15.6)

Delivery hours: from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m.

Terms of delivery: free given the minimum order of 4,000 tenge (US\$12.5), average delivery time is one hour.

Contact numbers: For the left bank of the Yessil River
2 Dostyk Street: 8 (7172) 552013, 8(702) 5225950
14 Kunayev Street: 8(7172) 222323, 8 (701) 7811041
12/2 Kunayev Street: 8(7172) 689768

For the right bank
5 Zhenis Avenue: 8 (7172) 29-34-30, 8 (705) 292 7470
16 Bukeikhan Street: 8 (7172) 29-15-00, 8 (701) 781 1042

Website: rafe.kz

Yakitoriya

Japanese restaurant Yakitoriya uses unique recipes while preserving the customs of traditional cuisine. The restaurant is famous for its sushi, which can be also ordered online or over the phone.

Type of food: Japanese

Address: 21 Turan Avenue

Average check: 5,000 tenge (US\$15.6)

Delivery hours: from noon until midnight and until 1 a.m. on Friday and Saturdays.

Terms of delivery: free given the minimum order of 4,900 tenge (US\$15.3), average time is 90 minutes.

Contact numbers: 8 (7172) 613 111, 8 (778) 0213111

Website: yakitoriya.kz
More restaurants and café with delivery can be found at choco-food.kz or zenge.kz.

Astana lights go dark for Earth Hour to launch environment protection actions

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – The city dimmed its lights March 24 to mark Earth Hour, initiating a series of environmental events to be held in the country this year. For exactly one hour, the capital’s iconic objects and 10 residential complexes turned off their illumination as a sign of non-indifference to the future of the planet. Most regions joined in the action.

“We plan to plant trees in Astana. In May, the Astana Economic Forum will be held, within which we also annually select sites and plant trees. June 5 is Environmental Protection Day. On Sept. 15, Kazakh young people will join the world ecological action, in which about 100 countries participate. Together, we will clean up garbage with the whole country. Today, all ecological measures that

will be held in our country this year are in the process of implementation,” said G-Global Coalition for Green Economy and Development Chairperson Saltanat Rakhimbekova, reported Kazinform.

Started in Sydney, Australia in 2007, Earth Hour is an international event held the last Saturday in March under the auspices of the World Wildlife Fund (WWF). The action reinforces respect for nature and attracting worldwide attention to the problems of climate change. WWF called on all people around the world to turn off lights and household appliances for one hour, from 8:30 p.m.-9:30 p.m. local time. In the last 11 years the effort has spread to almost all countries, with millions of people participating.

Rakhimbekova noted this year, in addition to the international motto, Earth Hour in Kazakhstan had its own motto: Catch the Connection with the Earth. The state

calls on its citizens to reduce their carbon footprint.

“This is an appeal to every citizen to reduce his or her own carbon footprint. If a person gets to work without using his own car but uses a bus that is fuelled by electricity or gas, he reduces his carbon footprint. A careful attitude towards the environment is very important. This should be our model of behaviour. We need to install LED lighting in our homes, take care of water, plant trees, participate in environmental actions, sort trash and use less packaging,” she said.

“When the lights are turned off, people begin to be interested and find information about why this is happening. In 2007, when it had just started, only Australia participated in it; the following year, the number of countries increased up to 35 countries and this year 175 countries participated in the action,” she added.

United Nations Development Pro-

gramme (UNDP) Deputy Permanent Representative in Kazakhstan Munkhtuya Altangerel noted the importance of the action for the country.

“In Kazakhstan, every 10 years the air temperature rises on average by 0.3 degrees Celsius and this trend has a very negative impact on people’s lives, crops and on nature itself. If this trend continues, then by 2050 the yield can be reduced by 30-40 percent. Also, climate change has a great impact on water resources in the country’s mountain basins and on productivity in agriculture,” she said.

Altangerel also emphasised Kazakhstan is one of the nations with a very high concentration of biodiversity.

“This is important not only for this country, but also for the global ecology. The number of these species is declining. We must strive to ensure that unique genetic resources of biodiversity that are of world significance are preserved on Kazakhstan’s land,” she added.

“Astana! Brighter Together!” festival brings eco-culture to Kazakhstan

By Aigerim Sadykova

ASTANA – The second Astana! Brighter Together! eco-festival gathered approximately 4,000 students from capital schools to promote an environmentally conscious lifestyle among the young generation, according to the press service of the Kazakh UNDP office.

“When you’ve finished washing and dressing each morning, you must tend to your planet,” wrote Antoine de Saint-Exupery in his book ‘The Little Prince.’ We need to start with ourselves to save energy, recycle waste as well as be responsible and teach the young generation,” said Deputy Akim (Mayor) Yermek Amanshev during the March 30 event in the Khan Shatyr shopping centre.

The festival, with a motto “I love my smart city,” offered 17 master classes and interactive quests oriented at audiences from five to 20 years old. The master classes gave first aid training and explained the importance of sustainable development and energy efficient equipment. Participants also learned about the concept of socially responsible business.



Photo credit: UNDP press service

“We tried to explain the meaning of the sustainable city, how it is possible to live in an environmentally friendly city with electricity and water saving. It will be a good message to support the ideology of EXPO 2017,” said Deputy Chairman of the Foundation for Public Initiatives Development (FPID) Tatiana Nemtsan.

The ROP Operator Company installed a photo stand to demonstrate the advantages of garbage sorting, and children were told how dangerous it is to allow plastic to fall into the ocean.

“If we want to have a clean environment, we need to pay attention to the education of our children. This generation will take heritage from us,” noted Chair of the FPID Yerlan Buzurbayev, one of the festival’s organisers, along with the UNDP.

The ROP Operator Company and FPID are working on a project to provide special containers for separate waste collection in Astana schools. The project is already established in one school and will be introduced in all schools of the capital.

“The processing volumes in Kazakhstan are very small. One of the reasons is the lack of waste sorting. The population is not prepared for this activity and we don’t have the infrastructure for separate waste collection,” he concluded.

The UNDP and the FPID are eventually going to involve 30,000 children throughout Kazakhstan in the project.

Head of the Sustainable Development Department of the UNDP office in Kazakhstan Ramazan Zhampisov said the festival will spread to 16 cities to promote smart technologies, energy efficiency, water supply and separate garbage collection. The main idea of the festival is to successfully implement green and smart technologies in Kazakhstan’s cities.

The next festival will be held in Shymkent April 13 with 10,000 participants. Each city has its own motto due to the environmental priorities of the region. Shymkent’s is “Shymkent is my garden city.”

The first Astana! Brighter Together! no-waste eco-festival, held Jan. 27, explored the creative potential of children, and its classes helped children discover their creative or technical aptitudes.