



## World's best humanities textbooks translated into Kazakh



President Nursultan Nazarbayev meets with teachers and young scholars during the presentation on April 12.

By Aigerim Seisembayeva

ASTANA – Eighteen of the world's best humanities textbooks translated into Kazakh were presented April 12 to Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev, reported the Akorda. The event was held under the New Humanitarian Knowledge, 100 New Textbooks in Kazakh project, part of Ruhani Zhangyu (Modernisation of Kazakhstan's Identity) programme.

Nazarbayev stressed the project's important role in the younger generation's education.

"The youth should receive knowledge that meets top scientific standards. That is why we made a large list of the 800 best textbooks. The National Translation Bureau was founded and has already started its work. Today, we are witnessing the presentation of the first 18 books," he said.

The President noted translation into Kazakh was carried out from the books' original languages.

"Today's first intellectual tranche includes the best scholarly products of advanced countries such as the USA, Russia, Great Britain, France and Switzerland. Few of our young people had earlier been given the opportunity to familiarise themselves with them," he said.

The head of state stressed the world's current development is largely determined by the potential of engineering sciences and noted the importance of understanding the goals of using advanced technologies.

"Scientific knowledge is the prerequisite for a modern nation's competitiveness. New textbooks are a true knowledge encyclopaedia. Today, not only are the methods of education important, but also their content. In this regard, the Ruhani Zhangyu programme provides the opportunity to implement a five-year programme of national education," he added.

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## Astana to host World Mining Congress

By Meruyert Abugaliyeva

ASTANA – The Kazakh Ministry for Investment and Development will organise the 25th World Mining Congress, a large-scale event dedicated to mining and metal sector, June 19-21 in Astana.

First held in 1958 in Poland, the World Mining Congress takes place every two-three years and unites industry experts and scientists from 49 member countries.

The programme will include multiple sessions related to the mining and metal sector, ranging from exploration and production to enrichment, from risk assessment to the attraction of foreign investment.

Simultaneously, there will be an exhibition of equipment and technologies applied in the mining industry and excursions to Kazakh scientific institutions and industrial enterprises.

"Such a large-scale event of global significance is held for the first time in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). Our country was not chosen randomly to host the anniversary congress. Kazakhstan is rich in mineral resources: there are 99 elements of the periodic table [in our soil], 5,000 deposits and 60 elements are used in production," said Mazhilis Deputy (lower house of Parliament) Albert Rau.

The organisers expect the congress to positively impact industry development in Kazakhstan and anticipate an increase in exploration and extraction projects, expansion of subsoil users' base.

The event will also help attract financial institutions and investors to the Kazakh mining and mineral industry given the investor protection provided within special legal regime of Astana International Financial Centre (AIFC). The opportunities and nuances within M&A (mergers and acquisitions) in Kazakhstan's mining sector will be disclosed.

Within the framework of the congress, there will be Mines & Money international investment conference, a leading event for the attraction of capital and investment into mining projects, where investors and subsoil users negotiate, discuss investment opportunities and the market, and share knowledge.

More than 2,000 delegates from 50 countries, 368 presenters, 58 associations, 62 universities and 220 companies are expected to attend the event.

The speakers will include Global Mining & Metals Advisory Leader at EY Paul Mitchell, CEO of the Eurasian Resource Group (ERG) Benedikt Sobotka, Global Head of Primary Markets at London Stock Exchange Robert Barnes.

Prime Ministers of Poland Mateusz Morawiecki and Australia Malcolm Turnbull are expected to attend as well.

## Kazakhstan resolves all Central Asian border issues, announces President

Staff Report

ASTANA – Kazakhstan's national borders with all bordering Central Asian nations have been legally delineated and all border issues have been resolved, Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev announced after a recent meeting with the leaders of five Central Asian states.

"The key point is that Kazakhstan finally finished the agreement on demarcation of our borders.

We started from delimitation, then demarcation of the border with Uzbekistan followed, then the tri-point area between Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan was properly formalised. All of the documents are signed; there are no unresolved border issues," said Nazarbayev.

The heads of state also agreed to regular meetings of their countries' security councils to maintain a consistent approach to resolving cross-border issues.

On the sidelines of the multistate meeting, the Kazakh and Tajik presidents also discussed hydro-power cooperation and the importance of Syr Darya and Amu Darya cross-border rivers.

"There are two rivers Amu Darya and Syr Darya, 70 million people live in their basin. They heavily depend on those rivers. Mutually favourable partnership, negotiation and resolution of all issues are very important for all our nations. Beneficial use

of cross-border rivers of Central Asia is of great mutual importance to every state. Kazakhstan and Tajikistan have a uniform position on this issue," Nazarbayev said.

"Tajikistan is reaffirming its commitment to international agreements reached in the hydro-power sector. We support close and constructive cooperation between the countries in all areas of use of water resources," added Tajikistan President Emomali Rahmon.

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## ADB forecasts 3.2 percent Kazakh GDP growth

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – The Asian Development Bank (ADB) forecasts growth of Kazakhstan's gross domestic product (GDP) at 3.2 percent in 2018 and 3.5 percent in 2019. It is expected that inflation will slow to 6.8 percent this year and will be 6.2 percent in 2019, provided exchange rate stability remains.

The report specifies that following a strong pickup in growth last year, the country is projected to slow to 3.2 percent this year but bounce back to 3.5 percent in 2019 as investment quickens, according to the ADB's Asian Development Outlook 2018 (ADO) report.

A more stable exchange rate almost halved inflation in Kazakhstan, taking into account that average inflation in the region was 9.2 percent in 2017 and 10.6 percent in 2016. At that, inflation accelerated in the other seven economies of the Central Asian region, particularly in Uzbekistan, notices the report. Inflation in the region is projected to settle at 8.5 percent in 2018 and 7.9 percent in 2019.

Average growth in the region rose to 4.3 percent from 2.7 percent a year earlier as the recession ended in Azerbaijan and expansion accelerated in six other economies, particularly in Kazakhstan.

Growth slowed only in Uzbekistan, where sharp currency devaluation to unify the exchange rate and other economic reforms forfeited some expansion last year for future growth.

Growth in the Central Asian region is forecast to slow to 4.0 percent in 2018, picking up somewhat to 4.2 percent in 2019, according to the report.

GDP growth in Kazakhstan in 2018 was 3.3 percent, according to the previous forecast of the ADB, published in mid-December. (The Kazakh government statistics put the growth last year at 3.8 percent.) The Asian Development Outlook is the main annual publication of the ADB.

Growth in the Central Asian region is forecast to slow to 4.0 percent in 2018, picking up somewhat to 4.2 percent in 2019, according to the report.

The ADB was established in the early 1960s as a financial institution that would be Asian in character and foster economic growth and cooperation in one of the poorest regions in the world. The bank seeks to reduce poverty in the Asia-Pacific region through inclusive economic and environmentally sustainable growth, as well as regional integration. The bank's headquarters is in Manila, Philippines. The bank's shareholders are 67 countries, 48 of which are in the Asia-Pacific region.

## Communication ministry to pursue 83 percent digital literacy by 2022

By Meruyert Abugaliyeva

ASTANA – The Ministry of Information and Communication has developed a plan to increase Kazakhstan's digital literacy rate to 83 percent by 2022.

The goal to better equip the Kazakh public to use information technologies in daily life and work is a central aspect of the national Digital Kazakhstan programme.

"We have identified two approaches: central government bodies will train professionals and population, whereas local executive authorities will educate the general public," Minister of Information and Communication Dauren Abayev announced recently.

Training professionals and the Kazakh population will be the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, Ministry of Healthcare and Ministry of Agriculture.

"These ministries will organise so-called concomitant trainings. For instance, the Ministry of National Economy is holding large-scale trainings for entrepreneurs, which will also include sessions on digital skills. The same will apply during the qualification upgrading trainings for teachers organised by the Ministry of Education," noted Abayev.

Trainings on digital skills are planned to involve approximately 385,000 professionals.

Approximately eight million people will be taught the basic skills needed to use e-government services and engage in e-commerce.

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"To date, the basic level of digital literacy is observed among 77 percent of population. We plan to increase the indicator to 78.5 percent by the end of the year. We have prepared recommendations on methodology, eligibility criteria for training applicants and four training programmes entailing basic digital skills, information and transaction skills, e-commerce skills," said Abayev.

# NATION

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 25, 2018

## Kazakhstan has 'zero tolerance' policy on torture, officials tell European parliamentarians

Staff Report

ALMATY – Kazakh officials briefed European parliamentarians, representatives of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and the media April 16 on the country's effort to prevent domestic torture and protect citizens' human rights, Almaty Internal Affairs Department reported.

Senior representatives of the Kazakhstan ministries of internal affairs and foreign affairs, as well as Prosecutor General's Office and National Anti-Corruption Bureau told the gathering that since Kazakhstan's accession to the United Nations' Convention against Torture and its Optional Protocol, much work has been done to create a national system to counter torture.

They said the government has a zero tolerance towards torture, investigates accusations and upholds torture victims' rights.

"The Constitution and the current legislation of the Republic of Kazakhstan proclaim a total ban on the use of torture, violence and other cruel or degrading treatment or punishment. All measures taken by Kazakhstan are aimed at creating an atmosphere of zero tolerance for torture in the society and in governmental bodies. This principle is the basis for many reforms carried out in recent years. In accordance with the instructions of the head of state, a considerable reform of the criminal legislation aimed at its consistent humanisation has been carried out; criminal legislation has been brought in line with the norms of international law, new criminal procedural and penal enforcement codes have been adopted," said Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs Rashid Zhakupov.

The officials also noted that the Kazakh Ministry of Internal Affairs has created a helpline for victims to file accusations of torture and the government has placed boxes accessible for convicts in all institutions of Kazakhstan's penitentiary system.

The government is also building glass-walled interrogation rooms equipped with video cameras in law enforcement buildings to make interrogations more transparent. Approximately 700 such rooms have been equipped throughout the country.

As a result, in 2017, complaints against police decreased 25 percent, accusations of illegal investigation methods decreased 50 percent and illegal arrests decreased 200 percent, it was noted.

"Victims of torture have an additional right to receive free legal aid and access to social, medical, and psychological services. Crisis centres have been established and are functioning in all regions of Kazakhstan, providing various services for victims of torture and cruel treatment. The government is working to fully rehabilitate and compensate the victims of torture. The corresponding Law 'On the Compensation Fund for Victims' was adopted in January this year. In addition, torture is classified as a grave crime, and the penalty for it was toughened with a maximum term of imprisonment of 12 years. Persons who commit torture are not to be relieved from criminal responsibility due to the expiry of the period of limitation or under an amnesty," said Zhakupov.

Kazakh officials noted the government has introduced mechanisms to monitor judges and prosecutorial procedures to safeguard the rights of those in the criminal justice system. Kazakhstan has also reduced the time suspects are detained to 48 hours and detention as a preventative measure is limited, except in cases of grave crimes, they said.

Following the briefing on the country's anti-torture measures, the European visitors including members of parliaments from Poland, Romania and Spain, together with NGO representatives from Italy and the Czech Republic, were briefed on the investigation of a number of criminal cases and visited detainees under investigation at the Almaty Pre-Trial Detention Unit No. 1.

## Officials briefed on Estonia's IT success

By Elya Altynsarina

ASTANA – Kazakh officials were briefed during a meeting in Tallinn at the end of March on Estonia's digitisation successes.

Estonia is considered a leader in IT-based logistics and business services and the meeting came as Kazakhstan embarks on its national digitisation programme.

Estonia is ranked first in Europe in the Global Index on cyber security, second globally in terms of legislation on information and communication technologies and fifth in global cyber security index rankings.

Estonia has invested in IT over the past 25 years resulting in approximately 3,700 IT and tech companies operating in Estonia, from start-ups to transnational corporations working in game development, finance, e-commerce, green technologies, trade and e-government.

Tech businesses make up 6.8 percent of Estonia's GDP, constitute 14.2 percent of exports and allow Estonians to do business with more than 120 countries.

During the meeting, Estonian Minister of Internal Affairs Andres Anvelt briefed Kazakh Deputy Prime Minister Askar Zhumagaliev on Estonia's electronic population register, state border register and crime register systems.

Ninety-eight percent of Estonia's population have electronic IDs and more than 33,000 business people use smart cards to sign contracts, receive financial services and manage their businesses. The cards, say Estonian officials, create a safe space for online customs.

The sides also discussed Estonia's X-Road project, a communication and database system that links the public and private sectors to electronic support services. In X-road, outgoing data is signed and encrypted in digital services.

The Kazakh delegation headed by Zhumagaliev also met with Estonian Prime Minister Jüri Ratas and Minister of Economic Affairs and Communications Kadri Simson.

Kazakh officials also met with Director-General of the Estonian Tax and Customs Board Valdur Lyde, Co-Chairman of the Kazakh-Estonian Parliamentary Group Denis Borodich, President of the Estonian Information Technology College Pieter Lawrence and business leaders.

### NATIONAL NEWS IN BRIEF

Burabay Summer Fest, an international children's and youth TV festival, will be held June 22-July 3 in the Shchuchinsk-Burabay resort zone north in Astana, said Akmola region culture and art department head Abil Zholamanov. Children aged 10-16 can take part in the competition, which consists of three qualifying rounds. "The mission of the festival is to support talented children and young people, to develop and strengthen international cultural ties and to increase interest in performing arts and the history of the country. The city and regional selection rounds are being held nationwide," he said.

The Kazakh Manufacturing Industry Union will continue developing domestic production with the government, said Atameken National Chamber of Entrepreneurs board deputy chairperson Kuanysh Bishimov at an April 17 briefing. "We held a survey among 1,500 regional enterprises in the manufacturing sector. Almost 63 percent of imports contribute to domestic consumption in the machine building and food industries. There is still a lot of work to do. There is a need to provide subsidies and preferences, to reduce taxes and to introduce non-tariff regulatory measures," he said.

A steel pipe manufacturing plant with a 100,000-tonne annual capacity of high quality items will be constructed in the Almaty region, reported the Kazakh Invest press service. Asia Steel Pipe, a China National Petroleum Corporation subsidiary, will invest \$50 million in the project, creating more than 300 jobs in the region. "The plant will be put into operation in December. The active construction phase is currently underway. We are closely collaborating with the local administration and ministries. We plan to expand production up to 150,000 tonnes per year," said Asia Steel Pipe communications adviser Radzhan Nurmuhametov.

The first anti-corruption project office opened April 17 at Al-Farabi Kazakh National University in Almaty, reported Kazinform. Almaty Akim (Mayor) Bauyrzhan Baibek and university rector Galymkair Mutanov, who attended the event, signed the charter. The office aims to eradicate bribery in education and create an environment where the rule of law prevails. "We need to eliminate academic dishonesty and to introduce new anti-corruption mechanisms in this sphere. The project office will cooperate not only with students, but also with colleges, schools and preschool institutions," said office coordinator Karlygash Usseinova. In the past three years, 687 corruption cases have been investigated in the education sector.

The Kostanai-based Sar'yakaAvtoProm car plant has started MAN truck and bus serial assembly as part of the memorandum signed between the Allure Group and UzAvtoSanoat, an Uzbek manufacturer, according to the Association of Kazakhstan Automobile Business. Plans indicate the plant will assemble up to 3,000 vehicles annually and the company intends to produce more than 50 units in this year's first stage. "The test model has already been produced. The transport vehicle type approval was obtained. The truck superstructures that constitute a considerable part of the total price have already been produced," said the press release.

Almaty City Pass, a single tourist card, has been launched, according to the Kazakh Tourism press service. The 5,990 tenge (US\$18) pass offers visitors the chance to spend three days seeing the top attractions. "The pass cards are available in the world's largest cities and tourist centres including Amsterdam, Berlin, Copenhagen, London, New York, Oslo, Paris and other cities. The first city pass was launched in Astana. We also intend to initiate this project in the Shchuchinsk-Burabay resort zone," said Kazakh Tourism CEO Rashid Kuzembayev.

## Gov.kz launches robot consultant to streamline services

By Aigerim Sadykova

ASTANA – The electronic government service eGov.kz has launched its first consulting robot, Kenes, from the Kazakh word for advice, in testing mode.

Kenes answers calls to Single Contact Centre number 1414 and consults on the most popular public service requests, according to head of the National Information Technologies (NIT) public-private company Aset Turysov.

"As world practice shows, contact centres are introducing special robots to optimise their work. The robot processes frequently asked questions and sends them to call centre operators in necessary cases. The mechanism not only reduces timeout, but also lightens the work of the operators," Turysov wrote on his Facebook page.

The numbers of calls and requests decreased 15 percent in the two months since launching Kenes in February, stated Turysov. The 113 operators at Single Contact Centre

1414 processed more than 4.3 million requests from eGov.kz portal users last year. They receive 14,000 to 16,000 calls from all regions of Kazakhstan every day, according to NIT data.

Kenes is designed to recognise Kazakh and Russian speech, as well as mixed Kazakh-Russian words. The robot is a virtual assistant for online consultation of eGov.kz and www.1414.kz web users," Turysov added.

As of today, Kenes advises on property tax payments, criminal record certificates, pension contribution certificates and registered rights or encumbrances on real estate certificates. The robot helps search for licenses and permits, electronic digital services (EDS) and compulsory health insurance. Citizens can also apply to check or be put on waiting lists for kindergartens, check fines for certain road traffic regulations and inquire about the service centre's work schedule.

NIT plans to make Kenes consult citizens on all requested services.

Kenes is an animated character

and describes himself as a smart and friendly virtual robot. He is prepared to discuss family, education, real estate, registration and business development issues and responds to inquiries about eGov.kz password recovery and certificate of address.

The electronic government service is not the first to employ artificial intelligence: National postal service Kazpost opened a digital office with two robots in Astana in December.

Kazpost's robot Saule is an electronic intelligence with a special screen. Another robot, Kuanysh, provides help to Kazpost customers by answering 100 questions, and can recognise clients' faces. "My name is Kuanysh, I'm a real live robot," he introduces himself to visitors.

"Kuanysh is aimed at entertaining our visitors who often come with children. The robot can remember your name and call you, asking 'How are you?' the next day. He can also answer questions about the weather, help with the coordinates of your location, and provide an updated password for Wi-Fi," said head of Kazpost Saken Sarsenov.

in full. Textbooks that are planned for translation next year should be selected and analysed on time. Second, one of the important tasks is the effective implementation of these textbooks in the education process. The disciplines studied in these textbooks should be introduced into educational programmes in the new school year. Third, I order systematising the terms used in scientific practice and publishing a new dictionary of humanitarian and economic terms," he said.

He also instructed authorised public agencies to ensure the appropriate high-quality control needed to implement the project.

"Fourth, textbooks should be published in the form of ordinary books. At the same time, we need to develop online education. Developed countries have virtual universities today. The Open University of Kazakhstan [openU.kz] should receive comprehensive support. We need to pay special attention to high-quality control of the open lectures' video library, as well as textbooks prepared on its basis," he noted.

"In this regard, it is very important that the younger generation is actively involved in its implementation," he said.

Noting the importance of adhering to tri-lingualism, the head of state also instructed translating several foreign textbooks into Russian.

Nazarbayev ended the meeting by giving a number of specific instructions to the government and National Translation Bureau.

"First, there is a need to ensure further quality translation and publication of 30 books that are planned for 2018. Financing should be allocated on time and

## Intensive cultivation, gardening trends discussed in Almaty

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – AgroCredit will provide more support to develop intensive gardening nationwide, according to an announcement at the Apple Day: How to Transform Apples into Profits and Smiles seminar held April 7 in Almaty.

The session was aimed at increasing horticulture productivity, bringing competitive advantages to the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and Europe and improving production efficiency.

Advice Consulting Srl, an Italian company with experience in intensive gardening and storage facility and warehouse construction, shared its technology for growing apples.

"Italy is one of the world's leaders in the apple market. We offer plants, equipment and the whole system from planting to marketing. New technologies are based on intensive gardening. Additional supports are needed for the plants. The plants have a weak root system and they grow faster. This project will pay off within the next three-four years. The cost of intensive gardening per hectare is from 30,000 euros (US\$37,000)-60,000 euros

(US\$74,000), depending on the technology. It is possible to plant from 2,500-4,333 seedlings per hectare according to the planting scheme," said company manager Birzhan Yerzhigitov.

Approximately 100 large and small companies in the Almaty

region, and more than 100 in the South Kazakhstan and Zhambyl regions, are engaged in fruit production. All are seeking to increase volumes. Kyrgyz entrepreneurs are also interested in apple gardening.

operation. There is a great deal of interest," said AgroCredit board chairperson Narmukan Sarybayev at the event.

The mechanisms, developed in cooperation with the Kazakh Association of Gardeners, will be completed in May. Second-tier banks and leasing companies will provide financing.

In 2017, AgroCredit financed three fruit garden projects measuring 170 hectares and a production capacity of 8,600 tonnes in the Almaty and Zhambyl regions.

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Nazarbayev noted there are few examples in the world of implementing such comprehensive programmes.

"New textbooks are an exclusive humanitarian library. They will be available to all people in three formats: in the form of paper books, electronic online versions and as a video library of open lectures from the best lecturers. Our young people living abroad will also have access to it when the books are published in Latin script," he said.

The President noted the Ruhani Zhangyru programme is being executed to enhance young peoples' futures.

"In this regard, it is very important that the younger generation is actively involved in its implementation," he said.

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# EURASIA & WORLD

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 25, 2018

## EXTERNAL NEWS IN BRIEF

During his first visit to Kazakhstan, International Anti-Corruption Academy Dean and Executive Secretary Martin Kreutner met with Kazakh Foreign Minister Kairat Abdrahmanov to discuss education-related issues in the fight against corruption. Abdrahmanov noted Kazakhstan's anticorruption legislation meets international legal norms and best practices in the field. He also welcomed strengthening cooperation between the Vienna-based academy and Kazakh Academy of Public Administration.

Twenty-two Kazakh businesspeople have travelled to Germany to learn about the country's corporate culture, ways to develop and promote business and master business negotiation skills, reported 24.kz. The opportunity to attend trainings and workshops was provided by the Federal Ministry of Economy and Energy programme aimed at boosting economic cooperation between the countries. The Kazakh entrepreneurs also planned to visit German enterprises in Berlin, Dresden and Leipzig to gain insight into high technology development and set up business contacts. To date, more than 11,000 specialists from 19 countries are programme alumnus.

Kazakh investment opportunities were presented at the Annual Investment Meeting (AIM) in Dubai, the world's leading platform gathering the international investment community and experts to discuss current trends in investment-related issues. The Kazakh delegation, composed of heads of 15 large companies, state bodies and national companies, greeted visitors at the national pavilion along with other 146 countries-participants. AIM President Dawood Al Shezawi welcomed Kazakhstan's participation in the forum and noted the history of bilateral relations between Kazakhstan and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

A Kazakh delegation led by Vice Minister for Investment and Development Arystan Kabikenov visited Seoul to meet with leading South Korean companies and facilitate economic cooperation. The representatives met with Korean Energy and Mineral Resources Vice Chair Sung Woon Khan to gauge potential areas of collaboration. He noted the organisation has been actively working with the Kazakh Embassy in Seoul and KazGeology and hoped the two sides will find interesting projects in the Kazakh mining sector. The delegation also held talks with Highvill, Noroo Kiban and POSCO ICT, South Korea's largest transnational companies.

Nearly 30 companies from the five Central Asian countries recently briefed Latvian company representatives on cooperation opportunities in the transport, logistics and food sectors in an effort to expand collaboration with the Baltic region. The trade mission was organised for the first time in the Baltic region by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). USAID Senior Regional Trade Adviser for Central Asia Ryder Rogers marked the growing interest in the region among Baltic countries due to "similar language, common past and good understanding of each other."

Almaty Youth Jazz Band, one of Kazakhstan's few jazz schools, represented the country at the International Jazz Festival in New York performing classic compositions of famous jazz figures including Duke Ellington, Dizzy Gillespie and Gordon Goodwin. Led by Tagir Zaripov, the young musicians shared the stage with representatives of the best jazz schools from California, Connecticut, Florida and Pennsylvania.

Kazakhstan provided nearly \$500,000 in humanitarian aid to Rohingya refugees April 18 in the Bangladeshi border town of Cox's Bazar. The Kazakh government announced in December it would send humanitarian assistance to Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh, which has welcomed since August more than 700,000 refugees fleeing neighbouring Myanmar after they were subjected to brutal violence from the Myanmar's militias.

## Kazakh FM visits Turkey, discusses presidents' summer meeting

By Almasbek Zhumadilov

ASTANA – During a two-day official visit to Ankara April 19-20, Kazakh Foreign Minister Kairat Abdrahmanov met with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and other top officials to discuss preparations for the meeting of the two countries' leaders in the summer and ways to boost Kazakh-Turkish cooperation.

Abdrakhmanov conveyed greetings on behalf of President Nursultan Nazarbayev and noted how much appreciated Erdogan's role in strengthening Kazakh-Turkish strategic cooperation is in Kazakhstan, the Kazakh ministry's press service reports.

Through joint efforts, the leaders of Kazakhstan and Turkey announced the launch of the so called Islamic rapprochement process in the Islamic world, and while Turkey chaired the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in September 2017, its first Summit on Science and Technology was held in Astana. Erdogan expressed confidence that the upcoming meeting of the High-Level Strategic Cooperation Council in Ankara chaired by himself and Nazarbayev would boost cooperation between the two countries.

Turkey remains a priority investment partner of Kazakhstan. The two governments are working to implement agreements reached during Erdogan's visit to Astana last September. The parties implement the New Synergy joint economic programme. Thirty-two projects worth \$1.4 billion involving Turkish investors have been established in non-primary sec-



Kazakh Foreign Minister Kairat Abdrahmanov (L) and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan in Ankara on April 19.

tors of Kazakhstan's economy. The most active investors are Yildiz Holding, Eczacibasi Holding, Abdi Ibrahim, Anadolu Holding, Aselsan Elektoronik and YDA Holding. At present, work is underway to bring new Turkish companies to Kazakhstan.

In 2017, trade turnover between Turkey and Kazakhstan, its largest trading partner in Central Asia, grew 28 percent compared to the previous year and amounted to \$1.9 billion. Abdrahmanov spoke about initiatives to modernise the Kazakh economy, as well as the Rukhani Zhangyru (Modernisation of Kazakhstan's Identity) programme.

Erdogan proposed a new goal of increasing trade turnover to \$10 billion. He was also interested in Kazakhstan's transition to a Latin alphabet. Erdogan noted the importance of the Astana process on Syria, supported by Nazarbayev, which, in his opinion, increased the authority of Kazakhstan in

the world arena. According to Erdogan, Astana process guarantor countries Iran, Russia and Turkey will seek to stabilise the situation in Syria, as agreed during the meeting of their presidents in Ankara April 4. The Turkish leader also thanked Nazarbayev for Kazakhstan's contribution to rendering humanitarian assistance to the Rohingya people.

Before meeting Erdogan, Abdrahmanov had bilateral talks with his Turkish colleague, Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu, where they agreed to finalise the coordination of the agenda and draft documents to be signed during the official visit of Nazarbayev to Ankara in summer. In addition, a number of economic contracts are being finalised. The most promising areas of cooperation are transport, agriculture, small and medium business development and tourism. Kazakhstan is also interested in developing the trans-

port and transit potential of the two countries.

The ministers discussed preparations for the summit of the Cooperation Council of Turkic-Speaking States (Turkic Council), as well as the activities of the Astana-based Turkic Academy.

During the talks, the interlocutors also supported the further continuation of the Astana process on Syria. "In the conditions of the ongoing conflict in Syria, Astana remains the only effective platform for achieving the cessation of bloodshed in Syria. The guarantor states have established a tripartite mechanism to monitor the cessation of hostilities, a working group for the exchange of detainees, the transfer of bodies of the deceased and the search for missing persons, and signed a memorandum on the establishment of de-escalation zones. Today, the Astana process needs not only continuation, but also greater international support in order to improve the situation on the ground. At the same time, we must fully support the Geneva platform under the auspices of the UN as a platform for a political settlement," the Kazakh diplomat emphasised.

Abdrakhmanov also met with Turkish Parliament Speaker Ismail Kahraman in Ankara on issues of inter-parliamentary relations and interaction of the two countries in international parliamentary organisations.

The Kazakh foreign minister also held a roundtable conversation with representatives of major Turkish companies and honorary consuls of Kazakhstan in Turkey where he spoke about Nazarbayev's economic initiatives

as laid out in the state-of-the-nation address "New Opportunities for Development in the Conditions of the Fourth Industrial Revolution" and the recent appeal on "Five Social Initiatives."

The government of Kazakhstan is working to strengthen the stability of legislation, protect foreign investors and improve the conditions for doing business in the country, he said. Abdrahmanov called attention to opportunities connected with the Unified Energy System, the implementation of China's Belt and Road initiative, as well as the launch of the Astana International Financial Centre, the International Centre of Green Technologies and Investment Projects and the International Technology Park of IT Startups.

Within the framework of the visit, Abdrahmanov also met with the heads of the leading political centres and observers of the Turkish media, where he exchanged views on the geopolitical situation in Central Asia and the Middle East.

**In 2017, trade turnover between Turkey and Kazakhstan, its largest trading partner in Central Asia, grew 28 percent compared to the previous year and amounted to \$1.9 billion.**

To date, the Turkish business community has invested more than \$2 billion into the economy of Kazakhstan, and the volume of Kazakhstan investments in Turkey is about \$1 billion. Honorary consulates of Kazakhstan are open in the Turkish provinces of Adana, Bursa, Nevşehir, Mersin and the city of Alanya.

## Astana announces support for inter-Korean summit

By Elya Altynsarin

ASTANA – Kazakh Minister of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan Kairat Abdrahmanov expressed support for the upcoming summit between the Republic of Korea and North Korea at an April 17 joint press briefing here with his Korean colleague Kang Kyung-wha.

Abdrakhmanov said he hopes the April 27 summit provides a breakthrough for the de-nuclearisation of the peninsula.

Kang thanked Kazakhstan for supporting disarmament on the Korean Peninsula, particularly within Kazakhstan's position on the United Nations Security Council.

"The unique voice of Kazakhstan that voluntarily renounced the nuclear armament must be heard to share its story of success after such a decision," said the Korean minister.

The two ministers also discussed economic and security cooperation.

"The Republic of Korea is one of Kazakhstan's key strategic partners in East Asia, and the state visit of President Nursultan Nazarbayev to Seoul in November 2016 opened a new page of our partnership," said Abdrahmanov.

Bilateral trade in 2017 increased 2.5 times compared to 2016, amounting to \$1.7 billion.

Both sides agreed relations can be developed further and Abdrahmanov suggested strengthening cooperation in infrastructure and logistics development, given the involvement of Korean companies in building the Great Almaty Ring Road.

Kazakhstan was the first Central Asian nation to establish relations with South Korea in the early 1990s. The relationship was elevated to a strategic partnership in 2009, said Kang, was strengthened by Nazarbayev's 2016 visit.

The sides also agreed to increase cooperation in information and communication technologies and digitisation. The agreements follow significant success in those areas by Korea and the launching of a national digitisation programme in Kazakhstan as well as the challenges regarding Kazakhstan's efforts to participate in the Fourth Industrial Revolution laid out by President Nazarbayev in a recent state-of-the-nation address.

Economic cooperation details were discussed during the April 19-20 Kazakh-Korean Business Forum in Seoul with participation of the Kazakh Ministry for Investments and Development along with Kazakh companies.

While in Astana, the Korean minister was received by President Nursultan Nazarbayev on April 17.

## Kazakhstan, UNDP organise seminar for Central Asian journalists and political scientists at UN

By Almasbek Zhumadilov

NEW YORK – The Kazakh Ministry of Foreign Affairs organised a seminar April 9-13 in New York to acquaint journalists and political scientists from Central Asia with the work of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) and Kazakhstan's activities as a non-permanent member of the council.

Kazakhstan organised the event with the UN Secretariat and the UN Development Programme. It was meant to strengthen humanitarian ties between Central Asia and the United Nations and was attended by representatives from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

The event follows a political address to the council by Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev in January 2017 in which he stated Kazakhstan's intention to promote the interests of Central Asian states.

"We will work to ensure Central Asia's stability and security, effectively countering regional challenges and threats, strengthening cooperation and promoting its growth and development," he said then.

The Central Asian delegation



visited world media branches at the UN. UN Under-Secretary-General for Global Communications Alison Smale briefed the group on the activities of UN information centres around the world.

out about all that is happening at the UN and to report on the ways this organisation continues to make a difference in the daily lives of many," she said.

The group also attended emergency UNSC meetings on the Middle East and briefings on Africa and met with UN Assistant Secretary-General – UNDP Director of Regional Bureau for Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) Cihan Sultanoglu, Deputy Director of the

UN Office of Counter-Terrorism Steven Siqueira and the leadership of the Security Council Report, an international non-governmental organisation.

Kazakh permanent representative to the UN Kairat Umarov also briefed the delegation on Kazakhstan's priorities for its UNSC membership and the results of Kazakhstan's January UNSC presidency, including a UN Security Council delegation's visit to Afghanistan. The Central Asian delegation also

met with permanent representatives from Afghanistan Mahmoud Saikal, Kyrgyzstan Mirgul Moldosayeva and Uzbekistan Bakhtiyor Ibragimov.

"Central Asia is now constantly being told in New York (that the West is) interested in the opinion of this region, listening to and discussing its position. It is important that this attention is not caused by conflict situations. Our region is interesting as an independent subject. Kazakhstan played a very important role in creating this image, thanks to its global initiatives and membership in the UN Security Council. The most important thing is that this republic represents not only itself but also the whole region on the international arena," said Asia-Plus journalist Liliya Gaisina from Tajikistan.

"For successful integration and strengthening of the role of the Central Asian region, we see the urgency of further joint actions to solve common development challenges, strengthening the partnership of the expert community. It is also necessary to involve young people in the integration processes, which will positively affect the development of the region," said Iskender Ormon Uulu, head of the Serep Analytical Centre in Kyrgyzstan.

# ECONOMY

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 25, 2018

## Mazhilis approves foreign currency regulation bill

Staff Report

ASTANA – The Kazakh Mazhilis, the lower house of the nation's Parliament, recently ratified the draft bill intended to strengthen foreign currency operations prone to withdrawing capital from the country.

In presenting the bill to the Mazhilis deputies, Kazakh National Bank Chair Daniyar Akishev noted it identifies a list of capital outflow-related operations.

"This includes residents lending to a non-resident that does not envision payment of the loan to a bank account registered in Kazakhstan; residents obtaining a loan from a non-resident that does not stipulate transfer of payment to a bank account in the authorised banks in Kazakhstan and residents granting an interest-free loan to an unaffiliated non-resident for a period exceeding 720 days. The list also includes export and import deals with a 720-day term for repatriation (the conversion of offshore capital back to domestic currency)," he said.

To be eligible to conduct such



operations, residents must submit a permit to transfer information to currency regulating bodies, said Akishev.

The National Bank, he added, will strengthen cooperation with state revenue bodies to prevent capital outflow. The bill grants the

National Bank the right to transfer information on currency operations subject to banking secrecy to the state revenue committee of the Ministry of National Economy.

"Why does communication between bodies receive special attention? Because laws by themselves

do not ensure comprehensive control over the capital withdrawal. This could be done through illegal means or under the guise of legal deals. Direct constraining measures might adversely affect the investment climate and business conditions for law abiding

businesspeople. This is not acceptable in a market economy," he said.

Akishev also reported about the simplification of information transfer procedures.

"Complicated registration regimes and notifications will be cancelled. A uniform registration base of foreign currency contracts will replace it. The total sum and subject of the agreement will serve as criteria. With that in place, banks do not have to decide on which currency regulation regime, registration and notification applies to a particular currency operation. This will cut the period within which banks complete the currency payments," he added.

The document also recognises foreign organisation offices as residents who, according to the current legislation, are non-residents. The changes, however, will not affect companies whose activities are regulated based on agreements signed on behalf of the state.

"This allows them carry out foreign currency operations in Kazakhstan when dealing with residents. Kazakh companies are prohibited from doing this," he said.

### ECONOMY NEWS IN BRIEF

The growth of social and economic indicators of Astana and new approaches to tax administration allow the city to occupy a leading position in ensuring the growth of the state budget, 24.kz reports. According to the State Revenues Department of Astana, the figures exceeded the forecast by 7.4 billion tenge (US\$22.7 million) to 227.2 billion tenge (US\$696.3 million) in the first quarter. Of this, 175.6 billion tenge (US\$538.2 million) went to the national budget and 51.6 billion tenge (US\$158.1 million) was provided to the local budget. The forecast was exceeded by 6.2 billion tenge (US\$19 million). These figures were the result of comprehensive measures to create conditions supporting economic growth in the city, increasing the collection of state revenues and effectively countering the shadow economy in Astana.

Bank card activity in Kazakhstan keeps increasing, as the number of active cards grew 20 percent over a year and reached 9.9 million units at the end of February, ranking.kz said. Credit cards are the fastest growing segment, increasing 31.9 percent to 1.4 million tenge (US\$4,291). For comparison, debit cards grew only 19.3 percent, as prepaid and debit cards with a credit limit decreased 2.7 percent. The share of credit cards in the total number of active cards increased from 12.9 percent to 14.2 percent over a year.

The government of Kazakhstan is considering the possibility of introducing a new tax regime: a single cumulative social payment, abtv.kz reports. This payment is supposed to combine individual income tax, mandatory pension contribution, deductions from the State Social Insurance Fund and the Social Health Insurance Fund. Thus, the government expects to formalise the category of so-called self-employed citizens who are now in the shadow market.

Sales are regarded as failed if there are fewer than two participants at the auction. Therefore, the ministry suggests allowing the sole participant in the first round to acquire an entity for not less than the starting price.

"Another proposal is to sell entities belonging to local executive bodies using the private-public partnership (PPP) mechanism. Healthcare and transport infrastructure objects, for example, bear considerable social importance and are also put on sale in a competitive environment. Taking into account their importance, we suggest selling them to public sector using PPP," he added.

clothing production decreased 8.5 percent and girls' outerwear by 19 percent.

The European Bank of Reconstruction and Development seeks to convert euros to dollars to support Kazakh clothing producers by investing \$1.5 million in the sector and cooperating with 70 textile companies.

With the support of the bank, Kazakh textile and fashion companies took part in the White Milano exhibition in February, returning to Kazakhstan with several agreements to export their products to Russia and Europe. It also subsides up to 50 percent of local and up to 85 percent of foreign management consultancy services for local designers.

Kazakhstan investment week continued in South Korea, 24.kz reports. Representatives of the Kazakh delegation in the country for the event held dozens of meetings daily with the heads of major South Korean corporations. Their discussions focused on logistics, high technology, agriculture and other areas of the economy where investors from South Korea are ready to invest. Some agreements were already signed: The largest logistics corporation of South Korea is expected to help increase the transit potential of Kazakhstan through a memorandum signed with Kazakhstan's national railway company.

The sides agreed to cooperate to use the capabilities of Kazakhstan's terminal in the Chinese port of Lianyungang.

Kazakh and Ukrainian producers are increasing export capacities. In the first quarter of 2018, Kazakhstan's fuel exports to Ukraine grew 30-fold, kazakh-tv.kz reports. Ukrainian operators imported nearly 36,000 tonnes of natural gas from Kazakhstan. According to them, the product meets the European standards. "According to our calculations, since 2010 this is the largest amount of imported Kazakh liquefied gas. This year, the figure is supposed to increase. The contract with Tengizchevroil contributed to addressing the shortage in August and September last year. Now, due to the supply of Kazakh liquefied gas, our market has become more predictable," Ivan Kudinov, analyst of petroleum products market, said. The demand for gas in Ukraine is estimated at 150,000 tonnes per month. Petroleum product market analysts forecast that with this demand, the volume of supplies from Kazakhstan will continue to grow.

## New loan programme to begin this year

Staff Report

ASTANA – The National Bank's 7-20-25 mortgage programme to provide favourable loans for Kazakh citizens to buy homes will begin in the second half of this year, Kazakh National Bank Chairman Daniyar Akishev announced recently.

"We need to change the legislation to make it work correctly. We will launch the programme on market principles. The banks involved in the programme are going to be main operators. All details are developing to make these banks offer the product (mortgage) from the second half of the year," he said, adding that the National Bank has requested additional information from government agencies.

Any citizen with stable income in the national currency can apply for the loans at 7 percent interest with a 20 percent down payment and a 25-year loan period.

"Mortgage loans will be provided in tenge. At the same time, banks will not levy any fees and charges related to the servicing," he added.

The National Bank has also updated its Mortgage Loan Refinancing Programme which was put in place in 2015 to assist borrowers who are having trouble making their payments. The updates will assist foreign currency mortgage borrowers and improve conditions for refinancing loans issued between 2004 and 2009.

A programme for refinancing mortgage loans was implemented in Kazakhstan in 2015. More than 23,000 borrowers received the assistance within the programme. They could save their housing and ease payments on mortgage loans. It is assumed the amount of refinanced loans will increase up to 2026 and may be approximately 40,000," said Akishev. "Borrowers that belong to the socially vulnerable group are especially in need of state support. For most of them, the only source of income are government payments and benefits. And they are forced to pay off their loans."

The National Bank will also allow banks to rent properties transferred from a borrower, with the possibility for the borrower to regain possession. The National Bank is also considering buying properties in the secondary market.

## Privatisation programme is 76 percent complete

By Meruyert Abugaliyeva

ASTANA – The national privatisation programme for 2016-2020 involving 877 entities is 76 percent complete, as 397 organisations worth 199 billion tenge (US\$619 million) have been sold and 274 are set for reorganisation and liquidation, reported Kazakh Minister of Finance Bakhyt Sultanov during the April 10 government meeting.

"This year, the plans are to sell 265 entities. Ministry data for the first quarter of the year shows that 45 organisations were put on sale, including 20 entities sold for 19 billion tenge (US\$59 million) and 10 set for liquidation," he said.

The list of entities to be privatised includes 71 top priority organisations, such as national holdings. To date, 13 entities have been sold for 95 billion tenge (US\$295 million). Although none of the organisations was sold during the first quarter, plans are to put 40 entities for sale this year.

"In general, the privatisation programme is running smoothly and its goals and objectives are clearly defined. The ministry constantly oversees the process using the electronic monitoring system," he added.

Minister of National Economy Timur Suleimenov proposed several suggestions meant to enhance the effectiveness in executing the programme. One proposal involves

strengthening post-privatisation control to ensure the organisation preserves its original scope, repays the debts, maintains existing jobs and creates new ones.

"Currently, control is executed only over state property assets, whereas quasi-public companies are not overseen after privatisation. Therefore, we propose that national holdings ensure that terms of sale are satisfied and the further effectiveness of the privatised entity is maintained," he noted.

Sales analyses show the enterprises are often sold during the second and third round and the price is lowered by 50 percent in each round, which results in governmental losses. There have been occasions, however, with

## Clothing manufacturers fail to meet demand, says report

Staff Report

ASTANA – Kazakhstan needs to increase its domestic clothing production to meet national demand, reports Energoprom.kz.

In January, domestic manufacturers matched 19.3 percent of national demand for hosiery and 16.9 percent for sportswear. Poor performance is observed in other segments, where production meets

only 1-2 percent of the country's demand.

During the first two months of 2018, Kazakh enterprises produced clothing worth 4.54 billion tenge (US\$13.89 million), demonstrating a 15.5 percent increase compared to a year before.

The Almaty region accounts for the biggest share at 18.1 percent, which almost doubled compared to the previous year. The region hosts some of the country's big-

gest clothing producers, including Glasman, Arlan 777, Azhar, Mediatrix-H and Textil Market.

The next largest share comes from the Karaganda region with a 16.1 percent share and Almaty with a 14.6 percent production.

Knitwear production increased fivefold, while fur clothing production decreased 8.5 percent and girls' outerwear by 19 percent.

Knitwear production witnessed a five-fold upward trend, while fur

clothing production decreased 8.5 percent and girls' outerwear by 19 percent.

The European Bank of Reconstruction and Development seeks to convert euros to dollars to support Kazakh clothing producers by investing \$1.5 million in the sector and cooperating with 70 textile companies.

With the support of the bank, Kazakh textile and fashion companies took part in the White Milano exhibition in February, returning to Kazakhstan with several agreements to export their products to Russia and Europe. It also subsides up to 50 percent of local and up to 85 percent of foreign management consultancy services for local designers.

## PPPs have reduced burden on budget by \$282 million

By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – Kazakhstan is seeking to make greater use of the private public partnership (PPP) mechanism that has commissioned 140 projects since 2006 and reduced the burden on the national budget by 90.6 billion tenge (US\$281.7 million), reported Minister of National Economy Timur Suleimenov. To date, 78 more objects are being constructed.

"The experience shows that the use of the PPP mechanism brings positive results. In the past, if we take into account the 140 objects that were commissioned, it allowed decreasing the budget load by nearly 90.6 billion tenge (US\$281.7 million)," he said.

Kazakhstan introduced the mechanism to its legislation in 2006, when it endorsed the law on concessions. Since then, 212 PPP agreements worth 766.4 billion tenge (US\$2.38 billion) have been registered, while 81 agreements worth 14.6 billion tenge (US\$45.4 billion) are currently in the registration stage. More than 75 percent of those agreements are in the social sector.

Forty-four PPP projects are currently being either studied or implemented, said Minister for Investment and Development Zhenis Kassymbek. One of the key projects is constructing the Big Almaty Ring Road by Turkish firms Alsim Alarko and Makyol Construction and South Korean companies Korea Expressway and Korean SK. The corporations

are set to invest 150 billion tenge (\$466.5 million).

The 66-kilometre road is expected to ease traffic jams in the nation's most populous city by enabling transit trucks and passenger vehicles to bypass the urban area through the Ile, Karasai and Talgar districts. Construction will begin in May.

Kassymbek also noted the railway bypass line to be built at Almaty station. The cost is estimated at 96.6 billion tenge (US\$300.4 million) and construction is scheduled for next year.

Prime Minister Bakytzhan Sagintayev, who chaired the meeting, noted expanded PPP use is of paramount importance to the nation's growing economy.

"The main issue today is the

construction of dormitories for students based on PPP as part of the implementation of the Five social initiatives voiced by the President.

The akims (governors) of the regions need to pay special attention to this aspect," he said, addressing the ministers.

As the majority of projects do not always reach the final stage, the government is taking steps to ease the procedures and create more favourable conditions for potential investors.

Kazakhstan adopted a law late last year to further improve and simplify the PPP mechanism. The document optimised the procedures by reducing the number of required stages from five to three, cutting the approval period and expertise for projects from seven months to three.

The law also envisioned guaranteed use for three or more years and an opportunity to plan a standard PPP project taking into account the specifics of a particular industry within the national programmes.

# BUSINESS

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 25, 2018

**BUSINESS NEWS IN BRIEF**

KMF, a microfinance organisation, and International Finance Corporation (IFC), a member of the World Bank Group, signed a memorandum allowing the former to take a three-year, \$82 million syndicated loan, the largest in the history of Kazakh microfinance organisations. The funds are earmarked for entrepreneurship development, specifically for micro and small enterprises in rural areas and female entrepreneurship, said KMF management board chairperson Shalkar Zhussupov. The syndicated loan was granted by several financial companies from Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands, Switzerland and the U.S. IFC will provide only \$10 million and be responsible for the currency risk, as the loan is in tenge.

Latvian carrier airBaltic will launch direct flights April 29 along the Riga-Almaty-Riga route. The five-hour, 45-minute flights will operate three times a week using a new Bombardier CS300 aircraft. A one-way ticket in economy class will start at \$196, including taxes, duties and charges; business class and premium tickets will cost at least \$246 and \$980, respectively. airBaltic provides flights from Riga to more than 60 destinations, including cities in the Commonwealth of Independent States, Europe, the Middle East and Scandinavia.

Railways platforms and grain carriers will be manufactured at an existing plant in the North Kazakhstan region. Facility reconstruction is underway and will enable producing 120 long-base platforms. Approximately 300 million tenge (US\$914,700) in new equipment will double production capacity to manufacture 240 railway carriages annually. The plans are to sell products valued at 23.4 billion tenge (US\$71.6 million) this year.

A union of manufacturing companies has been established in Kazakhstan. Members include machine companies and six industry associations composed of 243 companies in the pharmaceutical, elevator production, chemical, light, furniture and paper and packaging industries. Member companies make a significant contribution to the national economy, as aggregate tax expenses for the last five years exceeded 100 billion tenge (US\$305 million). The union was set up with the goal of representing manufacturers' interests in the non-extractive sector and formulating a single stance on strategic directions for industry development. The companies united to provide access to key modernisation drivers, namely technology and finance, and reduce entry barriers into local and foreign markets, according to management board chairperson Marat Bakkulov.

A smart district will be built in Astana using private investors' funds. The site, surrounded by Barayev, Kravcov, Tashenov and Khussein streets in Zhasstar city district, will be equipped with 10 different technologies to ensure comfortable facilities such as heated pavements and roads and smart planning systems for drivers and pedestrians, lightning and water drainage and eco-friendly waste. The district will also include smart bus stops, parking lots, children's playgrounds, comfortable ramps, Wi-Fi, smart gardens and benches. Astana Innovations is responsible for the know-how, which will be used as a benchmark during construction.

Saraishyk, the first Kazakh enterprise specialising in goat cultivation, will use Saanen goat milk to produce ice cream, butter and baby food. Using Italian and Serbian equipment, the Attyrau region plant will manufacture 180 tonnes of milk and 140 tonnes of milk products. The company has purchased 450 goats with the goal of increasing production capacity and now plans to also generate 21 tonnes of yoghurt, 15 tonnes of cheese and four tonnes of goat meat. The farm also has sheep, camel and horse herds and meat processing facilities.

## Kazakhstan participates in major Middle East investment forum, prioritises transnational company cooperation

**By Zhanna Shayakhetova**

ASTANA – A Kazakh pavilion highlighting the country's investment opportunities was presented at the Annual Investment Meeting (AIM) held April 9-11 in Dubai, reported the Kazakh Invest press service.

"Kazakhstan and the UAE (United Arab Emirates) have a very long history of relations. Moreover, we are very glad to meet the Kazakh delegation this year at the event. The AIM exhibition management is ready to sup-

port the delegation of Kazakhstan so that you can successfully hold meetings. It is a great platform to attract multinational companies to Kazakhstan. We wish for you to achieve maximum results from this event," said AIM President Dawood al-Shezawi.

The delegation included the representatives of 15 large domestic companies, state bodies and national companies. Kazakh Invest officials met with agents of the largest Middle-Eastern companies.

"We visited the pavilion of Kazakhstan at the World Trade Centre in Dubai because we heard

that the business market is very developed in Kazakhstan and we would like to have a business in your country. Now we are looking for business partners around the world, especially in the Middle East, Italy, Kazakhstan and Russia. We are already developing in Dubai and we need to open a business with new partners," said AT WORLD representative Mahmoud Shalash.

A recent announcement from Kazakh Invest noted 67 projects involving \$7.1 billion in foreign investments will be built this year, creating more than 13,500

jobs. Construction and installation works are underway on six projects worth \$539 million and 12 projects will start in the second quarter of the year.

"\$15 million extruded mixed fodder plant financed by UAE-based Phoenix Commodities is one of the key projects in the Khorgos-Eastern Gate Special Economic Zone (SEZ).

"The collaboration with the transnational companies involves not only presentations and negotiations. The preparatory work is essential to identify the key projects. We have prepared 50 new

projects. Now, we will identify the target companies. Our representatives abroad will work with these projects," said Kazakh Invest board chairperson Saparbek Tuyakbayev at an April 6 press conference.

A major investment conference, AIM serves as an interactive platform for the international investment community. Industry 4.0, public-private partnerships and global strategies for attracting investment were on the plenary session agendas. The forum also included a pavilion exhibit featuring 141 countries.

## S. Kazakhstan leads in manufacturing investments, creates supportive environment for SMEs

**By Zhanna Shayakhetova**

ASTANA – Twenty projects worth 50 billion tenge (US\$151 million) and creating 2,700 jobs will be implemented in the South Kazakhstan region, reported akim (governor) Zhanseit Tuimebayev at an April 9 meeting of the Chamber of Entrepreneurs Council.

Approximately 129.4 billion tenge (US\$392 million), 2.4 times more than in 2016, will be invested in manufacturing. According to these indicators, the region ranks first in the nation.

"President Nursultan Naz-

arbayev always pays attention to the issues of regional entrepreneurship development. The social and economic initiatives are aimed at eliminating administrative barriers and simplifying business procedures.

All the conditions are currently created to promote a favourable business climate and to develop small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the region," he said.

Industrial output reached 858.4 billion tenge (US\$2.6 billion), a 102.1-percent increase in 2017. The annual increase in the sector reached 105 percent. Launch-

ing new production facilities and modernising existing enterprises, initiatives set by the head of state, contributed to the positive indicators.

"We plan to launch Shymkent Temir, a steel bloom production plant, and Asyl-Bastau.KZ, a powdered milk and butter production plant, in the first half of 2018. These will be import substitute products," he said.

Atameken National Chamber of Entrepreneurs Presidium Chairman Timur Kulibayev, who attended the event as part of his working visit to the region, noted the need to present entrepreneurship to

young people beginning in school.

"We introduced the business ombudsman institution, an absolutely new concept for the country. Its power and authority allow solving the problems of businesspeople independently from officials and imperfect laws," he said.

A special student entrepreneurship course expected to launch in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Science will have a positive effect on densely populated areas.

Regional chamber of entrepreneurs head Askar Abubakirov said 179,500 SMEs operate in the region. South Kazakhstan also occu-

pies a leading position in business entities.

"Last year, 499 projects were supported as part of the Business Road Map 2020 programme. About 900 entrepreneurs received microloans worth 4.1 billion tenge (\$12.4 million) due to the Productive Employment and Mass Entrepreneurship 2017-2021 initiative. Approximately 1,500 people took part in trainings and 300 of them started their own businesses," he said.

Ontustik Regional Investment Centre supported 2,342 projects valued at 8.3 billion tenge (US\$25 million) and created 4,618 jobs.

## AIFC discusses perspectives of cooperation at Boao Forum for Asia

**By Aidarbek Zhumadildayev**
**GUEST COMMENTARY**

ASTANA – A delegation from Kazakhstan delegation participated in the annual Boao Forum for Asia (BFA) in Hainan Province, China, earlier in April. This year's topic was "Open and Innovative Asia for a World of Greater Prosperity."

**Yesterday: restoring ancient Silk Road**

Today, humanity faces a policy of confrontation and resistance to change. Such an attitude is traced in all spheres, including the economy. Nevertheless, a national economy is not considered as an issue of the single state anymore. On the contrary, for seeking economic growth and stability, states undertake various actions. Cooperation in international organisations and making conversations globally are among the measures.

The Asian region has a rich and dense history of nations, states, wars and borders. Due to a number of historical and current geopolitical factors, Asian states have decent preconditions today. The Silk Road is worthy to be treated as a definite source of analysis of historical processes not only between Kazakhstan and China, but also throughout Asia and the East.

Historical roots are the source and support for the development of bilateral cooperation of neighboring states and their peaceful coexistence. However, states' collaboration is never considered apart from economic essence.

The forum broadcast such messages as the importance of trade and investment liberalisation, more open economic integration and innovation and promoting a prosperous Asia in a flourishing world. Kazakhstan has traditionally participated in this high-level event.

Xi, in his speech at the opening ceremony, underlined the positive reflection of the state's opening-up policy and mentioned that "The world is undergoing a new round of major development.

Kelimbetov also met with the representatives of Chinese financial institutions and signed memorandums of cooperation. During his visit to Shanghai, memorandums of understanding were

great chance and profound readjustment. Mankind faces many instabilities and uncertainties. The new round of technological and industrial revolutions brings fresh opportunity and also presents challenges." Thus, digital globalisation is the next step. We are witnessing the era when digitisation is not a challenge, but a tool to develop."

The purpose of the Kazakh delegation's visit was to hold bilateral meetings with representatives of the Chinese business sector, conduct roadshows of national companies planning to launch their as IPOs and sign bilateral memorandums of cooperation.

The delegation from the Astana International Financial Centre (AIFC), headed by its Governor Kairat Kelimbetov, joined the discussion concerning the potential development of the BRI.

Special attention was paid to the topic of innovations, which highlighted such topics as blockchain, new trade and the future of production and communications, which are also important in the work of the AIFC.

At his interview with China Global Television Network, Kelimbetov stated that "International trade will motivate competition, while competition will always spur technological development and innovations. We believe BRI is not just a land or maritime bridge, but also [means] digital Silk Road development."

Meanwhile, Lin Guijun, the chief editor of the BFA annual report, in joining the interview stated that "Now, we have economic integration in an institutional sense. For a long time, communication between East and West has been done through the ocean on cargos. Today with the development of the BRI on land, communication will be a revolution.

change. The new substantial change will accelerate economic integration."

Such big companies as Google and Alibaba are already partly replacing their work with instruments of fintech. New fintech technologies substitute the traditional banking system. Regulating all the outlines of fintech is very important. The AIFC will be based on English common law. At the same time, balance between capital mar-

kets, traditional banking and fintech is crucial. The financial sector has to be in line with the development of new technologies.

The world economy is going through a range of changes and needs to be adjusted to current trends. Thus, digitalisation became a highly discussed issue this year. Traditional economic barriers are erased and digital instruments are widely globalising business processes.

In terms of digital globalisation and gaining economic growth, the AIFC shared its views and future plans. Advanced financial technologies and digitisation are the main growth points for the AIFC.

Both Kazakhstan and China treat each other's economies with curiosity for the continuation of the cooperation in various sectors.

Today, the Shanghai Stock Exchange (SSE) is a strategic partner and shareholder of the Astana International Exchange (AIX). Kazakhstan's stock market will be led to the best world practice and will gain its confident pattern. AIX and other institutional bodies of the AIFC will be supplied by all the latest fintech instruments in order to provide a full range services for its participants.

The organisation's level of competence and recognition are determined by its partners and those who trust in it. Thus, in addition to China's financial institutions, the AIFC has signed a number of partnership documents with giants in the financial sector such as NASDAQ, WAVES platform, Euroclear, Thomson Reuters, Bloomberg, Microsoft and others.

These and other organisations will gather in Astana on July 5 during the Astana Finance Days in order to discuss the most essential matters for the economy of Kazakhstan and its partners. Astana is about to become a new regional and international platform where every participant gains economic growth and prosperity.

It is important not just to identify the impact of Asian states towards each other, but also the role which Asia can play for the rest of the world. Thus, win-win cooperation is key for growth and prosperity. The lifestyle and work of each human in Asia has an effect on all three interrelated elements, which include private interests, regional execution and worldwide development. Such collaboration of all elements are key answers for the challenging issues.

# EDITORIAL & OPINION

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 25, 2018

## Kazakhstan's diverse history contributes to a united present

**W**hen commentators identify Kazakhstan's achievements since independence, the focus is often on the economy and growing international status. These are, of course, both areas which deserve to be celebrated.

The record of economic growth is strong and sustained and has seen living standards transformed. On the global stage, Kazakhstan has set its own course and won wide admiration for the emphasis placed on championing peace, nuclear disarmament and dialogue.

But in some ways, the country's success in forging a stable and harmonious society from a population made up of so many different ethnic and religious backgrounds is even more remarkable. After all, as we continue to see today across the world, such a mix can be a recipe for resentment, division and, sadly, violence.

This exceptional diversity is a product, as we have said before, of both Kazakhstan's geography but also a challenging history. Positioned at crossroads between Europe and Asia and the Middle East, our land has long attracted people from across the region and beyond to settle here.

But it is also true that, in more recent times, many were moved here against their will. In the darkest days of the Soviet Union, not just individuals and their families but entire populations found themselves uprooted and exiled. Many thousands of people of Korean, German, Polish, and Chechen extraction, for example, were forcibly deported to Kazakhstan.

The result was that on independence our country was home to more than 100 different ethnic groups and people of nearly 20 different faiths. In the modern world, such diversity, of course, should be a strength, but all too often it has proved a curse with people of different backgrounds set against each other.

It is the Kazakh people, as we have said before, who deserve the most credit for building a society where such divisions have not occurred. Instead Kazakhstan is widely seen as a country where people of all backgrounds are respected and valued.

But along with their good sense and moderation, there have also been formal decisions and structures put in place, which have helped cement this stable and harmonious society. Among the

most significant was the creation of the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan, which is drawn from and represents all the ethnic groups living in the country.

Since it was set up in 1995, the assembly has acted as both a watchdog and sounding board to help promote diversity and social cohesion. It examines new government initiatives to ensure they strengthen rather than weaken inter-ethnic harmony. Where necessary, suggestions are made to ensure they comply with the strong constitutional protections of equal treatment and respect. It looks, too, at how to improve co-operation between state institutions and civil society. Its role is further strengthened by the fact that since 2007 the assembly has acquired a constitutional status and has delegated nine members of the Majlis (lower house) of our Parliament who actively work to promote relevant policies within this key legislative body.

But as well as being a ready source of sound advice for the government, it also actively champions and strengthens diversity across the nation. The assembly, and its regional counterparts, takes the lead in preserving, promoting and, in some cases, reviving the languages and traditions of the country's different ethnic groups. With its support and encouragement, a wealth of new organisations and centres are now helping keep alive cultures which, in the past, had been actively suppressed.

There is nothing, however, backward-looking about its role. Over the last 23 years, the assembly has built up an impressive depth of knowledge in the area of ethnic and religious harmony. It was this experience and expertise which has seen it become increasingly prominent in helping combat extremism and radicalism from beyond Kazakhstan's borders.

President Nursultan Nazarbayev, who will address the assembly's major annual session this week, has also made clear he sees it as a key partner in the continued modernisation of the country. Ensuring all groups can benefit from the changes being made and opportunities opening up is essential to safeguard and strengthen the unity and stability of our society. This strong sense of national unity and purpose, which we celebrate on May 1, underpins all that Kazakhstan has achieved.

## Central Asia must build relationships, seek solutions from inside out

By Mukhit-Ardager Sydykhanov

Central Asia sees a new reality unfolding. Central Asia itself must progressively build its new regional identity. Up until now, it has been built from the outside.

The region had a socio-political, cultural and economic order for these processes, which is, by the way, over 20 years old, for the warming of relations between the new independent states of Central Asia sharing cultural, linguistic, ethno-confessional and historical ties.

A common future not only based on beautiful and pompous words about brotherhood, unity, but based on the fact that pragmatism of modern international policy justifies mutual, pragmatic, mutually beneficial bilateral and multilateral economic relations.

More importantly, we need solidarity both regarding common external affairs (proximity to an unstable Afghanistan, the growth of extremism, risks of terrorism), and exclusively internal ones – water agenda and water and energy problems, trans-boundary rivers and water disputes, the Aral Sea, environmental issues, transport and logistics, unfinished demarcation and delimitation of borders, building regional relations with key neighbouring powers, Russia and China, as well as with Iran, India and Pakistan, as all the Central Asian countries have almost similar main vectors and tracks of interaction with them.

As for Kazakhstan's interests, many of its problems are mostly of a trans-boundary nature, which can be solved only by joint, consistently concerted efforts, without unnecessary moves from Central Asian partners.

All our peoples have a proverb "One does not dig a well by the river." That is, Central Asia has to find a solution and minimize external and internal risks by itself. That is why it is necessary to work proactively at the highest level, and that is what Central Asian leaders demonstrate, setting the tone for everyone, to actively increase trade turnover, mutual investment, to create a truly free space for capital flow, services and labour.

Here is a contrasting example. In the 25 years of independence, there has been no direct bus service between neighbouring Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. And last year finally saw the launch of the bus service between Shymkent and Tashkent. Whereas Europe, the former socialist Central and Eastern Europe, has been having direct internal inter-country tourist bus tours such as Visegrad Tour, Shining Carpathians, Five Capitals for decades.

Given that foreign ministers of Central Asian states first met together only on Sept. 2, 2017 at the UN General Assembly in New York, it is clear that we need to catch up.

It should be noted, however, that with the arrival of the second president of Uzbekistan, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, the dynamics of bilateral and multilateral cooperation in Central Asia have shifted towards a positive direction.

Right after coming to power, President Mirziyoyev set a priority to normalise relations with Central Asian neighbours. His prompt visits to Ashgabat, Dushanbe, Bishkek and return visits of leaders of these states gave a powerful impetus to the positive trend. The visa regime unnecessary for the neighbouring Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, that share culture and history, has been eliminated.

Uzbekistan is the only Central Asian state that shares borders with all other four states of Central Asia and Afghanistan. A new constructive dialogue between Astana and Tashkent is efficient and meets national interests of the entire region.

Moreover, Central Asia should work together on issues of comprehensive assistance to Afghanistan. Peace and tranquillity in this country is the basis of regional security and stability. In this issue it's time for Central Asian countries to show a clear and unambiguous regional personality.

An interesting situation has developed in the economic, military and technical spheres of Central Asia. Three states of Central Asia are not members of the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU): Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan. Three states of Central Asia are members of the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO): Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. Uzbekistan withdrew from the CSTO membership in 2013 when Islam Karimov was the president. Three states are World Trade Organisation (WTO) members (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan), the other two are not. But as one can see, with political will, these issues cannot and should not become watersheds in bilateral and multilateral relations.

With all things considered, I would like to emphasise that Central Asia is absolutely not exclusive as a region on the political and economic map of the world. The problems that it faces are also not exclusive.

Similar agendas were faced by the countries of Eastern Europe – Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary. They established an effective four-sided format of the Visegrad Group, which is officially called the Visegrad Four, Visegrad Quartet. The official slogan of the Visegrad Group: European Quartet – One Melody. This nice slogan reflects the geopolitical focus on joint solution of external and internal political issues.

I believe the expert and analytical community of Central Asia and regional foreign offices need to systematically study the experience of the Visegrad Group.

All five Central Asian countries sleep under the same patchwork quilt, and although they see different dreams, they should wake up at one time and take up the same things.

I believe we should fill the gaps of those 25 years, over which we did not establish a joint expert, scientific and research Central Asian centre, in which researchers and experts of all five countries and Afghanistan could now work together on a rotational basis, adapt to each other. It is high time to establish an Institute of Central Asian Studies.

Summing up, the format of the consultative meeting, which was proposed by the President of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev, supported by the leaders of other Central Asian countries, and resulted in a meeting in Astana on the eve of Nauryz holiday, is effective. Nauryz itself is symbolic, having acted as a logical trigger for the meeting, which some have called the Summit of the Heads of State of Central Asia. There are many stereotypes around Central Asia, from which partners need to get rid of both inside and outside the region.

In Central Asia, a new reality is emerging. Central Asia itself should build its new regional identity. So far, it was built from the outside. The meeting of the presidents of Central Asian countries on March 15 in Astana confirms that after 25 years of independence new pragmatic approach in bilateral and multilateral cooperation in the region is needed, which they are laying down as elites.

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# OPINIONS

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 25, 2018

## Belt and Road Initiative: One Vision of Justice

By Mark Beer, OBE



In 2017, the United Arab Emirates and Kazakhstan celebrated 25 years of friendship and diplomacy. The UAE is Kazakhstan's largest Arab trade partner, with close to \$643 million in bilateral trade recorded in 2017. Over the last decade, the UAE has made substantial investments, exceeding \$2 billion in a wide array of economic sectors in Kazakhstan, financing projects in strategic areas, such as oil and gas and food security.

With the President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev visiting the UAE in January and March 2018, ties between the two countries were further reinforced through the signing of agreements and memorandums of understanding, to boost joint partnership and cooperation across various sectors.

An agreement on reciprocal encouragement and protection of investments between the Ministry of Investments and Development of Kazakhstan and the UAE Ministry of State for Financial Affairs, was accompanied by two agreements between the UAE Ministry of Energy and Industry and the Ministry of Energy of Kazakhstan, to build world-class plants for polyethylene and polypropylene in Kazakhstan.

DP World of the UAE and the regional akimat (administration) of the Mangistau region of Kazakhstan, signed a framework agreement on the main principles for the

acquisition of a 49 percent stake in the special economic zone Seaport Aktau. Another framework agreement outlined DP World's equity participation in the Khorog Eastern Gate Management Company and was sealed by DP World and the Kazakhstan Temir Zholy.

Finally, agreements were signed that confirmed Kazakhstan's participation in the Expo 2020 Dubai, as well as cooperation between the UAE Space Agency and Kazakhstan's Ministry of Defence and Aerospace Industry, to collaborate in various fields of space exploration projects.

In April, Kazakhstan participated in Annual Investment Meeting (AIM) held in Dubai, prioritising transnational company cooperation. A recent announcement from Kazakh Invest noted 67 projects involving \$7.1 billion in foreign investments will be built in 2018, creating more than 13,500 jobs. Construction and installation works are underway on six projects worth \$539 million and 12 projects will start in the second quarter of the year.

Announced by Chinese President

Xi Jinping at Nazarbayev University in Astana in 2013, the re-birth of the Silk Road as the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has spurred nations into hyper-connectivity mandates across trade, investment, energy and infrastructure. BRI includes the most ambitious infrastructure project the world has ever known – and the most expensive. Its expected cost is just under one trillion dollars and when complete, the Belt and Road will connect 65 percent of the world's population and 30 percent of its GDP.

The UAE and Kazakhstan are both acutely aware that, with a supply chain composed of land and sea routes running from China to Scandinavia and the Middle East, an innovative, flexible and global legal network to support commercial rule of law is crucial. BRI should not only create opportunity, but it should also enable progressive justice in terms of security, protection and certainty that people and businesses need to trade and innovate securely.

In recent weeks, DIFC Courts and a delegation from the Supreme Court of Kazakhstan met in Dubai to discuss their role as Courts of the Future, the Fourth Industrial Revolution, China's Belt and Road initiative and the need for the world's courts to collaborate to provide greater access to justice.

In his first visit to an overseas court since assuming his new position, Chairman Zhakyp Assanov of the Supreme Court of Kazakhstan

discussed unlocking the power of innovation to transform courts into services, as well as improving access to justice in line with increased prosperity.

Links between the two courts have expanded significantly in recent years, starting with a cooperation agreement between the DIFC Courts and the Supreme Court of Kazakhstan in 2015. It included a memorandum of guidance giving practical directions for the enforcement of judgments for businesses operating in or between both countries.

The Dispute Resolution Authority (DRA), as part of a wider advisory project, delivered its recommendations in 2017 to the Astana International Financial Centre Authority (AIFC Authority) on establishing the first specialist common law commercial court and independent arbitration centre in Kazakhstan, operating exclusively in English. English common law is favoured for contracts and dispute resolution by the international business community. AIFC sees its role, in part, as a gateway into Central Asia for international investors and a link between Shanghai, Dubai, and London.

Whilst such collaboration between institutions might be viewed as exclusively underpinning the commercial rule of law and trade, the trickle-down effect cannot be overlooked. Measures being taken by both the UAE and Kazakhstan to improve the effectiveness of justice feed into larger national plans for

creating more sustainable and diversified economies. For the UAE, it is Vision 2021, and for Kazakhstan, it is Plan of the Nation – 100 Concrete Steps.

Each country's blueprints are also designed to absorb commitments to the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. Launched in 2016, the SDGs represent a commitment by nations with an undertaking to "promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels."

The combined effect of the growing inter-governmental partnerships at strategic level will certainly herald the beginning of a stronger collaboration between the Middle East, led by UAE efforts, Central Asia under Kazakhstan's pioneering endeavours, and Asia, driven by China as its economic powerhouse.

The myriad of technological advancements that define the fundamental re-shaping of businesses in the 21st century make it essential for high-level connectivity and innovation. Expectations from the private sector increasingly require the bold engagement of public service and of regulatory agencies. The DRA's ambition, through continued outreach to global judicial systems, is to contribute in creating a level-playing field between BRI participants, by re-engineering the way commercial justice is designed and delivered.

As goods and services travel

across the world along the BRI, they will seamlessly cross borders, so we need a seamless judicial platform that can do the same. The answer is to make sure that when the dispute comes into the "real world," the court system can understand that virtual supply chain and deliver a decision that can be executed around the world. The creation of a court that focuses on connectivity and the enforceability of its judgments will ensure the success of the BRI by facilitating the quick resolution of disputes in a neutral forum.

The future of courts will be one of supporting supply chains operating virtually, with dispute resolution encoded into the blockchain, with virtual currency and with the most likely dispute being one of coding. Those supply chains will develop and advance to the point that smart contracts will replace traditional contracts, and we'll see them become ubiquitous even for small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) operating on a public blockchain. Soon we'll see not only the contract encoded into the supply chain, but also the applicable laws and regulations. At that point, it will be the blockchain itself which resolves most contractual disputes.

This allows companies to scale up faster than ever, with suppliers and customers knowing disputes can be resolved (and decisions enforced) in seconds versus months or years – and without the need for human intervention, with AI and machine learning making the system smarter.

**The author is Chief Executive of Dispute Resolution Authority.**

## Kazakh engineering capabilities, Dutch expertise support major developments in Kazakhstan

By Krijn De Brabander



CaTRo project are largely parallel, not only will the design task soon be completed, but the facility itself will soon be ready to transport and offload the first modules.

CaTRo is a unique operation of its kind in Kazakhstan. It consists of a 70-km marine access channel in the Northern Caspian basin to Prorva oil field where a cargo offloading facility and cargo storage facility will be located, together with all the road infrastructure and associated facilities. A large number of employees will be working at the

CaTRo facilities during operation.

Given its unique character and its location in the Northern Caspian basin, approximately 70 Kazakh national experts of Witteveen+Bos Caspian LLP have worked together with a team of specialists from Witteveen+Bos in the Netherlands. This is to combine valuable national capabilities and experience with international knowledge and experience in providing innovative and environmentally-sound design solutions. Integrating internation-

al and national capabilities was one of the main challenges. Since Witteveen+Bos was not only responsible for the design but also permitting and approval by Kazakh regulatory authorities, it was necessary to adjust the design to Kazakh design codes and regulations while at the same time making use of the latest international insights and technologies.

"The decisions made by President [Nursultan] Nazarbayev reaffirm that Kazakhstan is a country with a favourable business climate and growing human capital. It has

been worth every minute of hard work by our team of Kazakh and Dutch experts when you see that a new manmade landmark has been constructed in the Northern Caspian basin that is visible from space, just like the Dutch Afsluitdijk or the Chinese Wall. I am proud that in this way I was able to contribute to the further development of Kazakhstan," said project manager Johan Lijftogt.

This is not the first time, though, that Witteveen+Bos has been called upon for its experience with major infrastructural develop-



ments in Kazakhstan and international engineering knowledge.

We started our activities in Kazakhstan by preparing the civil engineering design of the artificial islands of the Kashagan oil field. This other landmark project in the development of Kazakhstan has been the basis for many other projects where Witteveen+Bos was successfully able to combine international engineering experiences with local expertise for compliance with local standards and norms. Our projects were not only related to infrastructure developments, but also included engineering and design projects for industrial wastewater treatment and re-use. Especially with a further anticipated scarcity of water, efficient water use and recycling will be required for further sustainable development of Kazakhstan.

Witteveen+Bos Caspian LLP currently employs approximately 80 people, 90 percent of whom are of Kazakh nationality. The company operates from three offices in Aktau, Almaty and Atyrau. The company is prepared to expand its operations in engineering and consulting in oil and gas technology, water management and technology, infrastructure, environmental technology and sustainable energy.

**The author is country manager at Witteveen+Bos Caspian LLP.**

## Ethics boards to both prevent corruption and protect civil servants' rights

By Ravil Tulebaev



regulates the standards of conduct of civil servants at workplace and at home, and ensures their anti-corruption behaviour, has been approved as well.

In light of the adopted new laws and regulations, and, following the course of the state aimed at the formation of a professional government apparatus, a new need has arisen for an institution that does not only aim to punish government employees for disciplinary offenses, but also takes precautionary, preventive measures.

This is the way how a new institute of Ethics Board was established by the decree of the President of Kazakhstan in December 2015, replacing the disciplinary councils.

Previously, the functions of the disciplinary councils included only the consideration of personal cases in relation to civil servants and persons equivalent to performing state

functions who committed offenses.

A significant distinction of the Ethics Board is that in addition to considering the disciplinary cases in relation to civil servants and bringing responsibility, great attention is paid to preventing violations of the legislation in the field of civil service, analysing corruption risks, the work of ethics commissioners and the preparation of relevant recommendations.

This goes to approve the fact that the purpose of the state is not to punish government employees, but to adopt preventive measures which are aimed at preventing the offenses.

For example, if the ethics boards considered 1,783 issues in 2015, which includes 1,328 (74 percent) disciplinary cases, then in 2016 this figure was reduced to 54 percent, and in 2017 to 48 percent. At the same time, the issues of system-

branches of the Atameken National Chamber of Entrepreneurs. This is an evidence of the openness and transparency of this institution.

Also, it should be noted that our agency is taking measures to strengthen the role of members of the ethics boards. In this regard the territorial departments of Astana, Kostanai and South Kazakhstan regions tested a pilot project aimed at granting the right of independence to the members of ethics boards while carrying out activities on the prevention of offences and improvement the quality of public services.

Due to the positive results of the pilot project, all territorial departments of the agency applied the said experience as well.

In summary, it can be said with confidence that the Ethics Board is set to become not only a tool for the prevention and punishment, but also a platform for protection of the civil servants' rights.

**The author is Director of the Department for Control in the Civil Service of the Agency for Civil Service and Anti-Corruption of Kazakhstan.**

# EURASIA & WORLD

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 25, 2018

## Israeli-Kazakh cooperation has considerable unfulfilled potential, says Israeli envoy

By Meruert Abugaliyeva

ASTANA – Israeli and Kazakh diplomatic relations, celebrating their 26th anniversary this year, have significant potential yet to be explored, according to Israeli Ambassador to Kazakhstan Michael Brodsky. Israel, which is also marking the milestone of 70 years of independence, was one of the first countries to recognise Kazakhstan as a sovereign state.

Established in 1948, Israel was at the time home to 800,000 people. To date, its population has increased tenfold to 8.5 million people who belong to different nationalities and confessions.

"Our main achievement in 70 years is that despite all the challenges we managed to preserve a truly democratic state where freedom of speech, political choice and religion are of real value. Israel's history is, in several terms, unique. It is a state which constantly needs to think about its security; still, it successfully combats terror and aspires for peace, signing peace agreements



Michael Brodsky

with states such as Egypt and Jordan. Israel is aspiring towards success and wants other countries to follow suit," said Brodsky.

He noted Israel is an island of stability in a sea of calamities, pointing to the unstable situations in Iraq, Libya and Syria.

Israel's economic performance is also praiseworthy, as it recently was recognised among the 30 most developed countries. It also has a firmly established reputation as a nation of start-ups, with the largest quantity of start-up projects per capita.

"More than 4 percent of Israel's

GDP is spent on scientific research. Our country managed to move from an agrarian economy to a model with revenue mostly coming from high technology and its export," he added.

The Israeli Embassy has planned a series of events, mainly cultural, in Almaty and the capital to celebrate its independence anniversary.

"For the third year in a row, an Israeli band has participated in the International Jazz Festival. Another band is also going to perform at an international festival of modern ethnic music, The Spirit of Tengri, this June. In Astana, there will be a concert featuring klezmer, traditional Jewish music. The band performed in the capital during expo. In the beginning of May, we also plan to hold a huge cultural project and stage the performance of the famous worldwide contemporary ballet troupe Vertigo at Astana Ballet. The performance will not only be dedicated to 70 years of Israeli independence, but it will also be a gift to Astana residents on the 20th anniversary of the Kazakh capital," said Brodsky.

April 10 marked 26 years of diplomatic relations between Kazakhstan and Israel.

"Throughout the period, bilateral relations have been characterised by friendly attitudes from both sides; however, relations between Israeli and Kazakh people have formed over several centuries. It is important to note the period of the 1930-1940s, when tens of thousands of Jewish families sent to Kazakhstan were warmly greeted by the local population. We remember that hospitality and launched the Alghys (Gratitude) project," he added.

This year, the Israeli Embassy held the Alghys project with the aim of collecting the stories of Kazakh citizens whose families helped Jews coming to their country. The winner, a school student from Almaty, was awarded a trip to Israel.

"We received tens of stories, examples of noble attitudes towards Jews, and learned a lot of new things from them," said Brodsky.

"As regards to recent times, we started from scratch and achieved a lot in 26 years. In economic terms, Israel imports oil and other natural

resources from Kazakhstan, with 15 percent of imported oil coming from Kazakhstan. At the same time, Israeli technologies in medicine, security and agriculture are popular in Kazakhstan. Numerous doctors had an opportunity to do internships in Israel. However, we want more intensive cooperation, which currently faces several obstacles, such as the absence of direct flights, for example," he added.

The ambassador commended governmental attempts to modernise the Kazakh economy.

"Each resource-dependent country needs to diversify its economy and Kazakhstan has chosen a correct direction of development. However, this cannot be done alone. It is useful to use and apply the experience of other countries that achieved success in high technologies. Israel, perceived to be one of such countries, is ready to assist Kazakhstan. We welcome experts involved in the process to visit Israel, study and then apply our experience, if relevant. We have something to share, not only in medicine and agriculture, but also in infrastructure de-

velopment and the energy sector," he noted.

Israeli business people are ready to work in Kazakhstan. Mostly medium-sized businesses are represented in Kazakhstan and there are several joint projects in medicine, agriculture and security. Greenhouses and poultry farms have been built using Israeli technology. The potential has not yet been fully exploited.

"We can talk of more significant projects. To my knowledge, an idea of establishing joint fund for investments in agriculture using Israeli technologies is under discussion. Such a project, for instance, would certainly spark closer cooperation in agriculture," he added.

Fintech and cybersecurity are other promising directions for cooperation. Recently, the Tel Aviv Stock Exchange and Astana International Financial Centre (AIFC) signed a memorandum of cooperation with a particular focus on cybersecurity.

"In the 1990s, thousands of Jewish families moved to Israel; however, there is a diaspora in Kazakhstan, mostly residing in Almaty. They feel comfortable, secure and have the opportunity to follow a Jewish lifestyle in Kazakhstan. I believe this is a bridge which connects two countries and assigns personal character to our relationships," said Brodsky.

## Anti-nuclear activist calls US-North Korea summit 'unprecedented'

By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – This year is a milestone for global nuclear non-proliferation efforts with a much-anticipated meeting of South Korean President Moon Jae-in and North



ATOM Project Honorary Ambassador Karipbek Kuyukov.

Korean leader Kim Jong Un in late April, the first since 2007, and the U.S.-North Korea summit preliminarily scheduled for May. Though their outcomes are yet to be known, the willingness of the North Korean regime to engage in negotiations is a big step forward for anti-nuclear activists worldwide.

Kazakh anti-nuclear activist, artist and Honorary Ambassador of The ATOM Project, a global anti-nuclear weapons effort initiated by Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev in 2012, Karipbek Kuyukov believes the upcoming U.S.-North Korean summit is an "unprecedented move," but he does not hold great hopes the meeting will produce much progress toward significant disarmament.

"The meeting of the U.S. President and the North Korean leader will undoubtedly become an unprecedented step, but I believe this will be a simple attempt to discuss the current state of relations between the two countries. President Donald Trump seeks to show his willingness for negotiations, but I am not sure whether the outcome would meet his expectations. And this is what the North Korean leader understands," said Kuyukov in the interview for the story.

The meeting should be approached with care, he said, because it could also have a negative outcome and even "produce an opposite effect." "There are no positive heroes" among nations that continue to maintain nuclear arsenals, he said.

## New report reviews religion and secularism in Kazakhstan

By Amir Khaidar

ASTANA – Kazakhstan can offer the world a completely different model of state secularism and may serve as an example for other Muslim-majority states, according to a recent study published by the Stockholm-based Institute for Security and Development Policy (ISDP).

After the fall of the Soviet Union, independent Kazakhstan, like other Central Asian countries, adopted a secular form of government. It then faced the challenge of implementing a state approach to religion.

The term "secularism" includes a broad spectrum of views and concepts. Researchers, including ISDP Director Svante E. Cornell, Head of Advisory Council S. Frederick Starr, and Junior Research Fellow and Research Coordinator Julian Tucker, outlined five different types of secular models of interaction between the state and religion.

The report's authors suggest the problem is connected to influences from the Afghanistan-Pakistan area, North Caucasus and the Syria-Iraq war zone.

As the survey shows, religion has a prominent place in present-day Kazakh society, but believers stand in opposition to political religious expression. Only 10 percent of the nation's Muslims support Sharia law. Approximately half of Kazakhs believe different religions can lead to heaven and individuals can be moral without believing in God. The numbers indicate the universal notion of peaceful coexistence between religious communities in society.

Research suggests the Kazakh government took the matter of regulating religion into its own hands, thus leaning towards the Skeptical/Insulating model and drawing from French and Turkish experience. The Kazakh model also differentiates between traditional and non-traditional reli-

gious practices. These are typically prosecuted under a provision in Kazakhstan's criminal code that prohibits propagandizing the superiority of one religion over another."

Events in the past decade led Kazakhstani authorities to conclude that they had underestimated the threat posed by extremist religious groups, the researchers say. "Revisions to laws and policies have led to state intervention against individuals and communities that authorities deem extremist or non-traditional. This is one reason for the Western criticism directed against Kazakhstan," the scholars note.

"However, another reason behind this criticism is a more philosophical disagreement: Western advocates support full religious freedom and state neutrality toward religion, accepting only intervention against groups engaging in or inciting violence. But Kazakhstan's authorities operate on the basis of a fundamentally different principle: that it is the duty of the state to regulate religious affairs," the report notes.

Kazakhstan's state religious policy has gone through a number of changes and adjustments and researchers suggest it should be seen as a work in progress model for the Muslim world. The government acknowledged shortcomings in the policy and was quick to respond by offering new strategies to solve religious issues. The authors note the model is by no means perfect, but implementing it can facilitate religious tolerance and inter-ethnic peace.

## Astana, Paris agree to send 100 Kazakh graduate students to France

By Aigerim Seisembayeva

ASTANA – Ninety second-year master students and 10 doctoral students from Kazakhstan will be sent to French higher education institutions under the new joint Abai-Verne Programme.

The agreement on implementing the programme was signed April 19 by the Kazakh Ministry of Education and Science and the French Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs, the Kazakh ministry's press service reports.

Kazakh Minister of Educa-

tion and Science Yerlan Sagadiev and French Ambassador to Kazakhstan Philippe Martinet inked the agreement in Astana to strengthen the Kazakh-French partnership in higher education to train personnel, develop an internationalisation strategy and a two-diploma education.

Priority will be given to graduates of Kazakh-French programmes, as well as graduate and doctoral students of higher education institutions that have partner agreements with French universities.

Graduate students will be trained for 10 months (Septem-

ber-June), while doctoral students will have a three-year programme, with six months spent in French universities each year (September-February).

Kazakhstan is obliged to grant scholarships: 800 euros (\$989) for each master student and 1,200 euros (\$1,483) for a doctoral student.

The French side is to: provide free tuition; grant the status of a French government scholarship owner, which exempts from paying a registration fee in public higher education institutions; provide French social insurance; provide a free long-

term student visa; give priority when accommodating in student dormitories; help getting assistance in housing payments, as well as in using the 'clé' system (when the State of France acts as guarantor in housing rental); as well as provide lower ticket prices for cultural programmes and events.

The programme will assist young researchers' mobility, access to the latest innovations in science and cooperate with advanced European scientific centres and laboratories with further expansion of scientific ties with francophone countries.

# Nation & Capital

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 25, 2018

**PEOPLE**

Hungarians, Kazakhs are almost relatives, says Hungarian cultural centre head

**B2****CULTURE**

'Karaman' becomes first Kazakh mystical thriller

**B3****SPORTS**

FC Astana ties with FC Kairat in Kazakhstan Championship's central match

**B7**

## Spina Bifida Public Association: raising awareness and breaking stigma

By Amir Khaidar

ASTANA – Spina Bifida Public Association (SBPA) was founded in 2015 by parents of children born with the disease to inform medical specialists, parents and the general public about the disorder. In an exclusive interview with The Astana Times, co-founders Anara Battalova and Aida Kolpakova shared their personal experiences and insights into how others can participate in the cause.

Spina bifida is a neural tube defect which occurs when the spinal bones do not close or develop properly. Depending on its severity, the disorder can result in bladder or bowel problems, various degrees of leg paralysis and accumulated fluid in the brain.

"During the pregnancy I attended the doctor regularly; I had five ultrasounds and no one told me that my baby had abnormalities. After giving birth to my child, I understood from the doctor's reaction that something was wrong," said Kolpakova.

When the youngster was born 15 years ago in the West Kazakhstan region, local doctors were unable to perform surgery and the family had to seek medical help outside the country. When a child is born there is usually a 48-hour window in which surgery is performed to close the defect and minimise future complications. In addition, advancements in neuroscience offer the possibility of operating on an unborn baby.

For the most part, such sur-



SBPA members participate in the exhibition held at the Russian Centre for Science and Culture in Astana on June 1, 2017.

ies are performed solely in Astana and SBPA parents are actively advocating improving the situation at the regional level. They spoke at a Parliament session in December and cooperate with local political parties.

"We are closely working with the general public, parliamentarians and healthcare ministry officials, organising events and bringing attention to our cause," said Battalova.

The association unites 400 children and their parents by providing advice and assistance to moms and dads whose kids were diagnosed with the disorder. SBPA's biggest undertaking is to raise funds to open rehabilitation centres for children and adults throughout Kazakhstan. Such centres will provide clinical support for patients and consolidate

the efforts of medical specialists.

"We are looking for sponsors and investors who are going to help us open such centres, where we can help people with spina bifida have fulfilling lives and provide psychological support to pregnant women and their families," said Battalova.

SBPA will hold a charity fashion show in early summer and Kazakh designer Bella Sat-Myrza is developing an adaptive clothing line that is trendy yet comfortable for people using wheelchairs. The models, mostly children with spina bifida, will demonstrate the summer denim collection. SBPA will be partnering with a local modelling agency that will provide technical assistance and teach the kids the necessary tips.

"We want to provide the participating children with active

wheelchairs so they can go on the runway by themselves in a fashionable and beautiful manner," said Kolpakova.

The association's immediate plans are to organise medical specialist home visits. Psychologists and ergotherapists will teach children how to move around the house and use various household objects without help, boosting their confidence and mood.

Together with the Kazakh Ministry of Healthcare, SBPA is developing informational leaflets to be distributed at women's health centres and prenatal and obstetric departments at local hospitals.

"We want to invite all interested parties to partner with us. Together, we can show that our children are not confined to homes, that they have active and fulfilling lives," said the founders.

## New Muslim identity must be shaped based on modernised national culture, says Kazakh Naib Mufti

By Meruyert Abugaliyeva



Zhangyru (Modernisation of Kazakhstan's Identity) programme, it is important to revive all the good virtues Kazakh people have had historically in national culture and adapt them to modern conditions. We believe national culture is based on religious values and therefore, our main objective is to identify those values, apply them in accordance with time requirements and shape new Muslim identity," he added.

Considerable emphasis is also put on developing the professional competency of imams in an attempt to increase religious literacy and combat radicalism.

"The overall level of religious literacy is rising among the population. Therefore, it is important for imams to be able to answer questions, correctly explain the religion and take preventive measures against radicalisation and potential religious misunderstandings," said Adilbayev.

"To date, there are 2,563 mosques nationwide with 4,415 employees. A fifth of them, or 21 percent, have completed higher education, whereas 18 percent have certificates of secondary education. The other 61 percent have only passed religious courses. Our main strategic task is to increase the number of imams with higher education," he noted.

"We need to revive the traditional religious attitude of the Kazakh people which was shaped throughout centuries in order to preserve unity and prevent the spread of destructive currents. Special attention is paid to Islam in Kazakhstan: history, traditions and ways to develop projects meant to increase religious literacy and promote unity among believers," he added.

Some imams, however, are unwilling to work in distant rural regions due to specific social conditions and lack of funding and SAMK is working on a special programme to attract qualified leaders to remote areas. Thus, 305 imams in rural mosques are now provided with a constant salary from the Uakyp Foundation, established with the support of President Nursultan Nazarbayev to prevent radicalism and extremism.

"Kazakhstan has presented itself as a peace-loving country creating favourable conditions for around 140 ethnic groups and many confessions to co-exist and live peacefully. One of the most successful examples is the Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions taking place every three years in Astana since 2003 and supported by religious leaders and eminent politicians," he said.

"We also always interact with representatives of different religions and confessions in order to promote peace and stability nationwide. It is important to note that the word 'Islam' itself means peace and the first meeting of Abrahamic religions took place during the times of Prophet Muhammad in 622 in Medina," he added.

"Islamic customs and traditions have historically played a key role in the lives of Kazakh citizens, who refer to Islam from early childhood and during major events such as marriage, the birth of a child or death of a relative or friend."

"Some people also find answers in Islam to fundamental

questions about life, death and justice. A lot of people attend courses on the Holy Quran, Arabic language and religious knowledge held in mosques. Moreover, our mosques are often full with visitors during Friday prayers and people even have to pray outside the mosque sometimes. Religious literacy is also on the rise nowadays, partially due to the active work of imams (Islamic mosque leaders), widespread access to Internet resources and the work of the Asyl Arna religious TV channel," said Adilbayev.

With the increasing interest towards Islam, there is also the threat of Kazakh people being involved in destructive currents.

"We need to revive the traditional religious attitude of the Kazakh people which was shaped throughout centuries in order to preserve unity and prevent the spread of destructive currents. Special attention is paid to Islam in Kazakhstan: history, traditions and ways to develop projects meant to increase religious literacy and promote unity among believers," he added.

"As President Nursultan Nazarbayev addressed in his Ruhani

Mosque leaders also constantly take exams to demonstrate their knowledge.

"We have also specified a process for imams to prove their competence. During the last three years, 3,800 imams took exams and 124 imams resigned in 2015 due to poor performance. The Islamic institute for imam qualification upgrading in Almaty, established in 2001, has provided training for more than 2,000 imams from Kazakhstan, Russia and Mongolia," said Adilbayev.

SAMK also sends imams abroad for trainings and courses; 50 have visited Al-Azhar University in Egypt and 30 are annually sent to Turkey.

May 16 begins the holy month of Ramadan, when Muslims fast during the daytime and indulge in prayers and good deeds.

"Ramadan, the month when the Holy Quran was revealed, is also a month of mercy and generosity and is the perfect time for reflection. During Friday prayers, the plans are to give sermons on important social topics such as how to improve one's personality, get rid of bad habits and traits and the importance of helping people in need," he noted.

Banners congratulating people on Ramadan will be placed in public places and transported with the approval of authorities. Booklets and leaflets will be distributed to provide more information and encourage fasting. Throughout the month, the whole Quran will be recited during tarawih (night prayers) during Ramadan.

"All the initiatives are meant to promote inner stability and unity within the nation," added Adilbayev.

## KAZGUU University enters top 50 universities following Jessop competition

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – KAZGUU University has entered the top 50 universities based on the results of the Philip C. Jessop International Law Moot Court Competition. The university team participated March 31-April 7 in the national and international rounds.

The Jessop competition, the most prestigious and famous in international law, is held annually in Washington, D.C., by the International Law Student Association (ILSA) and supported by the international law firm White & Case. This year marked the 59th event involving 645 teams from 95 countries.

The KAZGUU team, which defeated Almaty-based KIMEP University in the first two rounds of the national championship, represented Kazakhstan at the international level. It competed against teams from prestigious institutions such as BRAC University (Bangladesh), Case Western Reserve University (U.S.), Hena e Plote (BEDER) University (Albania) and University of Toronto (Canada).

The team scored 3,050 points, taking 49th place. It outranked many world-famous universities including Universität Wien (Austria, 53rd), the University of Ottawa Faculty of Law – Common

Law Section (Canada, 57th), the University of California Berkley (U.S., 60th), Fordham University (U.S., 62nd) and Case Western Reserve University (U.S., 64th).

In addition, memorandums drafted by the KAZGUU team took 26th place and Kazakh speakers Madina Arturova and Zarina Temirbulatova were among the top 100 speakers.

The team included undergraduate and graduate students Adil Osipov, Alexandra Platoshina and Aiym Sabyrova and was coached by Department of International Law Deputy Chairperson and Assistant Professor Miras Daulenov and senior teachers Alberto Pecoraro and Aiman Smagulova.

Participating in such competitions allows students to acquire critical and analytical thinking, logic, judicial rhetoric and emotional intelligence skills, as they try to solve problems and train themselves. Teams have more than six months to solve problems, as the competition starts in mid-September and precedes the international rounds.

Conducting weekly trainings, thoroughly analysing disputes and developing the parties' legal positions gives the students an opportunity to effectively compete with experienced lawyers and perform the most difficult practical tasks.



L-R: KAZGUU Professor Miras Daulenov and students Aiym Sabyrova, Zarina Temirbulatova, Madina Arturova, Alexandra Platoshina and Adil Ossipov.

### THINGS TO WATCH & PLACES TO GO

#### ASTANA OPERA

**April 26 at 7 p.m.**

Brahms and Mahler, symphony concert

**April 27 at 7 p.m.**

Favourite Pages of Russian Music, concert

**April 29 at 6 p.m.**

Abai, opera

**May 4 at 7 p.m.**

La Traviata, opera

**May 7 at 6 p.m.**

Spartacus, ballet

**May 11 at 7 p.m.**

Madama Butterfly, opera

#### SARYARKA VELOTREK

**April 26 at 7.30 p.m.**

PBC Astana – BC Barsy Atyrav

#### PALACE OF PEACE AND HARMONY

**May 1 at 7 p.m.**

Irish dance concert

**May 3 at 7 p.m.**

Parade of soloists, symphony concert

#### ASTANA BALLET

**May 6 at 6 p.m.**

One, One & One, ballet

# PEOPLE

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 25, 2018

## Hungarians, Kazakhs are almost relatives, says Hungarian cultural centre head

By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – The people of Hungary and Kazakhstan, who share a nomadic past, are almost like relatives, said Hungarian Cultural Centre Head Aleksandr Papp. In a recent interview with The Astana Times, he marked common roots and historical circumstances among the key factors explaining their similarity.

Uniting the small diaspora of 457 Hungarians in Kazakhstan, the centre has been working during the past 23 years to facilitate friendly ties between the nations.

"The Hungarian cultural centre was established in 1995. I was chosen as a chair," said Papp.

The centre's main objective is to revive and foster development of the Hungarian national culture, preserve national customs and traditions and boost bilateral cooperation in education, science and culture, as well as participate in the work of the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan (APK) at the local and national level.

Hungarians are among the 130 ethnic groups, although not the largest, who call Kazakhstan their home.

"I can say that there are 457 Hungarians in Kazakhstan according to the recent census. Twenty-seven Hungarians out of 50 living in Almaty are working in the centre," he added.

The first Hungarians settled in the Kazakh steppes 300-400 years ago, according to historical data, while others were among the more than 1.5 million who came to the country during the extensive Virgin Lands campaign launched by Nikita Khrushchev in the 1950s to boost Soviet agricultural production.

"I believe that Hungarians and Kazakhs are like relatives because we came from the North Pole and lived in the Far East; then, Hungarians were dislodged from controlling the Hun state and relocated to South Ural and northern Kazakhstan," said Papp.

"I think they (Kazakhs and Hungarians) were very close to each other. If there were not enough men in wars, even women fought both among Kazakhs and Hungarians. Part of the Magyars (Hungarian tribe) settled in Kazakhstan in Derzhavinsk, Karaganda, Akmolinsk and other regions and then they migrated to the Turan lowland between the Aral and Caspian seas



Aleksandr Papp

and then to the Volga River living near the embankment of Dnepropetrovsk," he added.

The two nations also share comparable words, said Papp, which makes the Hungarian alphabet a good example for the Kazakh alphabet currently in transition from Cyrillic to Latin script.

"Nearly 350 words are similar," he noted.

Born in 1939 in the Trans-Carpathian Oblast in south-western Ukraine, Papp came to Kazakhstan in 1970 as a chief mechanical engineer to establish several machinery plants. By virtue of destiny, he and his family settled in the country and he has worked here for nearly 50 years.

"In Kazakhstan, I built three plants in the Soviet times and when it dissolved, I set up a small enterprise with my wife and son and called it Kelet, which means east in Hungarian. We are Hungarians in the East," he said.

Papp received the Order of Kurmet from Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev given for distinguished merits across different fields, Unity Gold Medal from APK and Knight's Cross Order of Merit from the Hungarian government for his contribution to strengthening ties between Kazakhstan and Hungary.

"I have been in friendly ties with all ambassadors (of Hungary to Kazakhstan). As a president of the cultural centre, I recommended Kazakh students for the embassy and nine have graduated. I keep in touch with them," said Papp.

He noted he and his family visit Hungary almost every year.

"Many people ask me if I applied for Hungarian citizenship and I am telling them no. I did not seek Hungarian citizenship; I am a citizen of Kazakhstan. We are patriots," he added.

"I think they (Kazakhs and Hungarians) were very close to each other. If there were not enough men in wars, even women fought both among Kazakhs and Hungarians. Part of the Magyars (Hungarian tribe) settled in Kazakhstan in Derzhavinsk, Karaganda, Akmolinsk and other regions and then they migrated to the Turan lowland between the Aral and Caspian seas

"This experience was useful. I started to learn all barriers that children face in education. I saw many opportunities to improve the situation. I was so motivated. For people who have a developmental paradigm, it always happens," she said.

The same year, she considered opening a school as part of the Education for All non-governmental organisation. The preparatory work took a year and the pilot project opened in October 2017.

"When I graduated from the university, I was thinking what to do next. I tried to delegate powers related to my project, but it didn't work. I knew that I wanted to continue my studies in an inclusive area. I decided to work in this direction, as these years significantly changed my values and me," Rollan said.

She is currently pursuing her master's degree in educational leadership focusing on inclusive education.

"This was an incredible experience. I was involved in socially responsible activities 24/7. We did projects and events to support families left behind, physically challenged children and older people in care homes. We had projects on assistance to victims of natural disasters, human trafficking vic-

### How it started

Rollan began her volunteering and social activities in 2012 when she founded the NU Red Crescent Society. Co-founder of the School for All Sabina Ismailova collaborated with the Solnechnyi Mir (Sunny World) Fund for children with Down syndrome.

Rollan participated in the 2016 Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Anniversary Fellowship Programme in Inclusive Education. She worked with organisations in Minnesota and Arizona that assist with the educational inclusion of children with disabilities.

### School and challenges in society

Rollan participated in the 2016 Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Anniversary Fellowship Programme in Inclusive Education. She worked with organisations in Minnesota and Arizona that assist with the educational inclusion of children with disabilities.

## Businessman and philanthropist named one of 100 New Faces

By Meruyert Abugaliyeva

ASTANA – Garik Bernetsyan, one of the nation's 100 New Faces, is the director of a construction company in the North Kazakhstan region. Apart from business projects, he builds kindergartens in Petropavlovsk under private-public partnerships (PPP) and helps the elderly, orphans and people with disabilities.

Born in Armenia, Bernetsyan studied in university in Russia and then moved to Kazakhstan in the 1990s.

"At that time, there was no one around – no relatives and friends. What helped me reach success is discipline and determination," he noted.



Garik Bernetsyan

He first ran a furniture assembly business before switching to construction. Currently, his Titan Sev'er construction company employs more than 300 people.

In his daily business activities, Bernetsyan pays special attention to cooperation among departments and makes efforts to improve management methods. His life attitude

helps him perceive all the obstacles as challenges and opportunities.

The businessman also uses his experience and resources to build kindergartens in Petropavlovsk under PPPs. In three years, more than 500 children received a place in pre-school institutions thanks to Bernetsyan's investments.

"When I learnt that there are not enough places in kindergartens in our city, I decided to contribute to pre-school education development and built kindergartens. We have built three facilities so far, the first launched in Dec. 2015 for 320 children and the next for 90 children during summer 2017. The most recent kindergarten offering 140 places started working on Kazakhstan's Independence Day, Dec. 16," he said.

Bernetsyan, who is also a father of six children, believes in the value of education.

"Each person has an inner motivation, the most sacred thing that helps him move forward. I always find my inner motivation in children, who are pure and sincere. By constructing kindergartens, we provide support for our country. The earlier a child goes to a kindergarten, the stronger will be the foundation for our children to grow, become active citizens and build a country with a rich culture and vibrant economy," he noted in an interview with *vira.kz*.

Bernetsyan also contributes to the development and preservation of Armenian culture being a deputy chair of the regional Armenian cultural centre.

## Neupusti.net EdTech company initiates start-up competition for Uzbek youth

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – Almaty-based Neupusti.net online work database for youth recently launched the Silk Way Start-ups competition for Uzbek youth as part of the South-South Youth Leadership Initiative in advancing Sustainable Development Agenda 2030.

Maxim Kim from Andijan with the Edunow project, the Uzbek analogue of Neupusti.net, won the final stage of the competition held April 20 in Tashkent.

The winner will travel to Almaty for an educational tour to network with local youth leaders, EdTech companies and attend the GoViral festival. Upon return to Uzbekistan, the winner will be under the mentorship of neupusti.net team until his or her project is up and running.

"Getting to know our existing and potential audience face-to-face is an excellent opportunity to get fresh feedback on our product and gain new partners. Ideally, we want to hold Silk

Way Start-ups competition in all the countries of Central Asia," she noted.

Last year, the company received a grant by winning the third place at the first global Youth4South Solution Awareness Contest and set a mission to transfer knowledge for Uzbek youth. The project received support of Uzbek companies Groundzero Coworking Centre and Andijan Development Centre.

They want to share the knowledge they acquired working on their website with Uzbek youth to inspire them to launch a similar project in their country.

"We chose Uzbekistan to work as part of the South-South youth cooperation. Uzbekistan has the largest population of our target audience – 17 million young people between the ages of 0 to 30. And yet, only five percent of our website's traffic comes from Uzbekistan. To better understand the Uzbek youth, its interests, needs and capabilities, we launched the Silk Way Start-ups competition," said Neupusti.net Development Di-

rector Aizhan Kul-Mukhammed prior to the final contest.

Launched in 2015, Neupusti.net portal provides information on scholarships, fellowships, grants, internships and other self-development opportunities available at home and abroad. The website content is divided into four themes including education related opportunities, career-related opportunities, start-up development opportunities and artistic endeavour development opportunities. The website is a winner of national and international competitions.

The team also includes CEO Ardash Berdibekov and Editor-in-Chief Farangiza Shukasheva.

"Strategy-wise, our goal is to become a leading EdTech com-

pany in Central Asia. Currently, we are working on making our product more user-friendly. For this reason, we are developing an iOS app (will be available in the fall). We have partnered up with the leading developers in the country to create a high-quality product," she said.

Kul-Mukhammed said that the paid subscription introduced last June did not affect their traffic negatively. The content is essential as most users love reading success stories of young people from the Central Asian region.

"We are very proud of successfully implementing a paid subscription model in a country where people are not used to paying for information. When users pay to access your content, it means you are doing something right. Only a handful of media platforms in Kazakhstan have a paid subscription. The majority relies on advertisements, and government funding," she said.

The South-South youth cooperation brings together developing countries to find solutions to development challenges. Youth4South Solution Awareness Contest is part of the United Nations strategic commitment to helping countries expand engagement in mutual learning and solution sharing for more rapid and sustainable development.



L-R: Ardash Berdibekov, Aizhan Kul-Mukhammed and Farangiza Shukasheva.

cause people have various understandings of this concept. We are open for all children. Our centre provides extended training for children without identified special needs too," she said.

Rollan won the I-SEED Social Entrepreneurship and Innovation in Education competition organised by the British Council and Chevron and was able to purchase some furniture and equipment.

The University of Minnesota provided financing for expansion, as the co-founders aim to open an assistive technology library where patrons can borrow technologies intended to support people with special needs. Specialists from St. Anthony School in Minnesota organised staff trainings and Special Olympics provided a programme on unified physical education.

"We receive very positive feedback from parents. We try to make the process of education interesting, adventurous and exciting. Creative teaching is our main approach. We vary concentration and leisure time. The mother of a child with Down syndrome said that her daughter finally found friends. She can now easily communicate with children of her age. It will be easy for her to adapt in later life. Of course, we are in need of sponsors or investors. We faced many difficulties in finding our office, but now we have plans to organise new trainings and find new teachers," she said.

"Our school is temporarily located at the university. We are moving to a new office in May. We offer educational courses in three languages. The lesson is conducted in small groups up to 10 persons. We use a co-teaching model. We offer academic, creative and sports classes for comprehensive development. A child can achieve good results through sports as well as art therapy," she said.

The courses cost 30,000 tenge



Kamila Rollan meets with Weekend School participants.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 25, 2018

## 'Karaman' becomes first Kazakh mystical thriller

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – “Karaman,” shot in Kazakhstan, is considered to be the nation’s first adventure mystical thriller. The movie was released April 12 and despite the mysticism on the verge of reality, makes viewers consider what is more important than material wealth.

The film’s concept belongs to scriptwriter and actor Marat Abdullayev, who was inspired by his family legend about the rich Karaman batyr.

“There is Karaman batyr in Kazakh epic and there is Karaman city in Turkey, but our Karaman does not belong to any of them. In my family, I had an ancestor – strong Karaman batyr. According to the family legend, he was so rich that after his death, all his treasures were used to make



hanged himself. The legends pushed me to write a similar script in the abstract genre,” he added, reported BNews.kz.

The movie tells the story of five friends who go to the mountains looking for Karaman’s mysterious gold statue, which they believe was lost there several centuries ago. Akhmet, a local huntsman, joins them and becomes their guide. Itch money leads the team, but being alone with nature, they must overcome inexplicable phenomena and challenges without losing their humanity.

Although the movie was written in the abstract genre, every action of every actor has a philosophical meaning. Experienced screenwriter Timur Zhaksylykov, who participated in creating popular domestic movies such as “The Lost” and “The Kazakh Khanate,” participated in “Kara-

man” and actor Dustin Shakirov made his directorial debut.

The movie was filmed in the most picturesque places of the Almaty region – Kaitandy, Kol-sai, Narynkol and Turgen. The actors lived in the field for more than three weeks.

“We shot in the wildest places of the country. While we shot some scenes, snakes jumped on us. Once, we went for five minutes to see the location and counted up to 30 mites on each of us, but we were lucky and they didn’t bite us. We had to sleep in tents in the mountains; wolves and bears were wandering around. Thank God, everything went well,” said Abdullayev.

“Karaman’s message is that human life is priceless, each one’s values are different and people are different. The film is about betrayal, friendship and what the most important thing in our life is,” said Shakirov.

## Bollywood to shoot movie about Mangistau



The Ustyurt reserve in the Mangistau region.

Staff Report

ASTANA – A Bollywood film company will shoot a movie about the Mangistau region famous for its historical sights, Akim (Governor) of the Mangistau region Yeraly Tugzhanov announced recently.

“We made prior agreements with Bollywood on shooting a movie about the Mangistau region. I think it is a splendid

place that has no analogues,” he said.

Tugzhanov pitched such a film to film companies, including those in India. The Mangistau region has 40 underground mosques built 10 centuries ago, 19 of them continue to function.

“We haven’t discovered [all] underground mosques. They have a history prior to the ninth century,” he added.

He also mentioned the Seisem

Ata necropolis, where historical characters and batyrs (the Kazakh

**The Ustyurt plateau in the Ustyurt reserve is also one of the region’s attractions.**

warriors) from the Nogai Horde period were buried in pantheon. The Seisem Ata necropolis is

a city of mausoleums made from pink gravestones of limestone and had been standing for five centuries. According to Kazakh legend, Seisem Ata was a follower of Khoja Akhmed Yassawi, poet and sufi who lived in the 12th century. Later, the burial Seisem Ata became a sacred place and was considered an honour place to bury their relatives.

The Ustyurt plateau in the Ustyurt reserve is also one of the region’s attractions. Seemingly endless diverse landscapes of steppes and deserts lead to channels of extinct ancient rivers where caravan routes passed through the plateau in the Middle Ages. The most well-known historical monuments of the reserve are the ancient ruins of the city of Shahri-i-Wazir, the Beleuli caravan and numerous mausoleums, most of which have not yet been studied.

Kazakh and Indian cinema makers have collaborated before. In 2017, Kazakh film producers presented a movie called “Love You Family” about a young Indian woman who came to Almaty to find happiness. The movie was shot in Almaty and India.

## Astana Ballet launches tour of four cities

By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – The Astana Ballet recently launched its tour of performances in Kyzylorda,

Almaty, Taldykorgan and Aktau and will present the Astana Ballet Gala programme it previously brought to the world’s prominent stages.

The ballet troupe performed



A scene from “Salome” ballet.

April 7-8 in the Kyzylorda Regional Music and Drama Theatre and will visit Almaty May 4-6, Taldykorgan May 9-10 and Aktau May 25-26.

The Astana Ballet Gala pro-

gramme the dancers recently presented to a New York audience at the Lincoln Centre features the “Legacy of the Great Steppe” performance, “A Fuego Lento” one-act ballet and a fragment from “Cleopatra.”

The “Legacy of the Great Steppe” reflects Kazakh culture elements and includes a series of choreographic miniatures, including “Scythian Frescos” and “Kyz Zhibek Dreams,” “Martinet,” “Almehs’ Dance” as well as fragments from world-renowned ballets.

The Almaty audience will have an additional day to enjoy the performance of the capital ballet troupe, as it is set to present not only its traditional concert programme, but also the most popular plays from its repertoire. These include “Serenade” choreographed by George Balanchine, “Zhusan”, relating the legends and myths of the great steppes, William Forsythe’s famous “In the Middle, Somewhat Elevated” and Ricardo Amarante’s “Love Fear Loss” set to the songs of Edith Piaf.

The ballet company continues enriching its repertoire that at present includes national choreography, traditional classics, neo and modern classics as well as experimental plays of Kazakh and foreign choreographers.

Opening its doors in a new modern building in the centre of the city, the Astana Ballet has also toured abroad and performed on the world’s well-known stages in Moscow, St. Petersburg, Beijing, Paris, Vienna, Seoul, Budapest, Baku, Minsk, New York, Tokyo, Warsaw and Brussels.

## Kazakhstan Fashion Week gathers best designers

By Dana Omirkazy

intertwined with the exquisite oriental themes, inform.kz reports.

ASTANA – Some of the world’s best fashion designers showcased latest offerings April 10-13 at the Abai State Academic Opera and Ballet Theatre and Dostyk Plaza in Almaty for the 25th season of Kazakhstan Fashion Week (KFW).

The show included collections by local and foreign designers, including Yerlan Zholdasbek, Judy Ai, Tamara Lamanukaeva, Sergey Shabunin, Arunaz, Di Siitova, By Sipa (Uzbekistan), Sophia (Russia), Giedi Afw (Azerbaijan), Dinara Satzhan, Nailyl Baikuchukov, Zineb Joudny Ofs (Morocco), Bouchra Filali Ofs (Morocco), Hany el Behairy Ofs (Egypt), Zharumaya Ayza (Russia), Alex Chzhen by One To One and Tara Jarmon (France).

“It is amazing, but we, as organisers, note that the spring fashion week is always different from the autumn one. Given that this is still an autumn-winter collection, nevertheless, we have many sunny collections. I do not know what it depends on. This may be because designers send their applications to visit spring Almaty or because the autumn-winter season attracts more attention of designers. Although such a collection requires more investment than creating a spring-summer one,” said KFW public relations director Gulbahor Hassanova, according to kursiv.kz.

Kazakh designer Sergey Shabunin presented the autumn-winter 2018/19 collection featuring European style of the 1940s

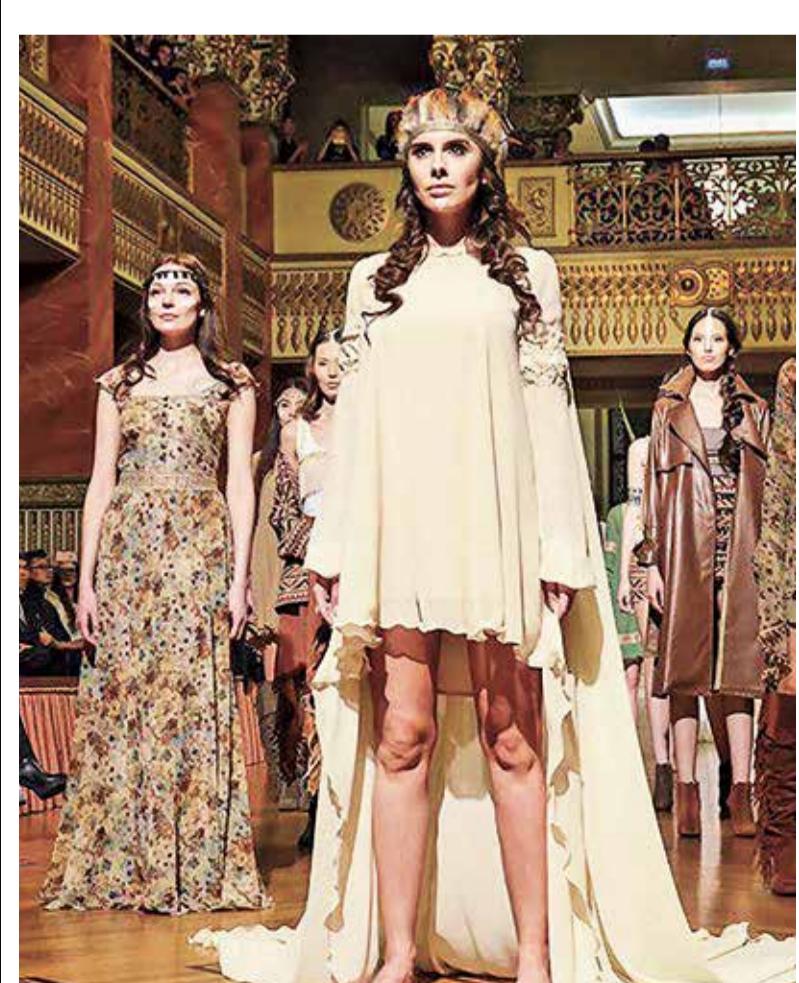


Photo credit: today.kz

# COUNTRY

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 25, 2018

## Shymkent oil refinery reconstruction to end in May

Staff Report

ASTANA – The Shymkent oil processing plant (SOPP) reconstruction will last for one additional month and the interim shutdown will not affect the Kazakh fuel supply, said Vice Minister of Energy Makhambet Dosmukhambetov during the 2018-2020 draft budget presentation.

"The reconstruction will proceed according to plan. It will not affect the budget or the fuel supplies around the state," he said.

Dosmukhambetov added the

shutdown issue had been resolved with KazMunayGas, one of SOPP's owners. The plant was closed for overhaul April 10 to rebuild operating equipment and add new facilities, according to owner PetroKazakhstan.

"New facilities of the residue fluid catalytic cracking (RFCC) complex will be integrated with SOPP functioning facilities," noted the company press service.

The complex is the most important process for deep oil processing. Constructing RFCC, in addition to gasoline and hydrogen purifying and Merox desul-

furising, was completed by 4,800 employees in March. New installations have created 445 jobs and employers are completing internships at Chinese, Kazakh and Russian oil processing plants.

The reconstruction phase is part of the plant modernisation project, including implementing industrial safety requirements and improving equipment reliability and qualitative and uninterrupted operation. The first stage was completed in 2017 and the second will be finalised in the third quarter of this year.

Before the planned shutdown,

all tanks were filled with the necessary volume of commercial products. SOPP manufactures K4 and K5 class petroleum products.

Built in 1985, the Shymkent plant is one of the three leading and newest oil-processing plants in Kazakhstan. SOPP currently produces 30 percent of the total volume of petroleum products; the balance is produced at the Atyrau and Pavlodar plants.

PetroKazakhstan is a vertically-integrated group of oil companies with shareholders China National Petroleum Corporation and KazMunayGas.



Photo credit: Kapital.kz

## Akmola region reproductive dairy farm to provide jobs

By Aigerim Sadykova

ASTANA – A specialised reproductive farm to be established in Burabay area, Akmola region, will provide jobs for local residents and develop the Kazakh dairy industry.

The industry is taking a new direction, as the unique project will create opportunities in rural areas and provide additional tax revenue. It will use high technology and international standards in genetics, such as total performance index

(TPI) and ALTA GPS, to manage and determine livestock value.

As a result, industrial and family dairy farms in the region will increase milk production. In addition to the reproductive farm, training centres, a single feed centre and separate production unit to manage herd reproduction will be available, providing farmers with highly qualified specialists to increase volume.

The process will begin with medium-sized and large dairy farms in the region receiving 3,000 head of highly productive cattle for

breeding. The main participants will be agricultural cooperatives, including dairy farms in the Akkol, Burabay and Zerenda districts and Esil, a social entrepreneurial corporation. Organic dairy products will be supplied through the AQMOL and Kokshetau-Onimderi trade networks to markets in the capital and Kokshetau city.

Kazakh farmers supply 30 percent of the domestic milk market and the Five Social Initiatives roadmap approved March 13 by the government will influence the country's agricultural develop-

ment. The government allocated 20 billion tenge (US\$61.2 million) this year to enhance mass entrepreneurship and 62 billion tenge (US\$189.7 million) for micro crediting.

Agricultural producers increased figures in all livestock categories in 2017 compared to the previous year, the Ministry of National Economy committee on statistics reported Jan 1. The number of camels increased 7.2 percent; horses, 6.9 percent, and cattle, 5.5 percent. The number of pigs, however, decreased by 2.3 percent.

## Education ministry to upgrade internet at schools

By Dana Omirgazy

ASTANA – The Kazakh Ministry of Education and Science will be systematically introducing four areas of digital technology in educational institutions, Minister Yerlan Sagadiyev said at the April 10 government meeting.

Paper documents and information will be completely accessible and mobile to ensure students, teachers, parents and principals can get the necessary information on their smartphones. The availability will allow students to monitor their grades, learn about homework, read textbooks and use all digital resources.

Digitisation means openness and justice. All necessary information, from the queue to place one's child with a kindergarten to questions about obtaining a certificate or diploma, should be publicly available.

Each student or teacher should have free, 24/7 access from his or her smartphone or computer to textbooks in the Kazakh and Russian languages, the latest foreign and Kazakh lectures and interactive lessons. The ministry also seeks to integrate all data into one database, implement Big Data technologies and conduct online analyses that will manage all the processes from one situation centre.

The ministry has begun implementing a schedule to gradually introduce digital technologies.

"In 2016-2017, more than 14,000 multimedia kits were purchased. This year, the national

budget allocated 6 billion tenge (US\$18.72 million) for these purposes. For the third consecutive year, the akimats (administrations) purchased more than 10,000 sets for educational institutions. The task is to increase the availability

The ministry has begun implementing a schedule to gradually introduce digital technologies.

of multimedia kits in rural and urban schools to 80 percent," said Sagadiyev.

Nearly 99 percent of schools are now connected to the Internet; 62 percent have access to fast Internet and 47 percent are connected to Wi-Fi. In accordance with the Digital Kazakhstan programme, the ministry plans to connect all schools. More than 4,000 schools have introduced electronic diaries, which are used by 50 percent of schoolchildren, he added.

The ministry also provides public services; it offers 73 state services, 25 of which have been automated. Its base is integrated with those of other state agencies on the e-government platform. Within the next two years, there are plans to automate and optimise an additional 48 services.

Sagadiyev focused on the need to teach digital basics.

"Approximately 150,000 teachers and 1.5 million parents will be trained to use our information bases," he said.

## Family holiday park to open in Aktobe on Children's Day

By Yerbolat Uatkanov

ASTANA – A new outdoor family park, the largest in the western Kazakhstan with more than 50 types of entertainment, is under construction in Aktobe. The opening ceremony will be held June 1 in conjunction with Children's Day.

For those who enjoy physical activities, the 3.5-hectare park will have four-season ice skating arena, sports and play platforms, a labyrinth, trampolines, adventure park, rock wall, shooting gallery and bowling alleys. The educational programme will include a zoo, ethnic village, mobile planetarium and summer library. The city administration will allocate up to 658 million tenge (US\$208,500) for the park.

Nurai Invest Group is serving as the construction company and CEO Yerbol Mukhamedzhan



recently met with region Akim (Governor) Berdybek Saparbayev to present the plans.

"It's a family park that enables combining leisure and entertainment

both for children and adults," he said.

Mukhamedzhan added the company has purchased playground equipment for children with disabilities.

The project is the first phase of the 9-billion tenge (US\$27.7 million) Yurta Park, which is slated for completion in 2020.

"The total area of the eight-floor complex is 40,000 square metres. The building will consist of three blocks, including business administration, sport-sanitary and entertainment modules," he said.

The project will also include a parking area and landscaping with approximately 500 spruces and Canadian maples. The park will be located at Nokin and 312 Rifle Division avenues, according to the Aktobe region press service.

Saparbayev said 2018 is the year of children in the Aktobe region and the Baqytty Bala (happy child in Kazakh) social project. It has received nearly 4 billion tenge (US\$12.3 million) in support from Aktobe entrepreneurs.

The project also includes the June 1-3 Baqytty Bala children's singing contest and festival. World famous Kazakh singer Dimash Kudaibergenov and The Voice (a popular Ukrainian contest) winner Daneliya Tulyeshova will perform on stage with the winners.

## Kazakhstan considers excluding term 'oralman' from Kazakh language

By Dana Omirgazy

ASTANA – A special commission created under the Kazakh Ministry of Labour and Social Protection is researching whether or not the word "oralman" ("returnee," in Kazakh), which describes ethnic Kazakhs returning to the homeland, should be excluded from the Kazakh language,

approximately 18,605 repatriates returned home," Vice Minister of Labour and Social Protection of Kazakhstan Nurzhan Altayev said at an April 4 press conference.

Kazakh officials are also considering a draft law on amendments to legislation on employment and migration, particularly as it relates to lone settlers.

"We are also introducing amendments aimed at covering state support measures and extending the regional quota not only to immigrants, repatriates and their families, but also separate settlers. We had a conflict in the legislation, which prescribed quotas for the ethnic Kazakhs. Frequently, we receive applications when the lone repatriate, who does not have a family, wants to move to Kazakhstan. Now, we are improving the legislation prescribing the quota for both families and lone settlers," Altayev said.

## 58,000 scrap vehicles collected in nationwide recycling programme

By Amir Khaidar

ASTANA – More than 58,740 vehicles have been collected in Kazakhstan since 2016 as part of a nationwide government campaign to collect and recycle scrap vehicles. The goal is to recycle 250,000 vehicles by 2021.

Seventeen collection sites were established across the country.

Collected vehicles are crushed to form massive bricks and later shipped to a processing plant in the city of Karaganda. It is the first plant of this scale on the territory of Central Asia.

Members of the public who turn in their old vehicles can receive monetary compensation depending on the auto parts present. Compensation ranges from 48,000-150,000 tenge (US\$300-500).

They can also receive a discount certificate, which they can apply towards the purchase of a new vehicle assembled in Kazakhstan. The maximum payoff for a passenger car is equivalent to 315,000 tenge (US\$1,000) and for trucks and buses 650,000 tenge (US\$2,000). An additional bonus is that certificates can be combined and transferred between individuals. Approximately 11,500 dis-

count certificates have been distributed.

"I have driven my car for so many years now, but everything has its expiration date. I could have made repairs to it, but who knows what can happen on the road, what if something fails. That is why I decided to turn in my car. I don't want to risk the lives of my loved ones," said motorist Aidar Mukhit.

Materials from the cars are divided according to characteristics into ferrous and non-ferrous metals, plastic, glass and rubber. Motor oil and other fluids are converted into fuel. Produced metal is supplied to steel mills in the Karaganda region. The programme is expected to produce 23,000 tonnes of metal per year from recycled parts.

According to the Tengrinews, in Kazakhstan, out of 5 million cars, almost a quarter were manufactured during the Soviet era. So the programme seeks to modernise Kazakhstan's automobile fleet with the support of the local automotive industry.



Photo credit: Tengrinews

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 25, 2018

# National campaign legalises more than 600,000 informal jobs

By Zhanna Shayakhetova

ASTANA – Labour and Social Protection Minister Madina Abylkassymova reported that 607,000 out of 2.7 million people had formalised their employment status since the beginning of the year at an April 17 government meeting.

Approximately 197,000 employees concluded employment contracts and began making mandatory pension contributions, and 12,000 individuals registered their entrepreneurial activities. The regions continue to carry out employment promotion measures for the self-employed and unemployed population.

"Activities on clarifying the status of citizens are underway in all regions. The regional headquarters operate at the akimats [administration offices] and the central state bodies. The work is based on the adopted regional road maps on formalisation of the self-employed population," she said.

These regional road maps offer methods to address key employment-related issues, including statistical accounting, the complex tax system and the lack of some organisational and legal regimes. The draft law "On Amendments



and Additions to Certain Legislative Acts on Legalising Informal Activities of Self-Employed Popu-

lation" is currently being developed.

Modernising the infrastructure

of the labour market will help provide access to productive employ-

ment.

Work is being carried out to renew employment centres around the country, to create a single online platform and to implement an electronic labour exchange nationwide as part of instructions from Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev.

"The electronic labour exchange was launched in a pilot mode in Astana, Almaty, Pavlodar and Shymkent in October 2017. The web portal was launched throughout the country in January. It ranks second among the most visited websites in the jobs and vacancies category and has 74th place among all Kazakhstan's sites," the minister noted.

More than 21,000 people have been employed and about 28,000 employers are registered through the electronic labour exchange website.

Private employment agencies will also be involved in state programmes to provide workplaces for the unemployed. Employment centres will collaborate with private agencies to transfer services for vocational guidance and job placement for the unemployed. This measure will provide jobs for up to 60,000 individuals.

The updating of citizen statuses depends on the integration of state bodies' information systems. Most

of these systems have already been integrated. The ministry will integrate systems with the Ministry of Finance on entrepreneurs and the Ministry of Education and Science on students, children under 18 and persons raising children up to the age of three before the end of this year.

Minister of National Economy Timur Suleimenov said a single social payment (SSP) system had been proposed to simplify the registration and legalisation of employees in informal sectors. The payment is expected to be one monthly calculated indicator (MCI) in the amount of 2,405 tenge (US\$7.3) for city residents and 0.3 MCI or 722 tenge (US\$2) for village residents. The payment includes tax and all social payments.

The SSP includes an individual income tax in the amount of 10 percent, a mandatory pension contribution of 40 percent, a contribution to the state social insurance fund of 10 percent and a contribution to the social insurance fund of 40 percent. The SSP norms will be included in the Tax Code.

The relevant draft law is being developed and will be submitted to the Mazhilis (lower chamber of Parliament) in the second quarter of 2018.

## Kazakhstan to build university hospitals in Almaty and Karaganda

Staff Report

ASTANA – The Kazakh government plans to build two university hospitals using public-private partnerships, Minister of the Healthcare Yelzhan Birtanov announced during a recent government meeting.

The construction of a hospital with 300 beds will be linked to Astendiyarov Kazakh National Medicine University (KazNMU) and an integrated clinic in Almaty will involve Karaganda Medicine University.

"Three projects on creating university hospitals are in the process. We received positive

economic expertise and developed the draft of a tender documentation in Almaty. The issue to attract the resources of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development is being worked out. We developed the documentation with Asian Development Bank on the University Hospital in Karaganda," he said.

The integrated hospital is a promising project to create a leading multidisciplinary research centre. It is planned to unite five leading scientific centres to establish a university hospital in Almaty.

"The project on building an integrated hospital is going through economical expertise in the Ministry of National Economy. It is

called for in the state-of-the-nation address of Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev to establish a university hospital with 1,265 beds in Almaty city," added Birtanov.

Approximately 175 health related projects in the country, totaling 33.7 billion tenge (US\$102.6 million) are funded by public-private partnerships, including 50 in the advanced stages of development.

"This year 15 contracts were signed in six regions of the state. The projects provide for the construction and operation of medical ambulance stations, clinics, hospital departments and required equipment. West Kazakhstan region has signed two contracts,

the Karaganda region has six, Kyzylorda region – three, for the Mangistau, Pavlodar and North Kazakhstan regions one project each," concluded the Minister of Healthcare.

The first Kazakh university hospital was KazNMU hospital on internal diseases built in 2012 in Almaty.

University hospitals have become the centre of medical discoveries and innovations in Europe. The education system of medical universities is based on the university hospitals model from the 19th century. The education process consists of scientific research, development and implementation of new medical technologies.

## 30,000 rural residents to learn basics of entrepreneurship

By Amir Khaidar

ASTANA – According to the Atameken National Chamber of Entrepreneurs, in 2018, 30,000 people will receive entrepreneurial training and 6,000 of them will launch businesses after completing the entrepreneurial programme.

The initiative part of the Basatau-Business project, which is part of the second direction of the Productive Employment and Mass Entrepreneurship Development programme. The project will teach the basics of entrepreneurship to unemployed and self-employed people in rural areas. Among other things, they will learn how to develop a business plan and start an agricultural cooperative.

In 2017, more than 15,000 people in 80 districts of the country were trained. Approximately 3,300 of them opened or improved their businesses. More than 2,450 projects were opened through concessional loans with interest rates of 6 percent. More than 700 projects were launched with the private funds of entrepreneurs. Eighty percent of businesses were in agriculture and 20 percent were in trade and the service sector.

This year, the project will expand to 160 districts and towns. Courses will be offered to individuals and groups. Course length is one month. The total amount of hands-on learning will be 80 hours per group course. In individual courses of 120 hours, aspiring entrepreneurs will receive consultations on business plan preparations and business project development.

Training will be provided by experienced business coaches using interactive and advanced teaching methods.

"This year we trained 160 coaches. They are all professionals. Most of them were involved in entrepreneurship, that means they can share personal experience and provide efficient support," said the chamber's Director of Department for Development of Business Communications in State Language Bauyrzhan Orazgaliyev.

Course registration is open to residents of rural areas, who live in district centres or small villages, unemployed or self-employed citizens who would like to kick-start their business ideas. Active entrepreneurs who are looking to expand their businesses can also participate.

## Eighty percent of Kazakhs with HIV to receive antiretroviral therapy

By Amir Khaidar

ASTANA – Eighty percent of Kazakhs who test HIV positive will receive antiretroviral therapy by the end of the year, reported BNews.kz. Only 54 percent of patients received the therapy in 2006 and the government has taken significant measures in the last decade with the support of the World Health Organisation (WHO).

"In order to achieve this result, the National Centre for Control and Prevention of AIDS is implementing a strategy called Test and Treat. Antiretroviral therapy will be prescribed to all individuals whose tests came back positive for HIV, despite the clinical conditions of the patients. This measure is preventive and the expected outcome of the campaign is to stop further transmission of HIV infection among the population," said centre director Bauyrzhan Baiserkhan.

Thirty-one antiretroviral medications are currently registered in Kazakhstan, 26 of which are used on a daily basis. The number of patients prescribed with highly effective fixed-dose drugs has grown each year.

Beginning in 2009, antiretroviral therapy has been offered to all infected patients at state ex-

pense. The quality of the therapy has improved and local doctors use the most advanced treatment technologies and register new drugs. Medications are supplied through the United Nations, which significantly lowers the price.

UNAIDS (Joint United Nations Programme on HIV and AIDS) is committed to ending the AIDS epidemic as a global threat by 2030. This includes ensuring the 30 million people living with HIV have access to treatment, eliminating new HIV infections among children and ensuring access to combination prevention options. On the fast-track by 2020, the organisation aims to reduce HIV infections to fewer than 500,000, reduce AIDS-related deaths to fewer than 500,000 and eliminate HIV-related stigma and discrimination.

Since the registration of the first HIV case in 1987, 26,887 Kazakh citizens have been diagnosed with HIV. Today 16,229 people in the country (35 percent women, 65 percent men) are living with HIV.

With the improvement of medical support to people living with the HIV diagnosis, the AIDS-related mortality rate in Kazakhstan decreased from 16 per 1,000 individuals in 2010 to 10 per 1,000 in 2017.

## Hospitals to do away with paper records, switch to electronic health passports

By Aigerim Sadykova

ASTANA – The Kazakh Ministry of Health plans to do away with paper records beginning January 2019 by completely turning to electronic health passports. Half of Kostanai residents will have passports by the end of the year, said regional health department deputy head Ekaterina Slobodenyuk during a briefing at the regional communications service.

"Electronic health passports are actively being introduced and 38,000 passports have already been purchased. We plan to provide 50 percent of Kostanai region residents with them," she said.

The region has considerable room for improvement in terms of Internet access and 90.9 percent of health facilities have computers. The region will spend 387 million tenge (\$1.1 million) to buy 1,427 computers for the remaining facilities and 361 million tenge (\$1.1 million) has been allocated from the regional budget to introduce Dmed, an integrated medical information system, in 41 medical organisations.

"The Internet is provided in 32 percent of medical institutions in the region. We are going to connect 143 objects to the Internet, reaching 60 percent coverage. The figure will change to 93 percent, as another 167 objects will have Internet connections next year," said Slobodenyuk.

Digitalising the health system is being conducted as part of the governmental 2016-2019 health development programme. One aspect is preparing citizens for obligatory health insurance.

The electronic passport includes information about the patient, including previous illnesses, chronic diseases, possible allergic reactions to medicines and test results. The online personal patient account will lower the queue for registration, said Slobodenyuk, as it suggests making a doctor's appointment or calling him or her to receive aid at home, as well as allowing the patient to monitor his or her health by leaving records in an electronic diary.

The electronic health passport will be introduced this year in the Akmola, Karaganda, Kostanai and

West Kazakhstan regions. The Ministry of Healthcare signed a memorandum with IBM and Microsoft to introduce the new, innovative projects.

The single information space with the patient's data will provide statistics and information for transparent industry financing, said Vice Minister of Healthcare Alexei Tsoi. Patients can use the passport to review information about their condition and get paperless access to electronic health services.

The electronic passport includes information about the patient, including previous illnesses, chronic diseases, possible allergic reactions to medicines and test results.

The system will also simplify doctors' workloads, as they have been recording the same data on paper, the health information system and their internal information systems. Now, they will go online to browse records about the patient, his or her dynamic data and medical history, get dispensary registration information and check the list of diagnoses.

All records will be found in the cloud data storage. Using the Internet, access will be granted with an ID card and digital signature anywhere in Kazakhstan or throughout the world. Old paper records will also be digitised.

"But all records can't be digitised. The quality of the paper is obsolete and the handwriting is very difficult to disassemble in some cases. Now, we are working on several options to solve the problem, using both scanning and manual work," said national electronic health centre general director Olzhas Abishev.

He noted mobile apps, designed for patients with chronic diseases to report their condition to the doctor, will be developed by the end of next year. Patients will be able to stay home rather than visit the clinic and physicians will monitor their health in real time.

# TOURISM

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 25, 2018

## Baikonur – small town of major importance

By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – Thinking of Kazakhstan would bring Almaty, Astana or Shymkent to one's mind, yet there is a place of equally significant importance to the young Central Asian nation. Baikonur, in the country's south-western area near the Syrdarya River, once a secret location used by the Soviet Union to build the world's first and to this date largest space launch facility, still remains a mystery both to locals and foreigners.

Home to more than 70,000 people, the city's recognisable name is largely due to the Baikonur Cosmodrome in Turatam village, approximately 40 kilometres to the north. It is currently one of only two places in the world that sends humans into

space; the other is Jiuquan in China's Gobi Desert.

"Baikonur is a small and closed town located not far away from the cosmodrome and the Syrdarya River," said Baikonur native Gaukhara Zhakazhanova.

In 1954, Soviet officials tasked researchers to identify a suitable place to locate a launch pad facility, an ambitious plan for the union. With its sparsely populated territory, sunny climate, close location to the railroad and relative proximity to the equator, the region became the perfect place for the country to make its space development objectives real.

The town's rapid growth occurred in the 1980s due to the active development of various space programmes, spurring an increasing inflow of specialists from across the

Soviet Union. The state dissolved in 1991, however, and as the space industry was a major contributor to Baikonur's development, the subsequent decline in launches and exit of specialists resulted in stagnation.

Baikonur remains of paramount importance for Kazakhstan, as Russia is leasing the cosmodrome for \$115 million a year until 2050. The town is regulated by Russian legislation and the Russian ruble is common currency.

"There is a checkpoint at the entrance to the city. All residents must have their permits with them that are given by the city administration if you have an address certificate," said Zhakazhanova.

Baikonur is quite a difficult place to visit both in terms of geography and legislative arrangements, yet traveling there can turn into a lifetime adventure.

There are several options. A special Moscow-Baikonur flight operates three times per week. Flights also originate from the Kazakh capital and Almaty to Kyzylorda, the closest big city to Baikonur, with visitors then having to drive the remaining part of the journey. A train ride is also available to Kyzylorda.

The special geopolitical situation also requires special travel requirements. In addition to having a Kazakh or Russian visa, depending on departure location, a permit must be obtained from Roscos at least 60 days before the planned trip. The document is reviewed at all checkpoints near the entrance to the city.

Visitors planning to attend a rocket launch must also obtain a permit from the Russian space



The launch of a Soyuz rocket.

Photo credit: baikonuradm.ru



Yuri Gagarin speaks to locals.

regulating body. The easiest way is to contact a tour agency that will carry out all the procedures. Some agencies also offer trips that include visiting the launch facility; touring Gagarin's Start launch pad, from which Yuri Gagarin, the first human to fly into space, flew on April 12, 1961 and a guided tour of the space history museum and memorial houses of Gagarin and prominent Soviet rocket engineer Sergei Korolev. Applications must be submitted approximately two months in advance.

Monuments throughout the town celebrating space industry achievements and famous cosmonauts serve as a reminder of its ever-important role in space development.

"I think the cosmodrome, rockets, museums and monuments might be of interest to tourists," said Zhakazhanova.

"Youth often spend time in Arbat, where different concerts and exhibitions take place during holidays. There is also a healing water pond near the river, where people bathe

in the summer. People also walk in different parks enjoying fountains," she added.

The rocket launches have an adverse effect on those who suffer from seasonal allergies.

"Local residents are recommended to stay in their homes and close the windows in case of rocket accidents," said Zhakazhanova.

"In 2013 [when a Russian Proton rocket crashed spilling toxic fuel and caused \$89 million in damage], we had to sit at home with closed windows for two days."

## Three nature reserves to open as part of Sacred Kazakhstan initiative

By Amir Khaidar

here is no coincidence. Bozok is a witness to our great history. In

the future, a museum and a visitor centre will be opened."

The second reserve will be near Botai village in the Aiyr-



The Bozok settlement near Astana.

tau district of North Kazakhstan region. According to historical sources, 5,000 years ago mankind first domesticated wild horses near this settlement.

The third reserve will be near the ancient Saraisky settlement in the Atyrau region. In the Middle Ages, Saraisky was an important economic and trade centre of the Golden Horde.

Currently, 13 national parks and ten state reserves operate in Kazakhstan. Abdygalilov added that first stage of Sacred Kazakhstan's programme is almost complete.

"This was not an easy job, there was some isolated information about the regions, but we didn't have anything on the national level. In the regions,

local historians offered their ideas, and we completed the assessment. Most important for us is a legend about the particular place. Our land is full of legends. This in turn makes the place sacred. There are not only sites of historical or archaeological importance, but some modern sites as well. The main task now is to market these sacred places; we want to popularise them among citizens. This will be one of the forms of relaying our history to future generations," he said.

The Sacred Kazakhstan initiative is part of the National Identity Programme and seeks to recognise 100 national landmarks that will consolidate the cultural identity of the nation.

## Kazakhstan launches 72-hour visa-free regime in Astana, Almaty for Indian citizens

By Meruyert Abugaliyeva

ASTANA – Indian citizens flying through Kazakhstan with local airlines can enjoy a 72-hour visa-free stopover in Astana and Almaty from April 23 until Dec. 31, according to a government decree signed April 10.

Air Astana offers daily flights from Almaty – Delhi and flights three times per week from Astana – Delhi on Airbus and Embraer aircrafts. Direct Astana – Delhi flights were launched July 2, 2017.

Round-trip economy and business classes tickets, not including service fees, start from 83,200 tenge (US\$254) and 390,498 tenge (US\$1,194) for Almaty – Delhi flights and 83,052 tenge (US\$253) and 390,351 tenge (US\$1,193) for Astana – Delhi flights respectively.

Transit passengers can travel to Kiev, Istanbul, Moscow, Saint Petersburg, Omsk, Novosibirsk, Beijing, Urumqi, Tbilisi, Bishkek, London, Frankfurt and Paris.

Air Astana also offers stopover packages starting from \$1, which include a one-night stay in three-

four-star hotels, buffet breakfast, arrival and departure airport transfer. Additional nights can be booked starting from \$65.

According to Air Astana, approximately 570,000 passengers and 5,600 tonnes of cargo have been transported since the establishment of air communication between two countries.

Air Astana is Kazakhstan's national air carrier, a joint company of Samruk Kazyna Sovereign Wealth Fund (51 percent) and BAE Systems PLC (49 percent).

Air Astana was the first from the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and Eastern Europe to receive prestigious four-star rating by Skytrax and obtained the title of The Best Airline in Central Asia and India for six consecutive years starting 2012.

In 2017, 620,000 passengers travelled through Kazakhstan. President Nursultan Nazarbayev has called for that number to be increased to 1.6 million per year by 2020.

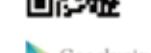
Kazakh Ministry for Investment and Development estimates that in 2018 airports will provide service to 900,000 transit passengers, which is 45 percent more than last year.



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WEDNESDAY, APRIL 25, 2018

# FC Astana ties with FC Kairat in Kazakhstan Championship's central match

By Anuar Abdurakhmanov

ASTANA – The main event of the past football weekend was the match of Kazakhstan's championship fifth round between the country's two strongest clubs, FC Astana and FC Kairat of Almaty. The game was anticipated because Kairat lost 0-3 to Astana in the match for the Super Cup of Kazakhstan and was determined to gain revenge for the defeat.

Before the match, Astana had already won all starting rounds of the championship. On the other hand, Kairat lost to team Aktobe. In the first half, the two teams played safe without any serious attacks. The only scoring chance was when Kairat's midfielder Isael da Silva Barbosa made a long attempt on goal, but the ball hit the post.

The second half was much more interesting. The teams exchanged goal attempts. First, a Kairat defender pulled the ball from the gate line after a shot by Croatian midfielder of Astana Marin Tomasov. Then Kairat striker Hugo Silveira failed in a one-on-one with the goalkeeper.

Just a few minutes later, Astana finally opened the score. Marin Tomasov crossed the penalty



area to Bakhtiyor Zainutdinov, and the young halfback, who has

become one of the highlights of the new season, scored his

fourth goal for Astana, making the score 1-0 in this game.

Kairat midfielder Andrey Arshavin, who came as a substi-

tute in the second half, saved the team. It took the ex-player of London's Arsenal just a bit more than ten minutes to score a goal. The score never changed until the final whistle.

"The fans witnessed a good match of the European format with a lot of chances for both teams. We controlled the game in the first half, had chances that we failed to realise. In the second half, we scored a goal and then lost the initiative to Kairat. The Almaty team had good players in their lineup and took advantage of this situation. In general, it was a double-edged and even game with a lot of tough and intense moments," said FC Astana Head Coach Grigory Babayan.

According to FC Kairat Coach Carlos Alos Ferrer, the result of the game was not natural.

"We deserved to win, but earned one point, and the championship goes on. Astana was very powerful the first 20 minutes, and we knew they would put high pressure on us. We also knew we would control the ball more, and the dynamics of the game would depend more on us. I have a feeling that if we had scored first, the victory would have been ours," he said.

Astana retained the first place in the championship, and Kairat is in the third place.

*Photo credit: sports.kz.*

## Traditional Kazakh belt wrestling tournament to be held in Almaty

By Zhanat Tukpiyev

ASTANA – Khalyk Barisy, the first national traditional Kazakh belt wrestling tournament, will be held May 7 as part of the Ruhani Zhangyu programme at the Sunkar International Ski Jumping centre in Almaty. The tournament is an effort to revive beldesu, Kazakh traditional belt wrestling, one of the oldest traditional sports.

According to the organisers, the cash prize is about 20 million tenge (US\$61,000). More than 1,000 wrestlers from across the country will take part in the tournament.

In beldesu, bare-chested wrestlers battle in brown trousers and red or blue belts of a width of 8 centimetres. Victory comes when one combatant forces the other to fall to the ground or touch the ground with a knee, hand or other part of their body.

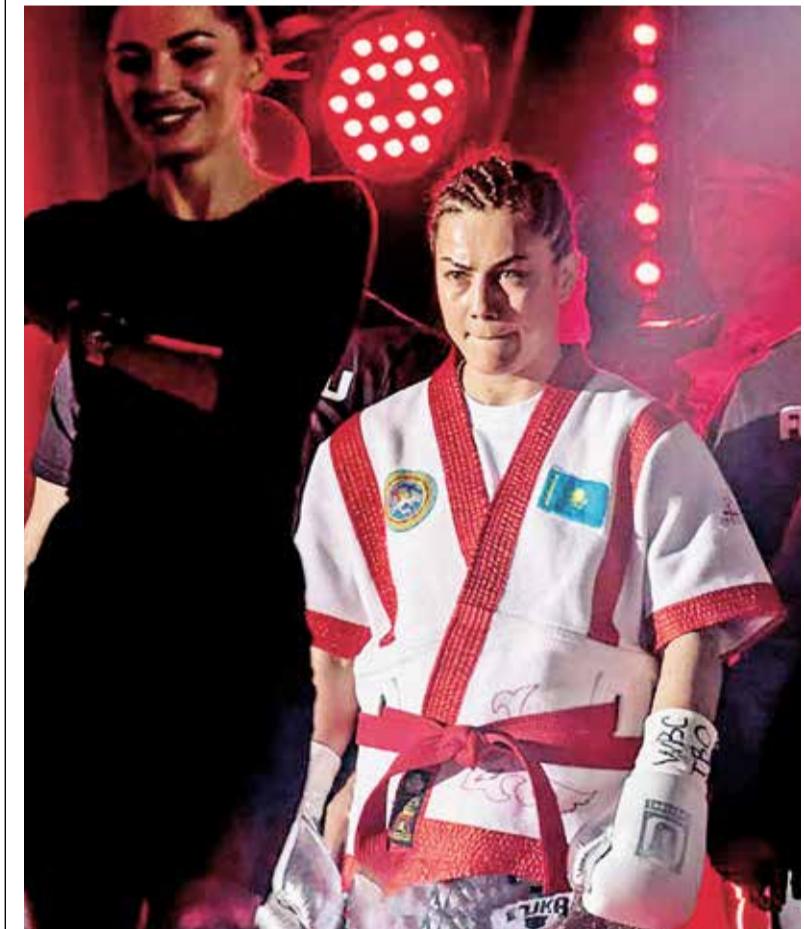
Fighters may hold and throw their opponents in any way possible, but they may not strangle them or inflict specific physical pain. Wrestlers stand during the bout, and can only grab their opponents above the belt. Gripping below the belt results in disqualification.

Fights last five minutes, with three more minutes added in case

of a tie. If the wrestlers are still tied after three minutes, victory goes to the wrestler who weighs less.

"Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev said that modernisation is impossible without national-cultural tradition in the policy article 'Course towards the future: modernisation of Kazakhstan's identity.' History and national traditions must be always taken into account. Thus, we are reviving the martial arts of our ancestors. This will be a grand event celebrating the national spirit," said Kazakhsha Kures International Federation President Kanat Bozumbayev.

## Boxer Sharipova to fight for WBC champion belt of Finland's Eva Wahlstrom



Firuza Sharipova

By Anuar Abdurakhmanov

## Kazakh national team loses to Croatia in Davis Cup quarterfinals

By Anuar Abdurakhmanov

ASTANA – Kazakhstan's national team recently lost to Croatia in the quarterfinals of the Davis Cup and finished its participation in the tournament.

Croatia was favoured having won the Davis Cup World Group in 2005 and having reached the finals in 2016. Kazakhstan's best finish had been the quarterfinals.

The first two players on the court were Marin Cilic and Dmitry Popko. The young Kazakh player could not defeat one of the world's best tennis players. The world No.3 won with a score of 6: 2, 6: 1, 6: 2.

Then Kazakh Mikhail Kukushkin brought the team match equal by defeating Borna Coric – 3: 6, 7: 6, 6: 4, 6: 2. This was the Kazakh player's third consecutive victory over Coric. In 2016 and 2017, the leader of the Kazakhstan's national team defeated the Croatian athlete in the ATP World Tour Masters tournaments in Rome and Madrid.

"Yes, the beginning was not easy. It's still difficult for me, like for many others, to go from the hard court to clay court. It takes a little time to adapt. Despite having trained a lot, it still feels quite different. I don't know whether it was because of nervousness or



Aleksandr Nedovyesov

lack of confidence. It was a hard competition. As I said, the rating in the Davis Cup does not matter. I think, the desire, struggle, hard work and taking every pass as the last one helped me altogether. Despite the fact that we played away from home, there were a lot of fans who outshouted their opponents most of the time. It's great! Thanks to those who watched the live broadcast in Kazakhstan. I won thanks to the efforts of our whole team," said Kukushkin.

Then came a grueling four-set doubles match in which Kazakh players Aleksandr Nedovyesov and Timur Khabibulin lost to their Croatian opponents Ivan Dodig and Nikola Mektić. The game lasted three hours and two minutes. Nedovyesov and Khabibulin won the first set but failed to keep the advantage, losing 7: 6, 4: 6, 4: 6, 2: 6.

Thus, Kazakhstan needed to win the remaining two matches to go through to the next round of the tournament. However, team Kazakhstan could not do it. In the fourth match, the leader of the national team Kukushkin met with the world No. 3 Marin Cilic. The match was controlled by the host team's player, although the Kazakh player tried to dictate his terms to his more famous opponent. As a result, the Croatian

player won 3: 1, thus helping his team reach the semifinals.

"We should give credit to the Croatian team, it was better. We are upset that the key match was a doubles. If we had led 2-1, we could have won the match. We will draw conclusions on the doubles. We will keep on training. We have the Asian Games this year, so we will prepare for the next competitions. The guys will recover. Of course, they have other tournaments ahead. I want to thank all the players, they all prepared well and did their best. Mikhail Kukushkin showed once again that he can play with any tennis player, as he won a point against the player with a higher ranking. Everything we do with the support of President of the Tennis Federation Bulat Utemuratov goes in the right direction.

More people started to play tennis in Kazakhstan. Many kids want to be like Mikhail Kukushkin or Zarina Diyas. The minimal target has been achieved, we remained in the World League. Now, we will aim for next year. We hope that such games and such moments will contribute to the overall development of tennis in Kazakhstan in the long term and more children will be engaged in tennis," said captain of the Kazakh national team Dias Doskarayev.

By Anuar Abdurakhmanov

ASTANA – Boxer Firuza Sharipova of Kazakhstan will face off against World Boxing Council (WBC) Champion Eva Wahlstrom of Finland in Monaco Oct. 24.

Sharipova's manager Sergei Zavilevsky discussed the coming bout in detail.

"We received a response from the promoter of Eva Wahlstrom, Petri Paimander. The Finnish athlete is now recovering after an operation, so she cannot fight in the nearest match in June. She will not be fighting for two months. However, Paimander noted that they are interested in having a fight with Sharipova on October 24. We will start discussing the terms of the contract Monday," he said.

The fight will be a challenge for Sharipova.

"We must understand that Eva

Wahlstrom is the leader in the world rating. So the fight will not be easy, but we are holding out for victory. Taking into account the fact that the fight will be held in Monaco, we will select for preparation a country with a time zone as close as possible to the European one. Firuza will most likely be training in Moscow, as for all past fights, although some stages of preparation may be held in Kazakhstan," Zavilevsky added.

Sharipova holds the world lightweight and super featherweight professional boxing champion titles. In her last match, on December 30 in Almaty, she defeated Belgium's Djemilla Gontaruk to win the International Boxing Organisation and WBC Silver titles, becoming an obligatory contender for Wahlstrom's WBC champion belt. Her next fight was to be held May 12, but was postponed, as a suitable opponent couldn't be agreed upon.

# CAPITAL

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 25, 2018

## Reconstructed park will represent Almaty region



By Aigerim Sadykova

ASTANA – Almaty region and BI Group are reconstructing the capital's Arai Park in conjunction with the city's 20th anniversary. The project will present the region's remarkable sites in one location, said project head Dauren Alzhasarov, according to Elorda Apparat news agency.

"The park will include an entrance with an arch, an alley with fountains and Aport Square (famous Almaty apples) with the symbols of Almaty region; they are hills that imitate the mountains, pavilions and yurts. Tengri Square will be constructed with playgrounds for children of different ages. There will be an ash tree alley and stones with Tamgaly Tas petroglyphs, as well as an amphitheatre built in the park. Moreover, Astana will have its own Sharyn Canyon," he said.

Sharyn Canyon has been compared to the Grand Canyon in the United States as a monument of nature. Tamgaly Tas is located 120 kilometres from Almaty city and the cliff is known for its Buddhist

inscriptions and ancient Turkic runic scripts.

The 15-hectare territory will be divided into four zones. The first will be for walks, the second designed as a central alley. Visitors with children can go to the third zone; the last will offer a food court and parking area.

The park will also have 1.5-kilometre bicycle and running trails, and Alzhasarov noted the playgrounds for children with special needs will have no equal in the capital.

The project will have a map of Kazakhstan designed with grass, flowers and bushes. The area will be landscaped with 270 trees, including 85 apple, ash and anointing oil.

The park will turn over a new leaf with a new name and be known in the future as Zhetsu (Seven Rivers) Park. Zhetsu, the region on seven rivers flowing into Balkhash Lake, was the site where the Kazakh Khanate was established in the 15th century.

"There are plans to make a decorative stream that will flow on wooden flooring into Balkhash Lake. The Great Silk Road will pass through the park; a caravan

will meet guests on the way near the entrance arch. The entrance will consist of seven arches symbolising Zhetsu," said Alzhasarov.

Those who like roller skating can enjoy their time in the roller rink, which will double in winter as an ice skating rink, and guests will be able to rent skates, rollers and bicycles. Children can spend time on trampolines and in play areas, the latter with a rubber-covered wavy relief hill to reduce injuries.

A Wi-Fi tree will consume solar energy, providing Internet access and a charging station for electronic gadgets. A closed-circuit television (CCTV) system will be installed and 380 lanterns will illuminate the park at night. Organisers will repair the roads leading to the area and remove the fence along Arai and Saraiyik streets. The park will also have three modular toilets.

The 3-billion tenge (US\$9.1 million) project, funded by the Almaty regional administration, will be completed by June 30. The opening ceremony will entertain guests with excursions, festivals, night shows, concerts and movies in an outdoor cinema.

## Annual BI Marathon promotes sports and charity

By Aigerim Sadykova

ASTANA – The annual BI Marathon, the largest sporting event in Central Asia, will be held May 27 in the capital. The third charity run will differ from previous year's events with the launch of a Sports Fair.

Marathon organiser BI Group has invited 60 companies to exhibit their goods and equipment May 25-27. City residents and guests can purchase famous brand uniforms and goods for the marathon, cycle racing, CrossFit and swimming. Participants will receive BI Marathon T-shirts to show their involvement in the social project.

The fair will be a unique place for individuals to begin sports and prepare themselves for the race. Organisers suggest children ages 8-14 try the two-kilometre distance, while older participants can choose among five, 10 and 21.1-kilometre (half-marathon) distances. The real challenge will be the 42.2-kilometre marathon.

The entry fee is 5,000 tenge (\$15), increasing to 5,500 tenge (\$16.61) beginning May 1. Registration is available at [www.bi-marathon.kz](http://www.bi-marathon.kz).

Participants in previous two BI Marathons shared their experiences. Timur Dmitryev trains three

times a week to be able to run the 42.2-kilometre distance in three hours, 30 minutes.

"Long-run training helps to overcome discomfort and severities. What do we need to suffer

for? Psychological adaptation to changes and the increasing level of stress during running improves your capacity for work; you perceive everything with the smile," he said.

BI Group employee Gulzhainar Mergaliyeva started with five kilometres in the 2016 marathon, improving her distances to 10, 21 and 42.2 kilometres in the following years.

"After my first marathon, I realised that I am stronger and more enduring than I thought. People were surprised I ran 42.2 kilometres. It's all about fortitude and character, not your physique. I

broke up the stereotype that people with a fragile physique are weak," she said.

Mergaliyeva advises group training with a coach.

"I trained incorrectly last year. I didn't know you needed to breathe properly, control the pulse and work on certain muscles of the legs," she added.

The BI-Zhuldyzai charity fund will receive donations from the marathon to support children with special physical needs. Following the first event, the fund purchased and installed medical equipment in BI-Zhuldyzai rehabilitation centre in the capital to treat children diagnosed with cerebral palsy. The 16 million tenge (\$49,230) collected in 2017 was spent on Solisten devices, which activate the nervous system.

The centre provides rehabilitation and operations and invites highly qualified specialists from abroad. As a result, 468 surgeries have been completed in the last three and a half years on Kazakh children with cerebral palsy and 50 youngsters ages 4-13 began to walk for the first time.

BI Group launched the marathon to support charitable organisations and a healthy lifestyle. Nearly 3,000 participants attended the event in 2016, increasing to 4,000 the next year.



Last year the BI Marathon was held May 28 in the capital.

## Sergek has helped solve more than 500 crimes

By Yerbolat Uatkanov

ASTANA – Sergek video surveillance system has helped capital police solve more than 500 criminal offenses, including four murders. The system has contributed to reducing the number of offenses by an average of 30 percent and accidents by 18 percent.

Akim (Mayor) Asset Issekeshev and Deputy Prime Minister Askar Zhumagaliyev recently visited the city's situational centre, where they were presented with the system operation, and experts spoke about the benefits of introducing the photo and video capture system, according to the city administration press service.

The major highlight was the way drivers' discipline has improved and the centre's experts are now working on a face recognition system which will operate in all public places. The know-how will significantly help police in emergencies and mass brawls. Using their gadgets, officers will be able to watch what is happening at the scene, allowing them to assess the situation and act more efficiently. In addition, the system can automatically identify malicious non-payers and debtors.

To date, the city has 6,365 cameras completely integrated into the system and the administration plans to install and launch 13,000 road cameras by June 1. Sergek has become Kazakhstan's first IT technology export product.



Photo credit: kapital.kz

Zhumagaliyev is a strong supporter of the system and instructed the Ministry of Internal Affairs to speed up integration procedures with the ministry and Office of the Prosecutor General. The functions significantly improve city residents' lives, making them safer and more comfortable.

"We saw today that the project is ready; it operates correctly and the city administration promptly reacts to the complaints and appeals of residents. We need to conduct another important work – to refine the mobile application in which all information will be available.

After all, the technologies being implemented ensure our safety and comfort, which means that access to them should be as simple as possible for all citizens," he said.

Sergek has a special algorithm for preventing road accidents. If a car violates traffic rules several times in a short period, information is sent to the police officer's tablet and he or she will know the vehicle's location and license number and have the ability to quickly stop it. The system will therefore indirectly help prevent serious road accidents.

Sergek also counts the number of cars passing through a site, providing very good statistics on traffic congestion. It can serve as a source of information for the intelligent traffic light system, because it not only knows, for example, that 10,000 cars left a particular city district, but also where they are going.

## Astana to build waste recycling plant using French technology

By Yuliya Mager

ASTANA – Astana plans to build a garbage recycling plant using French technology by September 2019 that will use wet and dry fractions technology to process up to 75 percent of the city's waste. The technology was presented at the recent EXPO 2017.

"The construction of the plant worth 3.4 billion tenge (US\$10.3 million) will begin in August and finish in September 2019. The technology will recycle 180,000 tonnes of organic

wastes, or 50 percent of waste from the total amount," Astana Akim (Mayor) Asset Issekeshev said at a meeting on Astana development with the participation of Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev.

The mayor also said that last year the company, which is going to construct the plant, spent more than 1 billion tenge (US\$3 million) to purchase 30 garbage trucks and 2,000 containers. Two shops to process plastic and paper have been already launched.

"As of today, 5.2 billion tenge (US\$15.8 million) have been allocated for the modernisation

of this sector this year. For the first time in the history of the country, the system of separate collection of waste using wet and dry fractions technology will be used in the city. For this reason, 25 garbage trucks and more than 6,000 containers will be installed in all yards until September 2019. The depth of recycling of waste will reach 30 percent. At that, great importance will be paid to explanatory work with the population," Issekeshev said.

The plant will be part of the unified system of collection, processing and disposal.